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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Folklore

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfol20>

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Alfred Nutt

Published online: 14 Feb 2012.

To cite this article: Alfred Nutt (1892) The Lai of Eliduc and the Märchen of Little Snow-White, *Folklore*, 3:1, 26-48, DOI: [10.1080/0015587X.1892.9720088](https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1892.9720088)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1892.9720088>

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THE
LAI OF ELIDUC AND THE MÄRCHEN
OF LITTLE SNOW-WHITE.

“ I WILL tell you a very ancient Breton lay, and as I heard it I will retell it.

“ There dwelt a knight in Brittany named Eliduc, brave and courteous, and a right worthy man. A wife he had of gentle blood and bearing. Long time they dwelt together, and faithfully did they love one another. But Eliduc had to seek service afar off, and there he loved a damsel ; daughter was she of a king and queen ; Guilliadun was her name, and she was the fairest maid of all her land. Now Eliduc's wife was named Guildelucc, and so this lay is sometimes called the lay of Guilliadun and of Guildelucc ; but its first name is the lay of Eliduc. What happened, and wherefore this lay was made, I will tell you truthfully.”

Thus does Marie de France begin the *Lai of Eliduc*, which she may have heard either in Brittany or in Western England, and which she wrote down sometime in the second half of the 12th century. 'Tis an adventure, says she, which man ought not to forget, and for this it was the ancient Bretons, full of courtesy (and by courtesy one must understand a fine appreciation of the sentiment of love as it was preached and practised in the courts of France, and of all countries subject to French influence in the 12th and 13th centuries), made the lay. By “ Breton ” there can be little doubt that Marie meant inhabitants of the present Brittany, the ancient Armorica. As we shall see, the scene of the story is partly Brittany, partly South-Western England. The fact that Marie recognised the lay as a

distinctly Breton production by no means precludes the possibility of her having heard it in this country.

The contents of the lay are briefly as follows :—Eliduc, from being the most trusted vassal of his master, King of Lesser Britain, loses all favour, and resolves to seek service elsewhere. He parts from his wife in great grief and sorrow, assuring her that he will keep his faith to her whole and good. Setting sail with ten knights, he comes to Totness (Toteneis). In that land are many chiefs, one of whom at Exeter (Excestrë) is powerful, but very aged. And because he will not give his daughter in marriage he is warred upon by rejected suitors, and sorely pressed. Eliduc offers his services, and defeats the king's enemies. The king keeps both him and his men a whole year by him, and makes him warden of his land.

Now Eliduc was courteous and discreet, fair to look upon, generous and *débonnair*. So the king's daughter, hearing much good of him, begged him, through her chamberlain, to visit her. Eliduc complied. And when they met after a while the damsel considered attentively what manner of man he was, his face and his stature and his bearing, and Love flung his dart bidding her love him ; and she paled and sighed, but would in nowise tell the cause, lest he should think lightly of her. On his side Eliduc went away sad and pensive, thinking of the maiden, his lord's daughter, who called him so sweetly, and who sighed. Then he minded him of his wife, and how he vowed his faith to her. But the damsel all night long neither lay down nor slept, and at daybreak she opened her heart to her chamberlain. By his advice she sent Eliduc a golden ring and a scarf. And when Eliduc received them, he put the ring on his finger and the scarf round his body, and thereat the king's daughter was greatly glad. But Eliduc had neither joy nor pleasure. Evermore he thought of the king's daughter, and evermore he thought of his wife, and how he had vowed faith to her. Now one day as the king was playing at chess, and his daughter at his side, Eliduc entered, and the king

said to his daughter, "Maiden, thou shouldst be at one with this knight; do him great honour; I have none better." Right glad was the maiden, and she rose and called Eliduc, and they sat afar off from the others, and she dared say no word to him, and he feared to speak to her. But at last their mutual love was fully told.

Now the King of Lesser Britain being hard-pressed by his foes, repented him of the injustice he had done Eliduc and sent to him, begging his aid and service. Eliduc could not refuse his first lord. But when he came to speak to Guilliadun, at the first word she swooned, and he lamenting, and oftentimes kissing her mouth, and weeping sorely, "Sweet my friend," said he, "you are my life and death; you have my faith, and I will surely return." So Guilliadun yielded, and with many a kiss and vow the lovers parted.

All in his land were overjoyed to see Eliduc, above all his wife. But he was ever sad for his love's sake, and nothing that he saw yielded him joy. This grieved his wife's heart, and she often asked him if he had heard aught to her disfavour.

So the time went by until Eliduc should return to Guilliadun, as he had promised. He passed over secretly into England, and carried her off at nightfall. But when they were got on the high seas, and were nigh the coast, the wind rose, and the masts were broken, and the sails torn. Prayers to the saints and to the Virgin were of no avail, so that at last a squire cried, "What boots it, Lord, to pray? have we not here the cause of our peril. Never may we come to land, so being that you, with wedded wife at home, are carrying this one with you against God and law, against right and loyal dealing." But when Guilliadun heard these words she fell fainting and colourless, and in that state did she remain. Eliduc having flung the squire into the sea, seized the helm, and brought the ship to land. Then bethinking himself where he might find a fitting burial-place for the body of his love, still deeming her to be dead, he minded him of a hermit who dwelt hard by in a great

forest. Thither he carried the damsel's body ; when as he came to the hermit's chapel, he found it void and abandoned, the hermit having died eight days before. So he laid the damsel's body before the altar, and, with tears and sighs and kisses, left it there. Thereafter he came every day to the chapel, and behold his lady's face changed not, only it became a little paler. But the wife of Eliduc, finding him bereft of speech and gladness, wondered at his daily absence, and setting watch upon him, learnt his visits to the chapel. On the morrow Eliduc must needs fare to court, and the lady rode forth to the chapel. Entering, she beheld the damsel on the couch, and she was like a fresh-blown rose. Seeing that body, those arms so long and white, those fingers so slim and taper, she knew her husband's woe. "Full well I feel it," said she, "for I too pity, and tenderness fills my heart, and never more shall joy be mine." Thus did she lament as she sat by the damsel's couch. But of a sudden a weasel ran across the body, and the lady's squire slew it with his staff. As it lay dead its mate came running, and would fain have raised its head or made it move, and being unable, seemed sore distressed. Then running forth into the wood, it returned with a flower, scarlet of hue, which laying on its dead mate's mouth, life was restored. The lady saw and marvelled. Seizing the flower, she laid it on Guilliadun's mouth, whereat the damsel sighed and opened her eyes. "Dear God," said she, "long have I slept." Then she told the lady her story, and bewailed her cruel fate. But the lady bid her comfort herself. "Eliduc still loves you. I, his wife, may not tell you how grievous to me is his despair, nor may I say how joyful to me your revival. Return with me, and I will place your hand in that of your friend. I will release him from his vows, and I will take the veil." Thus she sent her squire to tell Eliduc that Guilliadun still lived. Overjoyed, he hastened home, and finding there his sweet friend, tenderly rendered thanks to his wife, and much and often did he embrace the maiden, and she him full sweetly. The

lady then begged her lord to give her leave to serve God. An abbey was founded by Eliduc, and the lady took the veil together with thirty nuns. So Eliduc wedded his love; many days they lived together, and ever was perfect tenderness between them. And lastly Eliduc, founding a rich church, devoted himself wholly to the service of God, whilst Guilliadun joined his first wife, to whom she was dear as her own sister. So they three passed in holy wise their remaining days, praying for each other, and mutually exhorting each other to the love of God.

Everyone knows the story of Little Snow-White, of Schneewittchen persecuted by her jealous stepmother, welcomed by the dwarfs in the forest, and preserved, apparently lifeless, although in the full bloom of her beauty, in the glass case guarded by the seven dwarfs, until the destined prince appears. At first blush there is nothing in common between this tale and the Lai of Eliduc, save the one incident of the heroine's suspended animation, and this is preceded and followed by such entirely different incidents as seem effectually to discriminate the stories. But it is a canon of storyology never to judge a tale by one version, but to examine all the variants. These, so far as Germany is concerned, are brought together by Grimm, iii, 87 *et seq.*, whilst the fullest enumeration of the non-German variants is to be found in Gonzenbach, p. 202. The versions range from the Balkan peninsula to Iceland, and from Russia to Catalonia; Germany and Italy being the two countries in which the greatest number have been noted.

In one of Grimm's variants a count and countess meet the heroine by the wayside, and the count loves her, and would fain have her with them in their carriage, but his lady seeks only how she may be rid of her. Here then wifely, and not stepmotherly, jealousy is the motive of the plot. This is still more so in the Neapolitan version written down by Basile in the early part of the 17th century (*Pentamerone*, v, 5). The heroine having at the

age of seven fallen into a death-in-life condition, her body is enclosed in seven crystal coffers by her mother, and is locked up in a room. The mother dies, leaving her house and all her belongings to her brother, whom she strictly charges to let no one enter the locked room. The brother lays the charge upon his wife, but she, of course, no sooner his back turned, has no first thought save to enter the forbidden chamber. Her reflections contrast amusingly with those of Guildelucc. Some may think them more legitimate as well as more natural: "Well done, Mr. Keep-your-troth, Mr. Clean out- and dirty in-side, so this was the cause of your precious anxiety to let no one in, this is your idol which you needs come and worship daily." After which, having by her violence caused the enchanted comb which kept the maiden entranced to drop out, and thereby brought her back to life, she treated her worse than a slave. Finally, in a Roumanian version (Schott, 6), otherwise closely akin to Schneewittchen, the heroine, blinded by her mother, is healed by the Virgin, even as Guilliadun is brought back to life by Guildelucc.

These few examples show more likeness between the two narratives than one could guess from the study of Schneewittchen alone. Still one cannot say that these parallels carry us very far, and as a matter of fact no one ever thought of comparing *märchen* with *lai*. The greatest of living storyologists, Dr. Reinhold Köhler, has annotated both Eliduc and the Sicilian versions of Little Snow-White, and in neither case did he attempt to connect the two stories.

When, nearly twelve years ago, I read my first paper before the Folk-lore Society—that critical examination of Campbell's collection which contained the germ of all the scientific work I have been able to accomplish since—I noticed the absence of the Schneewittchen formula from the Gaelic *märchen* store. It was therefore with profound interest that in 1888 I noted a Scotch-Gaelic version collected by Mr. Kenneth Macleod, printed by my friend

Mr. MacBain, in vol. xiii of the *Celtic Magazine* (pp. 213 *et seq.*), and since reprinted in *Celtic Fairy Tales*. I give below a summary of the tale, "Gold-tree and Silver-tree," with the more important passages in full.

Silver-tree, the wife, is jealous of Gold-tree, the daughter ; she consults a trout in a well as to who is fairest, and learns it is her daughter, whereat she takes to her bed, and declares one thing alone will heal her, her daughter's heart and liver. A he-goat's heart and liver are given her, and Gold-tree is sent off secretly and married to a foreign king. After a year Silver-tree consults the trout again, and learns that her daughter is still alive. She sets sail for the foreign land, and kills Gold-tree with a poisoned stab in her finger ; but so beautiful did Gold-tree look that her husband would not bury her, but locked her in a room where no one would get near her. "After a while he married again, and the whole house was under the hand of this wife but one room, and he himself kept the key. One day he forgot the key, and the second wife got into the room. What did she see there but the most beautiful woman she ever saw." Taking the poisoned stab out of her finger, Gold-tree rose alive as beautiful as she was ever. At the fall of night the prince came home downcast. "What bet," said his wife, "would you put to me that I would make you laugh?" "Nothing could make me laugh, save Gold-tree to come alive." "Well, you have her alive down there in the room!" When the prince saw Gold-tree, he began to kiss her and kiss her and kiss her, so that the second wife said he had better stick to her and she would go away. "No," said the prince, "indeed you will not go away, but I shall have both of you." It is then told how the wicked Silver-tree is punished, thanks to the second wife, and the story winds up with "the prince and his two wives were long alive after this, pleased and peaceful, and there I left them."

It is hardly necessary to set out all the interesting points of contact between this and other versions of the Snow-White formula, as well as between it and the Breton *lai*.

Gold-tree is with her husband when the death-in-life trance befalls her, even as Guilliadun is with her affianced husband. She is locked into a chamber as is the Neapolitan damsel ; found by her husband's wife as is Basile's heroine by her uncle's wife. But these parallels are slight indeed compared with the remarkable one afforded by the conduct of the two Celtic wives : like Guildeluec, the prince's second wife welcomes her rival ; like her, she tells him of the joy that is his ; like her, she offers to go away and leave them to their happiness. I confess I am more taken with the frank and unaffected naturalistic paganism of the modern Gaelic tale than with the monkishness of the 12th century *lai*. The ending is more original, if not more charming. Little objection indeed did the large-hearted husband meet to his offer, and the last we hear of the three is that they were "pleased and peaceful".

In his notes to Gold-tree and Silver-tree, Mr. Jacobs wrote as follows (*Celtic Fairy Tales*, p. 252) :—" It is unlikely I should say impossible, that this tale, with the incident of the dormant heroine, should have arisen independently in the Highlands, it is most likely an importation from abroad. Yet in it occurs a most 'primitive' incident, the bigamous household of the hero. On the 'survival' method of investigation this would probably be used as evidence for polygamy in the Highlanders. Yet if, as is probable, the story came from abroad, this trait may have come with it, and only implies polygamy in the original home of the tale." When I first read this note I demurred to the supposition of importation within a comparatively recent period, yet I could urge nothing against it. It certainly seemed more likely that the isolated Celtic version should be due to borrowing, than that it should represent the original stock, always provided the hypothesis of independent development from a common mythic germ were set aside as inadequate. It was long since I had read Marie's lays, and no thought of connecting the Celtic folk-tale with Eliduc crossed my mind. But only a few weeks later I read in the *Revue des*

Deux-Mondes (Oct. 15th), Mons. Joseph Bédier's equally erudite and charming article on Marie de France. Therein the *lai* of Eliduc is analysed at length, and as I read, the supreme interest of the Gaelic tale was borne in upon me.

It hardly needs to point out what that interest is. Connection of some sort between the two narratives must be patent to all; evident also that the story of Eliduc is a civilised and Christianised version of that found in Gold-tree and Silver-tree. I say evident to all, as I cannot think it will be seriously urged that the *lai* of Eliduc made its way to Northern Scotland, and was there shorn of its ecclesiastical ending, and otherwise transmuted as we now find it. But it is not safe to take for granted that a certain school of storyologists will refrain from any contention, however desperate, in support of their views, and I will therefore cite one argument which seems to me absolutely conclusive in favour of my argument that Eliduc has been deliberately altered to its present shape. In the great majority of folk-tales, as indeed of most forms of narrative, the interest of the story depends upon complications wrought by the agency of a "villain", a villain technically being anyone who opposes the hero or heroine. In Eliduc the "villain" is the squire, whose words on board ship throw the heroine into her death-in-life trance, and as "villain" he is fitly punished by being straightway cast overboard. But he it is who embodies the moral sentiment of the narrator and of the better part of her audience. It is inconceivable that this antinomy should be the deliberate act of Marie or of her predecessor, *if either had invented the story*; equally inconceivable that it could appear in any genuine folk-tale, an unfailing characteristic of which is that it never deviates into sympathy for the villain. We can see as clearly as if the process went on before our eyes how one special incident of the folk-tale appealing to the minstrel's fancy, that incident was transformed to suit the taste of a different audience. As generally happens in these mediæval adap-

tations of the common folk-tale, the adaptor cared little for logical consistency, so that whilst his villain represents the high-water mark of moral sentiment in the story, he yet suffers as he did in the primitive folk-tale, where he was thought of as wholly bad, simply because his action inconvenienced hero and heroine.

Admit Eliduc to be a modification of a previously existing folk-tale, and the conclusion cannot be resisted that its original must have been closely akin to the original of Gold-tree and Silver-tree. Unless indeed we can point to any other narrative type which is equally or more likely to have given rise to the *lai* as we now have it.

There is a widely spread narrative type which in the Middle Ages was localised in widely separated districts, and furnished the matter of many favourite stories—that of the Husband with two Wives.

This cycle has been briefly studied by Mons. Gaston, Paris (*Comptes rendus de l'Acad. des Inscr. et Belles-Lettres*, 1887, pp. 577-586). One of the best known of the stories belonging to it is that of the Count of Gleichen, whose tomb is still shown between that of his two wives. But this cycle, so far as studied, is really of literary origin, and goes back to the Breton *lai*. Thus one of the oldest forms, the French metrical romance of *Ille et Galeron*, by Walter of Arras, recently made accessible in Professor Förster's admirably handy edition in his *Romanische Bibliothek*, is, as the learned editor argues, based entirely upon the *Lai* of Eliduc, with such developments as were required to spin out a story of 1,000 lines to one of 6,000, and such modifications as the poet deemed necessary to suit the theme to the taste of his patrons and patronesses, among them the Countess Marie of Champagne, the leading love-casualist of North France, under whose auspices it was that the theory of love, as professed by all the courtly spirits of the time, was elaborated and codified. Now, as one of the texts of this code ran, *Nemo potest duplici amore ligari*, it is evident that Walter had a task of some difficulty before

him, and his work deserves an instant's consideration, excellent example as it is of the way in which the Breton *lais* (themselves, I believe, adaptations of current folk-tales) were turned into long romances. The adventures of Eliduc at the court of the King of Exeter are, to some extent, used twice over: firstly, in the account of how Ille wins the love of his first wife, Galeron, sister to the Duke of Brittany, and then—when Ille, having lost his eye in a tournament, and fearing his wife will love him no more, flees from her—in the account of the help he gives the Emperor of Rome, and of the love he excites in the breast of the Emperor's daughter Ganor. But Galeron, instead of staying quietly at home, as does Guildeluec, seeks her truant husband, and finds him just as he, thinking her to be dead, is about to wed Ganor, out of pity for her great love. Galeron then offers, as does Guildeluec, to retire to a convent, but Ille will have none of the proposal, returns with her to Brittany, and there they live happily for many years. But Galeron, being in sore peril in childbirth, vows herself to the service of God if she wins through. This happens, and Ille, thus released, sets forth in search of Ganor, delivers her from great peril, and finally weds her.

The above brief abstract suffices to show the softening of the original polygamous feature begun in Eliduc fully carried out by Marie's contemporary. In the process, the "villain" has completely disappeared—as was, indeed, to be expected. The fact is, however, instructive to note for any who may hold that the *lai* of Eliduc is the source of the folk-tales. When we do find a derivative of the Breton *lai*, the development is in the very opposite direction.

The versions hitherto cited of the "Husband and Two Wives" can thus throw no light upon the origin of Eliduc; on the contrary, they must be looked upon as mere literary offshoots from the *lai* stock. There is, however, one version which has never yet been mentioned in this connection to my knowledge, which cannot be directly connected with Eliduc, but which may be, and I believe is, an inde-

pendent growth from the same root as that from which Marie's poem has sprung. I allude to the Amleth (Hamlet) story told by Saxo Grammaticus in the fourth book of his *Historia Danica*. After the slaying of his uncle-stepfather, Amleth returns to Britain to his wife, daughter of the king of that land. When he tells his father-in-law what has happened, the latter is greatly perplexed. There was an old covenant between himself and Amleth's stepfather, that whoever survived should avenge the other's death. To fulfil his promise, he sends his son-in-law to woo for him a Scottish Amazon, who loathed her lovers, and always inflicted upon them the uttermost punishment. But the queen loving Amleth ("the old she utterly abhorred, desiring the embraces of the young") for his wise and valorous deeds, craftily substitutes for the message of his father-in-law one directing that he should be married to her. Amleth readily falls in with the plan, and returns to Britain with his new bride. On his way he meets his first wife, who has come to warn him against her father. Her words (I quote from Mr. Elton's translation, to be issued shortly by the Folk-lore Society) are worth noting. Speaking of her own son, she says: "He may hate the supplanter of his mother. I will love her; no disaster shall put out my flame for thee," etc. Amleth, later, gets the better of his father-in-law, and goes back with his wives to his own land, *i.e.*, Denmark. After a while he is defeated and slain by a competitor for the Danish throne, and the second wife, Hermutrude, yields herself up of her own accord to be the victor's spoil and bride.

I cannot but think that Saxo is giving us here at second, if not at third hand a distorted version of an heroic legend that his countrymen heard in Celtic Britain. My chief reason for believing this is supplied by the Scottish (*i.e.*, Celtic) Amazon queen, whom the King of Britain sends Amleth to woo for him. The warrior virgin who will only yield to the perfect hero, and who treats her other wooers much as the female spider treats hers, is, of course, a con-

stant of heroic tradition. As Brunhild she plays a great part in the most famous hero-tale of the Germans. But certain characteristics clearly differentiate the Irish from the German representatives of the part. There is an un-human independence of, or indifference to the mortal woer, a divine *abandon* when she decides to yield, a callousness to the fate of the particular mortal on whom she bestows her favours, that stamp her of the kin of the immortals, that place her on a different level from such beings, transcendently endowed with valour and high-heartedness, yet women all the same, as Sigrun or Brunhild. These characteristics are clearly marked in Saxo's heroine, whose conduct after Amleth's death moves the worthy chronicler to one of his familiar outbursts of rhetorical commonplace about the fickleness of woman. Note, too, that Amleth's first wife is as ready to subordinate herself to her rival as are Guildeluec or the second wife in Gold-tree.

It may be urged that the name Hermutrude is non-Celtic, but I do not think this point is of the slightest importance. Saxo would almost certainly give his personages a recognisable name, even if, as is not likely, his Danish informants had retained and correctly rendered an alien Celtic one.

So far, then, the consideration of allied stories has strengthened my general proposition by showing, both: that another possible offshoot from the original of *Eliduc* exists, and that the derivatives of *Eliduc* show no tendency to revert to the folk-tale type. A close examination of the *lai* and the recently collected folk-tales may further support the contention that the Scotch-Gaelic tale probably represents the original of Marie's poem, and almost certainly is not derived from the continental versions.

With regard to the date of the *lai*, a *terminus ad quem* is furnished by that of *Ille et Galeron*, finished, as Prof. Förster shows, in 1167. By this time, then, Marie's poem, or one closely resembling it, must have enjoyed wide favour. But

indeed we can carry the date much further back. Marie herself describes it as ancient, but we cannot lay much stress upon this. A work barely two generations old may well have seemed ancient in her eyes and in those of her contemporaries. Internal evidence affords surer ground. The *lai* must have been composed at a time when there was frequent and easy communication between Brittany and Southern England, and when the condition of the latter country was such that the Breton poet knew, or could imagine, that it was parcelled out between a number of petty kings. This seems to preclude a post-Conquest date. The Breton allies of the Conqueror received liberal grants of territory in South-Western England; in the second half of the 11th and the first half of the 12th century the chief men of the district were also leading members of the Breton nobility, so that a Breton minstrel of that period could hardly have been so far unaware of the real state of contemporary Southern England as to draw the picture of it we find in *Eliduc*. The mention of Totness gives us no precise date. We know that at the Conquest it was already a borough town and a considerable port, moreover that in the early 12th century it enjoyed legendary renown, as Geoffrey makes Brutus land there on his first arrival in England. Whether this is to be brought into any connection with early migrations between Britain and Armorica is perhaps doubtful, but it seems to argue a long-standing traditional belief that Totness was the chief port of South Devon. I think we may assign the composition of the contents of the *lai*, substantially as retold by Marie, to some period prior to 1056.

Turning from the material to the moral conditions of the *lai*, we note that although bigamy is held to be sinful, yet no form of divorce or other kind of ecclesiastical separation seems necessary. The arrangement between *Eliduc* and his two wives is apparently a family one, with which the Church has no concern. I do not profess to say how far this reflects possible historical conditions, or is simply to

be attributed to a heedless and unlegal-minded minstrel. Be the origin of this feature what it may, it certainly adds to the archaic air which the *lai*, as a whole, wears.

Turning to the German folk-tale, we note that according to Grimm (iii, 87) the form of the heroine's name is Low-German, and is retained even in High-German versions. This would indicate, if anything, a spread from north to south. The tale opens with the red-white-black incident, which, as I have abundantly shown (MacInnes, pp. 431 and 435), is met with in Irish sagas earlier than elsewhere in modern Europe, and has from the 11th century downwards been a prominent commonplace of Celtic story-telling. If it is denied, as some deny, that such an incident may originate independently in different lands, and if it is denied, as many deny, that it is impossible for such an incident to be a portion of the proethnic Aryan story-stock, then I maintain that those who thus deny are bound to look for the origin of the incident there where it occurs earliest and most frequently. And that is in the Gaelic-speaking districts of these islands. Again, it should be noted that in several of Grimm's variants the rhyme of the jealous queen runs thus :

"Spiegel unter den Bank,
Sich in dieses Land, sich in jenes Land,
Wer ist die schönste in *Engelland*!"

I do not lay much stress upon this, as from the fourth century onwards, England, thanks to its geographical position and to a natural bit of popular etymology, represented the Otherworld to the continental German races. In one case (Musäus' version) the rhyme-word is "Braband". Lay as little weight upon these indications as one likes—and in my opinion they do not carry much weight—still they serve to localise the German versions in the Low-German-speaking lands, the connection of which with these islands was always close.

In comparing the German and Gaelic tales there is one incident which cannot, I think, but strike every unprejudiced

observer as being more archaic in the Gaelic than in the German version. I mean the mode of divination practised by the jealous queen. In Schneewittchen and in most of the continental variants she consults her mirror, in Gold-tree a trout in a well. No competent judge but will say that in the 10th century, the period to which we have inferentially carried back the original of Eliduc, the latter is the more likely mode. Now in one of Grimm's variants the jealous queen consults a dog, Spiegel by name. Which is the more likely, that the mirror of several versions arose from a misunderstanding of the name of the divining animal, or that one narrator altered mirror to dog? In any case the magic fish of knowledge (generally a salmon) is prominent in Gaelic myth. The fullest English account is that of O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*, ii, 142 *et seq.*), paraphrasing the Shannon legend found in the *Dindsenchas*, a topographico-mythical poem of the 10th-11th century, other early 11th century references to the myth being also given. Later use of this mythic idea abounds in Gaelic legend. It is surely more sensible, as well as more scientific, to refer the trout in the well of the Gaelic folk-tale to this old Gaelic mythic conception, rather than to suppose that a Gaelic story-teller, having heard a version of Schneewittchen, substituted a trout for a mirror. Is it not, on the contrary, evident that the clear surface of the well led by a natural transition to the mirror of the German versions?

What are the principal elements in the hypothetical original of Eliduc and of the Gaelic tales?—the situation of the hero between the two heroines, the death-in-life condition of one heroine brought about by the "villain". Now somewhat similar elements, though differently combined, are to be found in one of the oldest Irish hero-tales—the Sick Bed of Cuchulainn. The text is found in the *Leabhar na h'Uidhre* (*LU.*), and professes to be transcribed from an older MS., the *Yellow Book of Slane*. Like most of the sagas in *LU.*, it is, as Professor Zimmer

has convincingly shown, an attempt to harmonise different and somewhat conflicting versions. As our present text was compiled in the early 11th century, the versions upon which it is based must be much older. Indeed, there is little reason to doubt that the elements of the story belong to the oldest stratum of Irish fancy, and that these elements were combined, much as we find them in the 11th century text, not later than the 7th century. In this saga Cuchulainn is loved by a queen of Faery, Fand. She comes to earth in bird-guise, and is wounded by the hero. She throws him into a magic sleep, visits him, and thrashes him to such purpose that for a year he lies on his couch, away from the court and all his friends, and can speak to nobody. Healed by faery intervention, he visits the Otherworld, and brings back Fand with him. The jealousy of his mortal wife Emer is thereby aroused, and she bitterly reproaches him. Fand thereupon returns to the Otherworld, and Cuchulainn and Emer, to whom a magic drink of forgetfulness is given, are left at peace with one another.

Here, then, we have the husband and the two wives, and the death-in-life trance of one of the chief actors in the story. I suggest no connection, I do not for a moment imply that we have before us two variants of the same theme, differentiated by the fact that in the one the hero, in the other the heroine, undergoes the magic trance. I merely point out that a story involving the same essential elements as those of the prototype of *Eliduc* and *Gold-tree* was one of the most famous of Gaelic legends. If the race could fashion the one story it could fashion the other.

Hitherto in my argument I have tacitly and implicitly accepted the "transmissionist" postulate. This I take to be that the similarity of folk-tale in modern Europe is to be accounted for by the transmission from definite centres within historic times of complete and well-rounded narratives. Still, for argument's sake, taking my stand on this platform, let me meet a possible objection arising from the

South-Italian variants of the Snow-White formula. As we have seen, Basile is nearer than is Grimm to Gold-tree, the assumed representative of the oldest type of the narrative. But Italy is farther from Gaeldom than is Low Germany! So the transmissionist may urge. Now, paradoxical as the statement may appear, Italy is closer to Celtdom than is Germany. The "salt estranging sea" is often a surer link than the land. In the 10th and 11th centuries the Norman adventurers overran and founded kingdoms in Sicily and Southern Italy. But Norman and Breton were closely allied; Breton chiefs and soldiers accompanied the descendants of the Vikings. And thus it comes about that in the early 12th century we find numerous traces of the Arthurian romance throughout the Italian peninsula in the shape of personal names taken from the Romance cycle; thus it is that a late 12th century writer localises Avalon near Mount Etna. All the contentions I have striven to establish are, if the transmissionists knew it, in favour of their thesis, if they will only give up the main article of their creed, viz., that stories can be invented nowhere save in the East, and that every example of transmission must be from East to West. The present investigation does not affect the arguments for or against the transmission theory *per se*, and therefore I shall not pause to expound my reasons for believing that that theory only accounts for a very few of the problems of folk-lore. I am quite satisfied if I can show that even the straitest partisan of that theory may accept my proof without its being necessary for him to revise all the articles of his creed.

Before drawing what are, I think, the legitimate conclusions from the facts I have been considering, I should like to say a few words about the polygamy incident which induced Mr. Jacobs to write his note. I agree with him that the tale as it stands would not be sufficient warrant for the existence of polygamy in early Gaeldom. I may add that the fact of that polygamy, which is as thoroughly established as anything can well be, would not in itself be a sufficient

warrant for the Gaelic origin of the folk-tale. But we know that polygamy was a Gaelic practice, and we have a tale in which it appears, and which professes to be Gaelic, a profession supported by a number of other considerations. Surely we are entitled, under these circumstances, to use the incident as evidence both of the Gaelic origin of the tale and of the survival of the practice in the folk-mind long after it had vanished from the social system.

With regard to the evidence for polygamy among the early Gaels I will cite but one instance, and this I cite not because there is the slightest necessity to advance proof for a custom as well established historically as that of trial by jury in modern England, but because the instance itself is of great interest to folk-lorists, and because it throws a most curious light upon early Irish Christianity. I allude to the birth-story of Aed Slane, high king of Ireland from 594 to 600 according to the *Four Masters*. The story runs thus :

Once upon a time there was a great gathering of Gaels in Taitlin. And the king, Diarmaid, son of Fergus Cerbel, was there with his two wives, Mairend the Bald and Mugain of Munster. Now Mugain was jealous of Mairend, and egged on a satirist to make her rival remove the golden crown wherewith the bald one hid her shame. So the satirist craved a boon of the queen, and being gain-said, tore the crown from her head. "God and (St.) Ciaran be my help!" cried out the queen, and before a glance could be cast at her, behold the long, fine wavy golden locks were over the ford of her shoulders, such was the marvellous might of Ciaran. Then, turning to her rival, Mairend said, "Mayst thou suffer shame for this in the presence of the men of Ireland." Thereafter Mugain became barren, and she was sad, because the king was minded to put her away, and because all the other wives of Diarmaid were fruitful. So she sought help of (St.) Finden, and the cleric blessed water and gave her to drink, and she conceived. Suffice to say that the Saint's intervention was at first by no

means successful ; first a lamb, and then a silver trout were born, but finally Aed Slane, and he was the chief man of his day in Ireland.

The story has come down to us in two forms : (a) a prose text, which I have abridged above ; (b) a poem by Flann Manistrech, who died in 1056 ; this merely gives the birth-story, omitting the rivalry between the two queens. The prose story as we have it mentions the poem, and would thus seem to be later than it ; but Mr. Whitley Stokes tells me that its language is, if anything, somewhat older, although it cannot be dated much before the beginning of the 11th century. Prose and verse would thus seem to be independent versions connected in *LU.* by the paragraph concerning Flann's poem. The polygamy and the intervention of the two saints certainly picture manners and feeling as old, to say the least, as the alleged date of the personages. In the poem the animal births are interpreted in a Christian sense, both lamb and fish being symbols of Christ. Seeing, however, that we have to do with a story of rivalry and jealousy, it is allowable to compare the incident with the one, so frequent in folk-tales, in which the queen is accused by an enemy of giving birth to an animal, and is in consequence driven away by her husband. It is even allowable to speculate whether this form, the normal one, of the incident is not secondary, whether originally the enemy did not actually by the power of magic cause the offspring of the heroine to be animal instead of human. But such speculations would, I admit, at present be rather *en l'air*.

The miraculous growth of hair recalls at once the Godiva legend. Here, there can be little doubt, the present form of the story is not the original one. The point *must* have been that the countess rode naked, and that the covering of hair was a miraculous protection against unholy curiosity. A similar conception is almost a commonplace in early Christian legend. The most familiar, as well as the oldest form known, is that found in the Acts of St. Agnes.

Here the hair covers the whole body. As this narrative is due to St. Ambrose, and as St. Agnes is mentioned in the 11th century Irish Martyrology known as the *Calendar of Oengus*, it is probable that the legend was known to the early Irish Church, and if so, it is possible that the incident in our tale may be due to it.¹ On the other hand, Mr. Whitley Stokes tells me that he knows no other example of the incident in Irish literature. Considering, too, the pride taken by the Gaulish chieftains in the beauty and length of their hair, as testified to by classical writers; considering, moreover, the Irish rule which forbade the kingly throne to anyone possessed of a personal blemish, it seems to me quite as likely that the Mairend-Mugain story, if not founded on fact, is the outcome of Irish invention, as that it is a loan from the St. Agnes legend. The point deserves attention from those familiar with Irish as well as with continental hagiology.

I do not wish to labour the argument further. There can, I think, be no reasonable doubt that I have sufficiently proved my contention, and that the Gaelic tale of Gold-tree and Silver-tree, collected in North Scotland within the last few years, must be looked upon as the representative of a tale which flourished in the 10th century, a literary offshoot of which was the *lai* of Eliduc, and which *may* have been carried by Breton minstrels to Southern Italy, by Danish Vikings to North Germany, and there have given rise to the Schneewittchen group of stories. I am not concerned at present to prove or disprove this last contention. I may point out, however, that the German tale contains elements, such as the seven dwarfs, which have all the appearance of great antiquity, and that the material and social conditions postulated by the tale must have existed in German as well as in Celtic lands. I trust some member of the Society with more leisure than

¹ Prudentius tells the story of St. Eulalia; late hagiologists, of St. Mary the Egyptian, for which the oldest Acts of that saint give no warrant.

I can command will carefully analyse and compare all known versions of this folk-tale group, and will essay to determine whether the facts compel us to assume radiation from a particular centre within historic times, or allow us to regard the tale as common property of the various Aryan races.

In any case we have here a most beautiful illustration of the theory I have always urged, viz., that the folk-tale as collected in modern Europe is *substantially* older than the romances which were written down in the Middle Ages; that so far from being abridged and debased derivations from the romances, they are, in the main, derived from the tales upon which those romances were based; that there existed among the various Aryan-speaking races, as far back as we can trace, a stock of mythic narratives which have lived on to the present day.

No one at all familiar, I will not say with the methods of folk-lore research—these methods are and must be those of historical criticism generally—but with the facts disclosed by that research, but readily admits that, whilst we must always take the earliest version as the starting-point of investigation we must steel ourselves against the presumption that this earliest version is necessarily the starting-point of the series of phenomena we are investigating. It may be so, but more frequently it is not. This view is, however, apparently unintelligible to those distinguished students of history or literary history who sometimes do folk-lorists the honour of noticing them, and is held by them to be the result of the uncritical spirit which pervades all folk-lore study. The boot is really on the other leg. It is the non-folk-lorist who is uncritical in applying critical canons, perfectly sound it may be in his own line of study, to another with which he is not familiar, and to which they are not legitimately applicable. It is not often, however, that a principle so important to folk-lore research as that of the capacity of contemporary tradition to preserve facts which are, using the word in a strict sense, pre-

historic, can be proved. Hence the value of the instance I have just examined.

Another lesson that may be learnt from this instance is the invalidity of an argument dear to many students of history, the argument *ex silentio*. I believe that even in historical investigation proper a most unwarranted use is often made of this argument; in folk-lore research it should never be used save with the utmost caution. Could we apply a universal phonograph to the entirety of living oral tradition we should even then be far from justified in dogmatising about what may or may not have taken place formerly. But, as every folk-lorist well knows, it is but fragments of tradition that have been recorded and published. Every now and then a fresh fragment comes to light, and, like the Gaelic *märchen* of Gold-tree, opens up new lines of investigation, and compels us to seek in new directions for the solution of our problems.

NOTE.—The birth-story of Aed Slane has been edited and translated by Professor Windisch (*Ber. d. phil.-hist. Classe d. Kg. Sächs. Ges. d. Wiss.*, 1884). The best edition of Marie's *lais* is that of K. Warnke (1885), with storiological notes by D. R. Köhler. For those unfamiliar with old French, Roquefort's edition of Marie's works, with modern French version, may be recommended.

ALFRED NUTT.