On The Legend of Tristan:

ITS ORIGIN IN MYTH AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANCE,

BY

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ON THE LEGEND OF TRISTAN.

Among the themes of mediaeval Romance few possess such striking elements of poetical interest as the Legend of Tristan. I fear, however, that it is not so widely known as it deserves to be, and I may therefore be pardoned for briefly giving those main outlines of the story which are common to most of the versions that we have.

Tristan of Lyonesse, the hero, is royally descended. The mysterious gloom, which shrouds the very threshold of his life, appears prophetic of the tragedy about to be unfolded. His mother, on learning that his father has fallen in battle, dies in giving him birth. Kept in ignorance of his parentage, the orphan Prince is secretly brought up by Rual, a trusty follower, and educated by him in all knightly accomplishments.

When grown to man's estate, Tristan presents himself at the court of his childless uncle King Mark of Cornwall, who, on hearing his history, adopts him as a son. To save his country from paying a shameful tribute of men and money to the neighbouring Irish, Tristan slays Morold, their champion, in single combat. The youthful victor, however, at the same time receives a dangerous wound from the poisoned weapon of his foe, which no native art can cure. He, therefore, absents himself from his uncle's court, and lands disguised in Ireland, where he is fortunately cured by Isolde, surnamed the Fair, daughter of the Irish King. Tristan eventually returns to Cornwall, and paints the charms of the Princess in such glowing colours, that Mark resolves to make her his Queen. Tristan undertakes to woo her on behalf of his uncle, and journeys to Ireland for that purpose. On his arrival at the Irish court, he learns that the King has promised his daughter's hand to the man who should rid the land of a terrible dragon. Tristan succeeds in killing the monster, and claims the prize in his uncle's name. The King gives his consent, and Tristan sets sail with Isolde the Fair for Cornwall. On the voyage they both unwittingly drink of a Magic Potion, entrusted to the care of Brangrene a waiting-woman, and destined for King Mark. This Potion possesses the property of making those who partake of it
deeply enamoured of each other; and it is upon this effect on Tristan and Isolde that the whole story turns. Isolde becomes the wife of Mark, but continues devoted to Sir Tristan. Mark discovers the attachment, and persecutes the lovers, who practice various deceptions in order to effect a meeting, and even succeed in making their escape together. Isolde the Fair afterwards returns to her husband, while Tristan, driven to despair, weds another Isolde, named "of the White Hand." Our hero vainly endeavours to forget his first love in deeds of reckless daring. On again receiving a grievous hurt in battle, he sends for her who alone can work his cure. His messenger is instructed to hoist, on his return, white sails should his errand prove successful, and black sails if the reverse. Isolde of the White Hand, jealous of her rival, tells Tristan that she descries a black sail on the horizon, though in reality the sail is a white one. Bereft of hope he dies, and Isolde the Fair, finding on her arrival that her aid has come too late, dies also, of grief, by his side. King Mark, when he hears of the Magic Potion and its unhappy effects, causes the lovers to be buried in one tomb, on which he plants a rose and a vine. These afterwards grow up so closely entwined one with another that none can ever separate them.

This legend, which struck the key-note of Romance, was, from its very nature, likely to captivate the imagination of mediæval writers. Sir Tristan's knightly prowess and Isolde's queenly beauty were the representative types of the heroes and heroines of chivalry. Their ill-starred loves formed the favourite theme of the poet, while their constancy under every misfortune became proverbial throughout Europe. The thoroughly human interest which attaches to the legend alone makes it an attractive study to the modern reader; yet its history is no less instructive and curious, as I shall attempt to show in the present paper. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of cultivated minds at the present day is the intense interest with which they follow every attempt to clear the early history of man from the mists which have hitherto shrouded it from modern gaze. All branches of knowledge are being pressed into the service of the scientific explorer, but few equal Comparative Mythology in importance. The history of the Tristan Legend is, I venture to say, an interesting contribution to that science. The germ of the tale is to be found in one of a class of myths widely diffused over the old world, and to it a gradual accretion of myths.
belonging to other classes, appears to have taken place. These various materials were subsequently moulded by Romance into the legend we have before us. In view of these facts, I propose to deal with its early mythic origin, its development in mediaeval Romance, and its reappearance in modern Drama.

German writers, such as Von Groote,* Mone,† and Kurtz‡ have attempted to elucidate the origin of the legend by comparing it with various ancient myths. The singular resemblances, which were thus brought to light, led them to trace it to a common source in the dedication of the powers of nature. The earliest objects of mythological worship were unquestionably personifications of the phenomena observable in the physical universe. Nature’s mysterious powers, before which man found himself so helpless, would be worshipped as good or evil divinities, whose aid was to be supplicated or whose anger was to be averted, according as they were likely to assist or thwart his undertakings. There gradually arose by the side of these another class of deities. Mortals, who during life had been distinguished for their physical or their mental qualities, were raised after death by the popular imagination into heroes. In course of time these latter, from being looked upon as the guardians of the national fortunes, were confounded with the earlier gods, and became in their turn objects of divine worship. The wondrous legends associated with their names in popular tradition thus grew up into the myths of a national Pantheon. In these myths we find the relations of human life employed to symbolize the operations of nature as shown forth in the seasons and the movements of the heavenly bodies. Such fables were embodied by the priesthood into Religious Mysteries, in which it was not improbably sought to preserve esoteric truths from the gaze of the vulgar under the veil of allegory. Most prominent among these truths would be the close relation between the material and spiritual worlds, the struggle between good and evil, and the existence of a future state.


† Mone. Einleitung in C. von Groote’s Ausgabe von Tristan und Isolde. Also Ueber die Sage von Tristan, etc. Heidelberg, 1822.

In the Mysteries the departure of Summer, the gloomy reign of Winter, and the approach of Spring were celebrated almost universally under the allegory of a beautiful youth, the Sun-god, violently slain, and mourned by his true love Nature until he is at length restored to life. The Egyptians symbolized this by the murder of Osiris at the hand of his brother Typhon, who flung the corpse of his victim, enclosed in a chest, into the river Nile. After a sorrowful search, his consort Isis found it, and succeeded in bringing her lord to life again. Osiris becomes the King of Amenthe, the realm of the dead, where Isis under the name of Nephthys shares his throne for half the year. Hindu Mythology describes the death and resurrection of the god Kama in a similar manner. The Phænicians yearly commemorated the untimely end of Thammuz on the banks of the stream, whose waters were said to have been stained purple with his blood. Hence arose, also, the Grecian fable of the fair Adonis, whose loss Aphrodite so passionately mourned, that Persephone, Queen of Hades, restored him to her for a portion of the year. In Phrygia we meet with Cybele’s wild grief for Atys her shepherd lover, her wanderings in search of him and his return once more to life. The people of Cins in Bythinia held sacred the memory of Hylas, carried beneath the stream by nymphs enamoured of his beauty. Festivals, also, were held in Greece in honour of Dionysus-Zagreus the Wine-god, who, having been cruelly torn in pieces by the Titans, came to life again, and sought his mother Semele in the Underworld. Similar tales were told of the tragic deaths of Linus, Hyacinthus, Nareissus and Hercules, of the Thracian Corybas, of the Cabiric Esmun, of Melicertes at Corinth, Mitras in Persia, and of the Scandinavian Baldur and Sigurd. The allegory was, also, sometimes presented under a different form, as in the rape of Kore by Pluto, or in the touching tales of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Admetus and Alceste.

Besides this tale of the suffering god, there is also another, which is often found interwoven with it, and which belongs to the same family of solar myth. I refer to that of the god or hero triumphant in combat with giants and dragons. Thus, probably also, as some suggest, were commemorated the sanguinary struggles caused by dynastic changes, foreign invasions, and the introduction of new religions. We see, however, underlying such tales, the deeper truth of the great conflict between good and evil, in which the former is ultimately the victor. In
Egypt war was waged by Sob the serpent and his giants against Ophion the Good Principle; in India by Vrita against Indra; in Persia by Ahriman against Ormuzd; in Greece by the Titans against the Gods; and in Scandinavia by Fenrir against Odin and the Æsir. Of a similar character is the terrible vengeance wrought by the Huns on the Burgundians, with which the "Nibelungenlied" so tragically ends. The same idea is expressed in the tale of the valiant hero rescuing a beauteous maiden from the power of a malignant monster, and receiving her hand as his reward. I will merely point, for example, to the legends told of the Egyptian Perses or the serpent Typhon, of Perses and Andromeda, of Apollo and the Python, and of Theseus and Ariadne, in which we may notice the singular parallels that even many of the names suggest.*

In the Tristan Legend we recognise traces of the same old fable of the Sun-god, whose yearly death the great goddess Earth or Nature mourns. At the same time it is allowed, that the hero himself may well have been, may probably was, an historical character, whose memory continued to live in the traditions of his country. Tristan, like Perses and other ancient heroes, by slaying a monster, wins a Princess as his prize. His love for the two Isoldes resembles the double union of Adonis to Aphrodite and Persephone, and of Osiris to Isis and Nephthys on Earth and in Hades. It is also worthy of notice, that as Osiris is said to have abolished the custom of eating human flesh, so too the victory of Theseus over the Minotaur, and of Tristan over Morold put an end to a tribute of human beings,—stories supposed to signify the abolition of human sacrifice from the national worship. The incident of the Black Sail is told in the Theseus legend in connection with the fate of the aged Ægeus. A woman's bitter jealousy of her rival is the indirect cause of the deaths both of Tristan and Siegfried. The sad search of Isis for Osiris, of Nept for her daughter Isis, of Demeter for Persephone, and the mourning of Nanna for Baldur find parallels in the wanderings of Rual after his fosterchild Tristan, * Kurtz (p. lx.) points out, that the dragon Thelain, which appears in the legend of "Wigalois," bears a name curiously resembling Python and Typhon.
and the loving journey of Isolde the Fair to save the life of her dying lord. Much of the original Sun-myth is doubtless no longer to be found in Romance, more especially that portion which relates to the hero’s return to life. The possibility, however, of Tristan’s life being saved by the magical skill of the first Isolde may be said to recall, in some degree, the promised resurrection of Osiris if his scattered limbs be re-united, and that of Baldur the Beautiful should all things weep for him.

The story of Tristan’s birth and childhood belongs to the widely-spread myth of the Royal Foundling, who is secretly nurtured, and afterwards happily reinstated in his rights. The sad circumstances under which he first sees the light are more or less similar to those related of Osiris and his two sons Horus and Harpocrates, of Hagen in the Siegfried legend, and others, such as the Teutonic Wotlfdriedrich, the French Ogier le Danois and the British Launcelot. The hero’s ignorance of his parentage is reproduced in the tales of Cyrus, Siegfried, Otnit, Reinhold, and the twin founders of Rome; while Rual acts the same fatherly part by Tristan that Mithradates, Faustulus, Meran and others do by their infant charges.

The last class of myths, which I intend to mention in connection with the Tristan Legend, is that to which the Magic Potion belongs. Magic Potions in Myth appear of different kinds. Some confer the gifts of immortality, of beauty, or of knowledge; others stimulate the passion of love, produce madness or oblivion, enervate the physical powers, or heal deadly hurts. The earliest, and perhaps the best known, are the various drinks of the gods in all ancient mythologies. We have the Vedic Soma or Amrīta, the Iranian Haoma, the Greek Nectar and Ambrosia, and the Teutonic Mead, in all of which Aryan myths the original idea of the cloud-water lies. The sacramental chalice of the Ἀγάθος Δαιμόν in the Dionysia, the bowl of Isis, the Water of Life of Persian fable, Lethe’s stream, the κατακτον of the Eleusinian neophyte, and the enchanted cup of Circe are all akin to those divine draughts. The Celtic race possessed other myths of this class in the world-famous Holy Grail, which had the power of even restoring the dead to life; the golden basons of Bran the Blessed and Peredur; and Taliesin’s wondrous Brew of Science. Medieval Magic derived its Elixir Vitae, its love-philtres and witches’ cauldron from the same source; while
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in the Sigurd Legend we meet with a mythic draught, the "Oiminnæat, employed to make the hero forget his love.*

Leaving aside all speculation as to the cause of the singular family likeness which appears in these myths, we are next met by the question, Whence does the Tristan Legend come to us? There has been much diversity of opinion on this point. Some have maintained, on the authority of early chroniclers, that, at the time of the Saxon descents into Britain, great numbers of the British took refuge in Armorica, hence called Bretagne or Brittany, and carried with them the legend, among their old traditions, into their new home. According to others it was introduced from England into Normandy and Brittany by Anglo-Norman Minstrels, at the time when those provinces belonged to the English crown. A third hypothesis makes it indigenous to Brittany. There can, however, be no doubt as to its British source. Tristan himself figures in the Welsh Triads, which give a mythical history of Britain from the earliest times down to the VII century of our era.† According to that work, the three great swine-herds of Britain were Pryderi son of Pwyll, Col son of Collvrewi, and Trystan son of Tallwch. Trystan, while tending the swine of March (Mark), falls in love with Essyllt (Isolde), the wife of the latter. March and his companions, of whom Arthur is one, conduct an expedition against Trystan to recover the swine, but without success. Trystan was also one of the three heralds whose mandates were law, and one of the three crowned chieftains famed for their inflexible will. He was, lastly, one of the three illustrious warriors who had the conduct of the mystic rites at Arthur’s court. Essyllt herself was one of the three British spouses notorious for their

* See on this subject KUHN, Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Gattertranks: Berlin, Duenmiller, 1859. See also Des Gervasius von Tilbury Ottia Imperialia, herausgegeben von Felix Liebrecht: Hannover, Luempler, 1856, as to the miraculous dew that falls from heaven on Christmas-night (p. 2), and the note thereon (p. 56). Liebrecht calls attention to a similar tradition in Iceland and Scandinavia concerning the dew on St. John’s night. He also refers to the "Nueta or miraculous drop of Egypt, said to heal the plague (see note to Moore’s Lalla Rookh), and to the mythic dew shaken off the manes of the steeds of the Valkyriur. See Grimm. Deutsche Mythologie: Goettingen. 1854, p. 393. Grimm has also an interesting chapter on Heiluwac, or water supposed to possess magical properties (ibid, p. 551).

† The Mynyrion Archaeology of Wales, vol. II., cited by Davies in his Mythology and Rites of the British Druids, etc. London, Booth, 1809.
infidelity to their husbands, a characteristic which has been curiously preserved to the heroine in Romance. Besides these traces of a mythical Tristan in Celtic Britain, we also possess others in a fragment of a Welsh poem, said to be at least as old as the X century A.D.* An introduction informs us, that it is a dialogue between Trystan and Gwalchmai son of Guiar. Trystan, crossed in love, has absented himself for the space of three years from Arthur's court. That monarch thereupon sends twenty-eight of his followers to bring the exile back. Trystan, however, slays them all, and only consents to listen to the words of Gwalchmai the Golden-tongued, with whose appeal the poem commences. Trystan is finally persuaded to visit Arthur, who welcomes him as his nephew, and conjures him by their ancient friendship to return to his allegiance. With Trystan's submission the fragment unfortunately ends. M. de la Villemarquè, in his interesting work on ancient Celtic legends, † calls attention to the fact, that most of these details are to be found in some of the later Romances of Tristan. He also compares the tale of the Love Potion to the Magical Brew of Science, already mentioned, which occurs in the old Welsh legend of Taliesin in the "Mabinogion," translated by Lady Charlotte Guest. That work, also, contains another ancient tale, which agrees with the Romance of Tristan in some important particulars. Morold, for example, under the name of Martolwch, appears again as the Irish Prince demanding tribute of the British, though we learn for the first time its origin. It seems that a noble Cambrian had cut off the ears and tongues of the horses belonging to an Irish Chief, for which insult the British were compelled to furnish annually to Ireland a fixed amount of gold and silver, together with a quantity of horses equal in number to those which had been mutilated. We also meet in the same tale with Bran-gaene as Branwen, the British spouse of Martolwch. Even she, despite her high station, is made to feel the bitter hate of the Irish towards her countrymen by being forced to perform the offices of a menial, thereby filling a position analogous to that of the waiting-woman in Romance. ‡

* The Myvyrain, etc. vol. I. p. 178. A translation of this poem is to be found in Von der Hagen's edition of Gottfried von Strassburg's works, and in the Appendix to Scott's edition of Sir Tristrem.

† De la Villemarquè. Les Romans de la Table Ronde, etc. Paris, Didier et Cie. 1861, pp. 72—83.

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We now arrive at the period when the legend made its appearance in the Romantic literature of the Middle Ages. Here the modern reader is fairly astonished by the fanciful and incongruous subjects that are presented to him. The stirring life of Chivalry, in its chequered lights and shades of love and hate, appears inextricably interwoven with the wonders drawn from fairyland, archaic myth and saintly legend. Adventures the most improbable follow one another in rapid succession without apparent connection, and exhibit, in many cases, a singular ignorance of the commonest facts in history and geography. For the cause of these peculiar characteristics we must go back to the end of the XI century when the dawn of literature was yet slowly breaking through the preceding gloom, and Christendom, bursting forth into a blaze of enthusiasm, sprang to arms to free the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Infidel. To this mighty movement, so fruitful in important results, Chivalry and Romance, the two fairest creations of the Middle Ages, mainly owe their birth. No other period in European history has ever been so rich in poetical elements. On a sudden, a new and glorious world of Eastern splendour burst on the astonished gaze of the West; for men's imaginations, dazzled by the glowing descriptions that were given, painted the East as a land of fairy and enchantment. While religious excitement was roused to the fullest pitch, a wild spirit of adventure, a thirst for gain and glory filled all classes with an uncontrollable longing to take part in the great enterprise. This new and vigorous life, which sprang up everywhere in Europe at that day, made itself particularly noticeable in the sudden blossoming forth of Romantic poetry. The latter owed its distinctive character to a variety of elements. The ardent spirit of Christianity, which then animated Europe, found its natural expression in the Crusades. It was reserved, however, for Romance to immortalize its fundamental principle of love, which culminated in the homage paid to the Virgin Mother of Christ. The ideal of Chivalry was sought to be realised in the conception of the perfect knight, that combination of the warrior and the saint, in which the heroic nature of heathen times became tempered by the hallowing influences of a purer religion. Another important element in Romantic poetry may be traced to the effect of Eastern thought on Europe. The occupation of Spain by the Moors had the result of making other European countries in some degree familiar with the treasures of Arabian literature. Wondrous tales of genii and enchantments, adorned with all the brilliant fancy
of the East, found their way across the Pyrenees. From Persia, also, the tales of Firdusi, breathing a spirit singularly resembling that of Chivalry, entered Europe in the track of the returning Crusaders; while from the Aryans of Hindustan came to their Western brethren, through strange channels, those apalogues, which supplied so many materials to European fiction.*

The first Romantic poems appeared in Southern France at the time when the dialect of Provence had driven out the Latin, and attained to the dignity of a national language. It has been justly remarked, that the earliest literary efforts of a people are of a poetical nature; and to this rule those of Southern France formed no exception. M. Francisque Michel has carefully collected the various passages in the chansons of the Troubadours, which make mention of Tristan. The earliest occurs in a poem by Rambaud, Count of Orange, who wrote about the middle of the XII century. Of the numerous other Provençal poets, who touch on the same subject, M. Michel gives the names of no less than thirteen † The South of France does not appear to have produced any metrical version of the legend; it was thus left to the Epic poetry of the North to give new life to Eastern fiction. As the scene changes, we are reminded of the powerful influence exercised on Romance by a new element, introduced by those sea-rovers, whose energy and daring led them to conquer Normandy and England, to found powerful states on the coasts of the Mediterranean, and to extend

* The Sanscrit collection of Fables, known as the Pancha-Tantra, was translated into Pehlevi early in the VI century; from thence into Arabic in the VIII century; from Arabic into Modern Persian in the X and into Greek in the XI century. A Hebrew translation of the Arabic text (date unknown) was also made, afterwards rendered into Latin by John of Capua in the latter half of the XIII century, and from thence into most European languages. The Book of Sendabad, also originally written in Sanscrit, was translated into Persian, and from thence into Arabic. From Arabic it passed into Syriac, and from the latter arose a Greek version under the title of "Syntipas." A Hebrew version, supposed to have been made from the Arabic, was translated by Dam Jehans, a monk, into Latin at the end of the XII or the beginning of the XIII century by the name "Historia Septem Sapientum Romae." Of this last various translations appeared in English, French, and other modern languages under the titles of "The Seven Wise Masters," "Dolopathos," "Enarrans," &c. See Deslongchamps, Essai sur les Fables Indiennes. Paris, Teichner, 1838.

† Francisque Michel. Tristan, recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes relatifs à ses aventures, &c. London, Pickering, 1835. (See Introduction.)
their sway into Asia itself. The gloomy Norse mythology of their fathers, in which the occult forces of nature played so prominent a part, contributed its heroes, its cobolds and its elves to the world of wonders in which Romance delighted to move. There was thus breathed into mediaeval poetry a spirit of peculiar freshness and vigour, which must, in a great measure, have tended to counteract the enervating influence of Asiatic literature.

The court of Normandy, the new home of those Northmen, became the birth-place of the Romantic Epos. There the rise of a national language and literature was effected in much the same way as in the South, though nearly a century later. In the XII century, when the Langue d'Oïl had superseded the German of the Frankish conquerors, a host of poetical Romances rapidly made their appearance. Romantic fiction may be said to have formed, according to its subjects, three great cycles; the Carlovignian, the Arthurian, and the Classical. To the second, which alone concerns us here, belong the Romances of the Round Table, the Holy Graal, Perceval, Lamecelot, and Tristan; all of which come to us from the same old British source. The tale of Tristan, though originally forming a more or less separate and distinct legend, became gradually confounded in mediaeval Romance with those of the Round Table. In the latter, Arthur appears to us as a half-mythical, half-historical character. Tradition represents him as the chief of a noble band of knights, adorned with every grace and virtue of Chivalry, amongst whom Tristan shines conspicuous. These Arthurian legends, having been naturalised, as we have seen, in Brittany, were probably afterwards collected and handed down in Latin prose by early chroniclers. In that case the Trouvères would naturally have taken the materials for their poems from those Latin compilations, though they may doubtless also have met with the same tales later at the English court of the Dukes of Normandy.*

The labours of M. Francisque Michel furnish us with the earliest French metrical versions that we possess of the Romance of Tristan. The first of these is a fragment taken by him from a MS. in the

* See Ellis. Early English Metrical Romances: London, Bohn. 1848, p. 21. He is of opinion, that "the Courts of our Norman Sovereigns, rather than those of the Kings of France, produced the birth of romance literature;" and cites as his authorities M. de la Ravaillière, the Count de Tressan, and the Abbé de la Rue.
Royal Library at Paris, and which has also been published by Von der Hagen. Its author is unknown, but it seems from internal evidence to have been composed during the reign of Richard I, or of John, or of Henry III. The second is a complete work from a MS. in the Library of Bern; the third and fourth are the fragments of Donec, mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his edition of "Sir Tristrem;" the fifth is the "Lai du Cheverefoil" of Marie de France, dating from the commencement of the XIII century; and the last is an extract from "Le Donnez des Amans" in a MS. of Sir Thomas Phillipps. I deem it here unnecessary to make more than passing mention of these poems, but before leaving the French poets I should state that Chrétien de Troyes, the well-known Trrouèrc, who flourished at the end of the XII century, is supposed by many to have himself written a metrical Romance of Tristan, since lost. Soon after these poems, with the spread of education, numerous prose Romances on the subject made their appearance in France.* Of these, the earliest that we have professes to be translated from the Latin by an English knight named Luens de Gast, and to have been afterwards added to by one Helyc de Baron.† According to Tressan, the Latin version, from which it was taken, came from the pen of Rusticien de Psise, who probably composed it (1110—1120) for Henry I at that sovereign's brilliant court in Normandy. As these prose Romances of Tristan, which departed greatly from the simplicity of the original legend, are, with one exception to be noticed hereafter, of no importance for us, I need here only add, that from France the tale rapidly spread and found a home in the literature of almost every country in Europe.

The only English metrical Romance on Tristan, that we possess, is the one edited by Sir Walter Scott, from what is known as the Auchinleck MS. It has been attributed by him to the Scottish bard Thomas of Erceidoune in the XIII century, from whom, as he argues, Gottfried von Strassburg derived the materials for a poem on Tristan, which I shall mention later.‡ The non-existence of any other

* We also have the Romances of Meliandus de Lemoynes and Ysane de Triste, the father and son of Tristan according to a corrupt version of the legend.

† F. Michel. Recueil, etc. Vol. I. p. xxxi. See, however, the remarks of Sir W. Scott in his introduction to Sir Tristrem.

English poem on the subject is the less strange if we consider, that for a long period English poetry was deemed only fit food for the masses, and that the higher classes most probably read the Romances of the Trouvères in the original. * We have evidence, however, that the tale of Tristan and Isolde was well known in the world of letters after the establishment of a national literature in England, in the references made to it by Chaucer, Lydgate, Gower, Caxton, Spenser, Skelton, Ben Jonson, and other writers. † The name of "Tristrem" was also long employed to designate one expert in woodecraft, from our hero's high proficiency in that art according to the old Romancers. The only English prose version of the Romance of Tristan is to be found in Books VIII, IX, X and XII of the "Morte d'Arthur," compiled from the old French writers by Sir Thomas Malory, and first printed by Caxton in the year 1485. Like the originals, however, whence it was taken, the story is sadly corrupted by admixture with Arthurian legends, and possesses little intrinsic merit. It nevertheless contains the curious story of a magic drinking-horn sent by Morgan le Fay to King Arthur, which had such a virtue, that there might no lady drink of it but if she were true to her lord;—if she were false she should spill all the drink, and if she were true she might drink peaceably. This horn was intercepted by Sir Lamorak and forwarded to King Mark, who thereupon made his Queen and a hundred ladies drink thereof; and there were of all but four ladies that drank clean. ‡ This horn is introduced into some of the Romances of Perceval, from which Ariosto probably took the idea of his enchanted cup. § In one of the old French Fabliaux, entitled "Court Mantel," or "Le Manteau mal taillé," the tale is told of a magic cloak, which will only fit the virtuous among the ladies of Arthur's court. ¶ A similar test occurs in the "Vīhat-Kathā" and "Thuthi-Nameh," where, however, a lotus takes the place of the magic horn. || In "Amadis de Gaul" the same

* See Scott's Introduction to Sir Tristrem, p. lii.
‡ The Byrth, Lyf and Actes of Kyng Arthur, etc. London, Longmans, 1817.
§ This cup La Fontaine afterwards borrowed from Ariosto's tale.
virtue lies in a wreath, and in "Perceforest" in a rose: in other tales it is a waxen image, or a vase which changes colour. *

In Italy, as M. Ginguéné informs us, the tale of Tristan became known at a very early period through prose translations of the old French Romances. The only original poem on the subject in Italian appears to be of late date and of no value. † Dante places Tristan, together with two other popular heroes, Launcelot and Paris, in his Hell; and takes occasion to censure severely those Romances which in his opinion tend to encourage adultery. ‡ Ariosto, in his "Orlando Furioso," describes a visit paid by Bradamante to Sir Tristan's lodge, where every traveller seeking admittance was forced to win it with his sword; § a custom followed by Sir Tristrem himself at Sir Brunor's Castle Pluere according to the "Morte d'Arthur." Similar references to the tale of Tristan may be met with in the works of other Italian poets. ¶

A translation of the French Romance appeared in Spain at the commencement of the XVI century, and is mentioned in Don Quixote. Cervantes himself, in all probability, owed to the old Celtic legend the hero of that immortal satire on the Romances of Chivalry, for the corrupted form Tristrem, which was commonly derived from the Welsh words trist ("sad") and trem ("a face"), exactly answers to the Knight of the Woeful Countenance. || Gruen notices an old Spanish fragment of our legend, which contains an incident unknown to any other version. Isolde the Fair is therein represented to have become

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‡ Inferno. V. 28, 68.

§ Orlando Furioso. XXXII. 83-83.

¶ See F. Michel. Recueil, etc. pp. xv, xvi.

|| See Davies, p. 447. The other English form Tristram is explained in Romance as follows:—"When he is christened let call him Tristram, that is as much to say as a sorrowful birth." Morte d'Arthur, Book VII. Ferguson, in his work The Teutonic Name System, is equally at fault when he suggests that Tristram may be derived from the A. S. thrist, bold, daring, and rem, a raven. Franñéseque Michel, in his notes, vol. I. p. xii. gives:—"Trist, sad; Tristys and Tristns, sorrow," from a Cornish-English Vocabulary; "Trystan, s. c. (trust)
a mother in consequence of partaking of a lily, which grew on Tristan's grave. This lily, as Kurtz suggests, corresponds to the rose and vine of the other Romances. We light here, however, upon a curious class of myths, which we find in most ages and countries. The idea they represent probably originated in the employment by early races of certain trees and plants as phallic symbols. Among the Hindus such a one was the Lotus; another was the Indian flower Kambal, to which the sage Náčhiketa owed his birth. The Chinese, also, have a legend concerning the miraculous conception of the Divine Reason by his holy mother Shing-mu, after she had eaten of the flower Lien-wu (Nelumbium). Besides these tales, there is another related by Ovid, according to which Juno, anxious to have offspring, touched a certain flower at the bidding of Flora, and thereupon obtained the fulfilment of her wishes.*

Passing by the Scandinavian nations, which produced no original work on the Tristan Legend,+ we at last reach Germany. There, during the XII and XIII centuries, were agencies as potent at work as those which, as we have seen, called forth the literary activity of France. The German nation was roused into the same warlike ardour, the same intellectual life as the rest of civilized Europe at that day; and, in addition, a strong national feeling was everywhere fostered by the consciousness that their sovereign held the proud position of temporal head of Christendom. These circumstances operated most favourably in developing the literature of Germany. Towards the end of the XII century began an era of Epic poetry, which falls into the two great divisions of Popular Epic and Court Epic. The former confined itself to subjects taken from native legendary lore, while the latter celebrated the foreign heroes of Romance, and amongst these Tristan. The first German Romance of Tristan appears to have been a poem

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* Fasti, v. 229. See also Lecky. History of Rationalism : vol. I. p. 233, where an old superstition connected with this subject is given.

† There is both an Icelandic and a Danish prose translation of the legend: the former dates from the XIII century. See also Arnason. Icelandic Legends : London, Longmans, 1866, p. 251.
written by Eilhart von Oberge, a poet in the train of Henry the Lion; but of this we only possess a fragment of no worth.* At the commencement of the XIII century, Master Gottfried von Strassburg wrote his Epic of Tristan and Isolde, which is by far the greatest work on the subject in any language.† There has been considerable difference of opinion as to the immediate source whence he took his materials. He himself mentions that his authority was one "Thomas of Britanie," who had the tale from "Britannie books."‡ He adds further, that he had long searched for the version of Thomas in both French and Latin works, and that he had at last found it and followed it solely. From the frequent use of French words and phrases in his poem, there appears to be little doubt that his original was one of the old Anglo-Norman Romances.§ Gottfried's Epic is of the highest merit as a literary production. He seizes, with real poetic genius, the dramatic incidents of the story; and paints, with rare insight into human nature, the varied passions of the actors in graceful and vigorous language. The early years of Tristan, his skill in arms and woodcraft, and the tenacity with which he pursues his lawless amour with Isolde under various disguises, are admirably described. The picture of the Queen is no less happily rendered. She never, however, appears conscious of the evil of her position, but, on the contrary, is only anxious to conceal her inconstancy from Mark. To this end she does not scruple even to order her waiting woman, whom she fears will betray her, to be put to death. The only task Gottfried proposes to himself, however, is to portray the course of earthly passion; nor should it be forgotten that his standard of morality was merely that of his time. Gottfried died ere his work was completed, but we have two different continuations by Ulrich von


† Von der Hagen, Gottfried von Strassburg Werke, etc. Breslau, Max u Komp, 1823. This edition contains also the fragment of Eilhart von Oberge.

‡ The original in Gottfried runs thus:—

"Als Thomas von Britanie giht
"Der aventure meistr was,
"Und an Britmeschen Buechen las, etc."

§ This conclusion is perfectly consistent with the reference to "Britanie," which may stand either for Brittany or Britain.
Thurheim and Heinrich von Friberg, neither of whom equalled their master in genius.* An unimportant metrical version of the legend appeared later by one Segelhart von Bauernberg, who is supposed to have lived in the latter half of the XIV century. In modern times two poets, A. W. von Schlegel and Karl Immermann, commenced poems on Tristan, which, however, like Gottfried, they were destined never to finish.† Renderings of the great Epic into modern German have also been made by Kurtz and Simrock, ‡ the former of whom composed a sequel based on those of Ulrich and Heinrich. The best known prose work on Tristan is to be met with in the “Book of Love,” a collection of old Romances dating from the XVI century; but the original legend is therein so distorted, that the reader has difficulty in recognizing it.§ In Germany the subject has also been treated in a dramatic form. In the year 1553 Hans Sachs, the Nuernberg cobbler, wrote “The Tragedy of the strong love of Sir Tristrant for the fair Queen Isolde,” which, however, has little but its quaintness to recommend it.¶ True to his character of moral teacher, he concludes his work with a warning to all men not to fall a prey to an unlawful love. The only other drama on Tristan, and one of considerable merit, has appeared recently from the pen of Ludwig Schneegans.|| It offers a curious instance of the strong hold that the legend has maintained on the German mind down to the present day. The author has evidently followed the version given by Gottfried von Strassburg in preference to any of the old prose Romances, yet the general outline only has been retained. In selecting such a theme, he must have been struck by the grand capabilities it presented, in the hands of the poet, for a treatment in conformity with modern ideas. To this end it became absolutely necessary to leave out much of mediaeval detail. Schneegans, for example, has carefully excluded from his work every ingredient belonging to the marvellous, above all the Magic Potion. He has rightly

* The former wrote about 1250, the latter about 1300. Their poems will be found in Von der Hagen’s edition of Gottfried’s works.

† Immermann. Tristan und Isolde, etc. Duesseldorf, Schaub, 1841.


¶ Hans Sachs. Ernstliche Trauerspiele, etc. Nuernberg, Schrag. 1819, vol. II.

|| L. Schneegans. Tristan, Trauerspiel, etc. Leipzig, Otto Wigand. 1865.
understood, that the development of a drama should proceed naturally from inner causes, and not from fortuitous and external ones. All that was gross and unseemly, the product of the mind of the Middle Ages, has been studiously avoided. In carrying out his views, the dramatist has completely modernised the characters with which he has had to deal. Of the general treatment of the drama it may be said, that the essential—all that remains eternally true of human passion and human trial—has been retained, stripped of the accidental accessories supplied by Myth and Romance. The gold, in short, has been worked, and the dross properly rejected.

Thus far I have endeavoured to sketch the history of the Tristan Legend from its earliest recorded beginnings down to the present time. Although one or two writers on the subject have, as we have seen, attributed it, not without reason, to a source common to many myths of the ancient world, still its first undeniable traces have hitherto only been found in ancient British lore. I trust, however, that I shall be able, in the course of this paper, to supply the links which are here wanting. Taking the Welsh records, as the oldest we possess, for a starting point, we are at once met by the difficulty there is in explaining them. It has been asserted, that the three mighty swine-herds of the Triads signify three remarkable epochs in Druidical history, of which Tristan represents the last; and that his guilty love for the unchaste Essylt points to an unholy mixture of foreign with native Celtic rites which then took place. The introduction of the new worship is ascribed to the Phoenicians, those "missionaries of the ancient world," whose sacred symbol of the boar is said to reappear in Tristan's swine. The advocates of this view also identify the strange rites, for which they contend, with the human sacrifices offered up by that race to Moloch. Be that as it may, it is a well-known fact that the boar was held sacred to the Sun-god by both Aryan and Semitic nations, and was employed by the Egyptians as a symbol of Typhon. It appears, also, in the Sun-myths of Adonis and Heracles, while in Homer we read of its being sacrificed to Zeus and Helios. In the German Romance of Tristan, which I have already mentioned, the swine or boar of the old Celtic myth is actually preserved in the heraldic device borne on the hero's shield.

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* Kurtz, p. Ixii.
† Iliad, XIX. 197.
opinion, however, the Celtic tale would more naturally proceed from
an Aryan than a Semitic source; a view which I believe will be borne
out by the result of the following inquiry.

I propose to show, that, with the Celts, Tristan and Branwen had
originally each a separate legend. Yet as these latter, being based on
mythical conceptions of kindred natural phenomena, are closely inter-
twined, I shall treat them as forming portions of one and the same myth.
For the sake of convenience, I will first examine the personality of the
waiting-woman. Her Celtic name of Brangwen or Branwen literally
signifies the "white raven;" but in our inquiry we may leave the
unimportant epithet green ("white") out of consideration. The name
Bran seems to have designated a mythic personage of considerable im-
portance in Celtic legend. In a Welsh tale, Bran, surnamed the
Blessed, is the brother of Brangwen. We find him invading Ireland to
take vengeance on Martolwch for the insults offered to his sister.
Falling mortally wounded in battle, he bids his followers carry his head
to England, and bury it on the White Mount in London. He prophe-
cies, that they will be many years on their way feasting and listening to
the singing of the birds of Rhiannon, and the head as pleasant company
to them as it ever was when on his body. But when they shall open
the door which looks towards Aber Henvelen and Cornwall, then they
are to haste to London and execute his last wish. After his death, all
which he had foretold comes to pass. The followers bide feasting seven
years at Harlech, whereunto come three birds, compared to whose singing
all the songs they had ever heard were harsh. Then they went to
Gwales in Penwro, where they dwelt feasting in a spacious hall over-
looking the ocean, forgetful of time, during a period of fourscore
years. "And it was as pleasant to them having the head with them
as if Bran had been with them himself." At length one Heilyn opens
the door, and looks towards Aber Henvelen and Cornwall. Then the
remembrance of all their sorrow comes back to them, and they haste
to London, where they bury the head on the White Mount.* Concern-
ing this Bran there is another Welsh tale. One day, while hunting in
Ireland, he comes to a piece of water, called "the Lake of the
Basin," whence issues a man of gigantic stature and hideous mien,
bearing in his arms a Basin, and accompanied by a sorceress and a
dwarf. These strange beings follow Bran, who shows them hospitality.

* Mabinogion, etc. Vol. III. p. 197.
and receives the Basin as a recompense. This vessel, which possesses
the miraculous property of restoring the dead to life, is given by Bran to
his brother-in-law Martolwich. When the former invades Ireland, the
 rashness of his gift becomes apparent; for, thanks to it, the foe never
diminishes in number. Finally, however, when the head of a wicked
Irish chieftain is hung therein, the Magic Basin breaks in pieces. I
believe, also, that we find traces of this myth in the tale of "Owenn or
the Lady of the Fountain." The hero rides through a forest, where he is
met by a gigantic man with only one eye, who directs him to a stately
tree. Under the tree is a fountain, and beside the fountain a block of
marble, on which stands a silver Basin attached to a chain. Owenn
fills the Basin with water, which he pours upon the marble; and imme-
diately there bursts forth a mighty peal of thunder, followed by torrents
of rain. After this the sky becomes serene; and upon the tree descend
birds, whose singing surpasses the singing of all other birds.† The myth
of Mimir in Scandinavian mythology recalls, in a strange manner, that
of the Celtic Bran. High above the heavens and overspreading the
world, towers, we are told, the mighty ash Yggdrasil, in whose branches
sits an eagle with a hawk between its eyes. The tree has three roots,
under the second of which is Mimir's well of wisdom and genius. The
All-Father himself pledged an eye to obtain a drink of its waters. Mimir
is sent as hostage to the Vanir, who cut off his head; but Odin pre-
serves it with such art, that it speaks and tells him many secret things.‡
In these tales we notice certain common features, of which the most pro-
minent one is that of a vessel or fountain possessing miraculous proper-

* Mabinogion, etc. Vol. III. p. 81. This same vessel appears also in the legend
of Peredur, the Hero of the Bleeding Head; of Peronik with the Golden Basin and
Diamond Lance; and of Perceval and the Holy Graal. See Les Romans de la
Table Ronde, etc., pp. 134, 140—146, 321, 326. See also De la Villemarque's
1. p. 295. It has a poem on the death of an historical Bran, who is said to have
fallen at the battle of Kerloa in the X century. There are points in it, however,
which have evidently been borrowed from the myths of Bran and Tristan; for
instance the tree with the wondrous singing birds, and the fatal black sail.

† The tale of Owenn, the Yvain of Romance, is given by M. de la Villemarqué in
Les Romans de la Table Ronde, p. 179. He refers to the marvellous forest of
Marseilles, and shows that Owenn's magic waters correspond exactly to the Lake
of Dulcam in Wales, and to the Fountain of Baranton in the forest of Brézéllen
in Britanny. Ibid, p. 231.

ties.* Besides this, we have the tree, the birds, the mythic one-eyed being, and the human head preserved from decay.

Having thus, as I submit, shown the connection between the myths of Bran and Mimir, there remains only to trace back both to a mythological conception found among all the Aryan races. Kuhn has shown, that, with them, the Celestial Fire and Drink were originally supposed to be generated in precisely the same manner. The primitive method of obtaining fire by the friction of two pieces of wood was, according to him, first suggested to man by observing the same effect produced by the action of parasitical and creeping plants on the trees to which they clung. To this day the Brahmins thus kindle their sacred flame by what is known as the fire-drill, a method identical with that employed by them in churning. The production of the Celestial Fire and Drink, or lightning and rain, came to be not unnaturally attributed to a similar process within the clouds: hence arose two distinct myths as to their origin. In the first of these the sun was a fiery disk or wheel, rekindled daily by the turning in its wake of the churning-stick (pramantha), which represented the thunderbolt or lightning.† In the second myth lightning and rain were both conceived as proceeding from a heavenly tree, which Kuhn recognises as the symbol of the cloud-masses. In India it is the Soma-dropping Acvattha or Ipa, surrounded by the lake Āra; in Scandinavia the world-ash Yggdrasíl distilling honey-dew, from the roots of which flow streams of Mead. The Persian fable departs but slightly from the same primitive idea in making the Gaokerena or heavenly Íana grow separate from, though near to, the tree Yat-bêš in the lake Vouru-Kasha.‡ These myths gave rise again to others

* This conception is a very ancient one among the Celts. Besides the Lake of Dulcann and the Fountain of Baranton, there is also the vase described by Taliesin as under the charge of the Patron of Bards. It possesses the property of inspiring poetic genius; conferring wisdom; and laying bare the future, the mysteries of nature, and the riches of human knowledge. See Romans de la Table Ronde, etc., p. 142.

† Herauskunft des Feuers, etc., p. 66. The analogy of the churning process has been still more strikingly preserved in a myth to be found in Hindu Epos, which represents the gods as churning the great Milk-sea with the mountain Mandara or Manthara for a churning-stick, and thereby producing first Fire, then Amrita or the Drink of Immortality. — Ibid, p. 247.

‡ Ibid, pp. 124–131
regarding the origin of the Terrestrial Fire and Drink.* Their celestial equivalents were fabled to have been stolen by a bird, which is sometimes described as wounded in its flight from heaven, and losing either a feather or a claw.† In the Vedas, for example, Agni, under the name of Bhuranyu, steals the Celestial Soma in the form of a golden-winged falcon (çyena). In Greece the mythic bird was personified by the Argive hero Phoroneus, who exactly answers to Bhuranyu,‡ and by Zeus as the eagle, which carried off Ganymede to make him the cup-bearer of the gods.§ With the Romans it was the wood-pecker, called Picus Feroniens after the Sabine lightning-goddess Feronia, the feminine equivalent of Phoroneus.¶ In Scandinavian mythology, also, Odin is represented as stealing the heavenly Mead from Suttung in the disguise of an eagle. There still linger in German and Celtic folk-lore a recollection of the same Aryan cloud-bird in the well-known traditions regarding the cuckoo, stork, swallow, wren and robin. Of the last-named bird there is a Welsh tale, according to which it daily carries a drop of water to the dismal land of spirits and of fire, in order to quench the flame. But in doing so its feathers are scorched; hence it is called Bron-rhuddyn, or “breastburnt.”|| This Bron, however, seems to be merely a corruption of Bran. In my opinion, Bran is the original Celtic bird of rain and lightning, now personified as a male in Bran the

* The Sanscrit pramantha is derived from the verb matnáini (to shake, to rub), identical with the Greek páveów; and in their common root mánth lay the idea of “seizing, robbing,” whence the Sanscrit pramátha (theft). In this we trace, as Professor Benfey has pointed out, the origin of the old Greek tale of Promethens, the fire-stealer. Herabkunft des Feuers, etc., pp. 16, 17.

† From the feather springs the Páṣṇa tree, from the claw a thorn. Ibid, pp. 147, 148.

‡ He appears as the son of the river-god Inachus and the wood-nymph Melia, and to him the people of Argos attributed the introduction of fire on earth. See Preller, Griechische Mythologie. Berlin, Weidmann, 1861. Vol. II, p. 36. As Kuhn shows, Melia (“the Ash”) is here clearly the mighty cloud-tree, Inachus the waters that surround it, and Phoroneus the bird which bears away the lightning.

§ Herabkunft des Feuers, etc., p. 170.

¶ Kuhn very happily establishes a connection between the Roman wood-pecker and the Celestial Fire and Drink, by reference to the legends of Romulus and Remus, and of Picus, first king of Latium. Ibid, pp. 32–35.

|| See Choice Notes from "Notes and Queries." London 1859.
Blessed, now as a female in Branwen.* In the legend of the
former, as in that of Mimir, the head corresponds to the claw or wing,
which is severed from the falcon in Hindu mythology. In Scandinavia,
however, Odin, as the mythic bird, seems to have usurped the position
which must originally have belonged to Mimir. Finally, the legend of
Owenn retains a distinct trace of the old Aryan myth in the thunder-
storm, which occurs at the Magic Fountain. The marble block, also,
plainly stands for the rock, which is a very common mythic symbol
for the cloud.† In the eye pledged by Odin we recognize a symbol
of the setting sun; and the same idea in all likelihood originally lay in
the solitary eye of Owenn’s gigantic guide.‡ With regard to Bran-
wen, the part she plays in the Tristan Legend, where she appears as
the dispenser of the Magic Potion, clearly points her out as the feminine
personification of the same Aryan cloud-bird. The name Bran may,
on the one hand, be derived from the Sanscrit Bhuranyu, by the not
unusual suppression of the first vowel and of the affix. As the root
*bhar of Bhuranyu shews the u to be really an a, the older Celtic form
of Bran would thus in all probability be *Buran, a word which we find
compounded with *ton (“hill”) in the Breton Baranton, the name of
Yvain’s Magic Fountain.§ On the other hand, Bran may be nothing
more than the Celtic word for “raven,” used as a proper name.
This would show, that the raven represented the lightning-bird in Celtic,
as well as in Greek and Scandinavian mythology.¶

* The name of Bran appears corrupted to Bron in a French metrical Romance
by Robert de Borron, and to Ban in a later French prose Romance. The latter form
may also be found in the Mort d’Arthur. See Romans de la Table Ronde, etc. p. 147.
† Herabkunft des Feuers, etc. p. 213.
‡ In the Vedas the sun is called the eye of Varuna. (Ibid, p. 53.) Grimm also
states that the sun was the eye of Ormuzd with the Persians; of the Demiurge with
the Egyptians; of Zeus with the Greeks; and of Wotan or Odin with the Teutonic
§ Bhuranyu is a compound of *bhurana (i.e. *bhara) and *yu, and signifies
literally “desirous of carrying.”
¶ For instance the mythic ravens of Apollo and Odin, who both represent Rudra
the Vedic storm-god. King Arthur, also, who corresponds to these two deities in
Celtic myth, is said to have been changed at his death into a raven (see Grimm.
Deutsche Mythologie. Vol. II. p. 637, where he cites Don Quixote, I. 49). Owenn
himself, according to ancient tradition, was accompanied to battle by the three
hundred ravens of Kenverhen. Grimm refers to the raven of the air, and Liebrecht
finds the same mythic bird among Mahomedan nations. (Otia Imperialia, p. 158.)
With regard to Tristan, a very interesting question arises as to whether he is an ancient mythic personage venerated by the Aryan family prior to their migrations into Europe. Of this I believe some evidence may be gathered from the history of Feridoun, the celebrated hero of Persia. His legend, as told by Firdusi in the Shahnameh, runs thus:—Feridun, the son of Abtin and Firâneg, is born in the reign of Zohâk. That King, warned by wise men that the child would overturn his kingdom, seeks after his life. Feridun's father is killed, but he himself is saved by his mother, who flees with him into India, where he is brought up in secret by a hermit. When sixteen years of age he demands of his mother the history of his birth. On hearing of the persecution by Zohâk, he determines to obtain his revenge. The legend proceeds to narrate his victory over the King, whom he nails, Prometheus-like, to a rock, in obedience to a divine command. The rest of his story has no importance for us.* Professor Roth informs us,† that in the Yaça the hero is called Thraatônu (or, according to the two eminent Eastern scholars Professors Westergaard and Max Müller, Thraétâona), ‡ which name was afterwards corrupted into

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* It is interesting to compare this tale with an old French Romance in prose, edited by Tressan, under the title Histoire de Tristan de Léonnois, etc. Paris, Didot, 1861. Like many of its kind, it gives a long account of the hero's ancestors, commencing with Bron, the brother of Joseph of Arimathea and custodian of the Holy Grail. Bron's grandson, Apollo by name, is born in Cornwall, where his mother, a Babylonian Princess, has sought an asylum. Thanor, the King of that country, being warned by a sage that the infant is destined to work him ill, exposes it in a wood. Apollo is, however, rescued and brought up in secret by a peasant woman. He afterwards becomes a celebrated knight, known by the title of "the Adventurous," and lives to fulfill the prophecy of the sage by killing the King. It will be seen how nearly this tale resembles that of Feridun, from which it was probably taken; a view which is strengthened by the fact that Tristan's rival in the same Romance is called Pherezin, a name singularly like that of the Persian hero. Should this conjecture be correct, we have here the curious spectacle of two distinct treatments of the same myth, independently developed in different countries and at periods widely distant from one another, woven finally, without design, into one story.

† Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, vol. II. p. 216.

‡ The MSS. differ in their spelling of the name. Some, like the Bamby edition and the three MSS. in London, read Thraatâonô; others, like the Venetian and Sade, the three Yaçaus, and the MS. of Mr. Manockjee Garsetjee, read Thraetanô. (See Journal Asiatique, 4th Series, vol. II. p. 497).
Fredâna and Ferîdûn. His birth is there described as due to the special favour of Haoma, the Divine Nectar personified. That deity is said to have rewarded the fidelity of four of his worshippers by blessing them with offspring, destined to be the benefactors of the world. Of these the first is named Vivanghvat, whose son was Yima; the second Athwya, whose son was Thraătona; the third Thrita,* whose sons were Urvakshaya and Kereçāpa; and the fourth Purushaçpa, whose son was Zarathustra. In Yima, Thraătona and Kereçāpa we recognise the three great heroes Dshemshid, Ferîdûn, and Gershasp; in Zarathustra the Prophet of Iran. Thraătona is represented as the slayer of the devastating serpent Azhi Dahâka, "created by Ahriman for the destruction of this world," of which the name Zohâk is a corruption. We also learn that Thraătona or Ferîdûn is to be met with in Indian mythology, a discovery due to the

* Eugene Burnouf (Journal Asiatique, 4th series, vol. V, p. 251) held the Zend Thrita to be an ancient form, in which the adjectival suffix ta is immediately joined to the numeral thri to give it the value of an ordinal, as in the case of the Vedic numerals ekâta, dvîta and trîta (first, second and third). Nerusengh, the Sanscrit translator of the Zend-Avesta, also looks upon Thrita as expressing number, but Roth points out, that, in the passage where it occurs in the Yaça, the numeral is found in its proper form beside the word Thrita. Roth (Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, vol. 2, p. 225) refers to the Vendidad as showing thogift of healing possessed by Thrita. He also calls attention to the fact that the form Thrita of the Zend-Avesta not only far more nearly resembles Trîta than Thraătona does, but is actually the same word. He says, "I do not doubt I shall also come upon the trace of this Thrita in the Vedic texts. The priest, who beats and presses out the Homa with stones, is there called, in many passages, Thrita. Could the designation of the priest, who prepares the potent and curative drink, have been changed in the sister religion, from recollections of a common past, to the name of a hero versed in the healing art? On the other hand, if we would assume that the Zend race had here preserved the original idea, could not the name of the Leech have been transferred to the Homa priest? That in such a case a Leech should bear the name of a water-god is quite probable among a people who held water to possess great healing properties. Many questions remain here, no doubt, still to be answered; e.g. how it comes that in the Zend one and the same Vedic word bears two forms." Professor Westergaard of Copenhagen, in his article on Ancient Iranian Mythology (Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. V, and Weber: Indische Studien: vol. 3, p. 402), remarks, "I am more inclined to seek the etymology of the Zend Thrita in the root thra, to save or preserve, in which case the name would be significative of office."
celebrated Orientalist Eugene Burnouf.* In the Vedas the hero is called *Trita Aptya.* As the Zend *Thractaona,* however, cannot be directly derived from the Vedic *Trit,* Professor Roth suggests an intermediate form *Tretavano,* afterwards *Tritavan.* It appears that another form *Tretana,* still more like the Zend, actually occurs once in the Rig-*Veda.* † These Indian and Iranian myths resemble each other not only in the names of the actors, but also in their history. Trita, for instance, owes his birth to the Divine Soma, and by its aid succeeds in conquering the evil serpent Ahi. Indra in one hymn is made to say, "It was I who gave Trita against the serpent to win the cows;" ‡ and in another hymn Agastya exclaims, "I will praise the Drink—the Soma Drink—by means of which Trita tore Vritra (i.e. Ahi) in pieces."§

* See *Journal Asiatique,* 4th Series, vol. V. p. 493. According to Burnouf, the form *Thractaona,* of which the crude form is *Thractana,* represents a patronymic in which *thrae* is a modification of *thri* (three). The other form *Thractaona,* of which the crude form is *Thractuona,* is, he held, more easily explained if *taona* is considered as another form of the Sanscrit *tīna* (a quiver). In such a case *Thractuona* would be translated as "the hero with the three quivers." This he considered to be the meaning, in view of the Persian orthography of *Feridôn,* in which the last vowel presupposes either an *u* or an *o* in the primitive word.

† See Roth (Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, vol. 2, p. 219), and his rendering of the passage in which the word occurs (ibid: p. 230.) He remarks that one sees in it traces of the later and more amplified myth of Dirghatana (Malá Bhūrata, I. 153). See Lassen: *Indische Alterthumskunde,* I. 558). See, however, Wilson's translation (Rig-*Veda,* vol. 2, p. 103) and the note thereto appended, in which he says "I cannot acquiesce in the opinions of those scholars who imagine a connection between *Tretana* and *Feridôn;* even admitting a forced similarity of name, there is nothing analogous in the legends relating to either." See also his note (ibid. vol. I, p. 141) where he refers to the story of Ekata, Dvita, and Trita, told in the Nitimanjarî, and adds, that if his interpretation of the above passage be correct, there can be little relation between *Tritu* and *Tretana,* and between the latter and *Feridôn.*

‡ Rig-*Veda.* X, 4, 6, 2.

§ Ibid. I, 24, 8, 1, according to Roth's rendering. Wilson has it, "I glorify Pita the great, the upholder, the strong, by whose invigorating power Trita slew the mutilated Vritra." In the foot-notes he remarks that Pita (rendered as Soma by Roth) is the divinity presiding over food, and adds "Trita is here evidently a name of Indra; the Scholiast explains it, he whose fame is spread through the three worlds, or, as Mahādharm interprets it, Tristhāna-Indrah, the three-stationed Indra. Yajur *Veda:* XXXIV. 7."
These myths, as we have seen, contain two distinct and prominent elements belonging to the Tristan legend, viz., the Dragon Combat and the Magic Potion. The myth of the Foundling, though also worthy of remark, appears in the Persian poem as a later addition, for we do not find it in the other two earlier versions of the Tristan myth. In examining, further, the changes that must have taken place from Trer-"tavana, through the forms Tritarvana, Tritan, to Tristan, we cannot help being struck by the wonderful resemblance, that is here apparent, to the name of our Celtic hero. If the Vedic commentators are right in their assertion that the word Trita is derived from the Sanscrit numeral tryis, tris, tri (three), I venture to submit, that we have good grounds for believing in the identity of Tritan and Tristan.

The exact position of Trita among the Vedic deities is difficult to determine, as his name is merely incidentally mentioned in the Rig-Veda, and then only about thirty times in all. Professor Roth regards him as a half-forgotten god of more ancient times. He sees in the Trita legend the Aryan myth of the cloud-demon, who steals the heavenly cows or rain-clouds, and drives them before him until the Fire-god's thunderbolt, descending, cleaves the sable veil, which the robber has spread over the sky, and makes earth once more fruitful. With the above learned writer, also, Trita assumes the double character of a Wind-god and Water-god.* He is apparently strengthened in his belief by the fact of Aptya, the hero's patronimic, signifying "the Water-born" or "the Water-ruler." This, he rightly holds, refers not to the ocean or rivers, but to the waters of heaven, the region of rain and mist. We must not forget, however, that the deeds of Trita are also ascribed in the Vedas to Indra, who is Sun-god as well as Rain-

* See Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft: vol. 11. p. 222. Roth suggests that Trita may be identified with Vayu, the deity presiding over the wind in the Vedas, and cites the following passages from the Soma hymns in support of this theory:—"The sweet Soma flowed and brought forth Trita's name (i. e. power), in order that Vayu might become Indra's companion." He further refers to a hymn of Gaya, wherein the flames of Agni, the Fire-god, are described as suddenly flaring up, when Trita from heaven blows upon him; and to another hymn ascribed to the same person, where Trita is mentioned in connection with the word vata (the wind).
god. Trita appears among the gods at the creation of the Sun, in a mystic hymn of Dirghatama:

"Yama gave (i. e. created) him,
"Trita harnessed him,
"Gandharva seized his bridle;
"Out of the Sun, ye Vasu (i. e. Gods).
"Have made a horse,
"Thou art Yama, oh Arvan (i. e. Sun),
"Thou art Trita of the mysterious way,
"Thou art the brother of Soma,
"Three-fold affinity thou hast, they say, in Heaven."*

Here Trita is actually described both as the Sun itself and as its ruler harnessing him, as Phæbus-Apollo might have done, to his celestial chariot. These lines also give us an insight into the meaning of the numeral three, which, as we have seen, probably lies in the name Trita. This idea of a Solar Trinity was further developed in the later Hindu Trimurti, which had its equivalents in all European mythologies. In the prose Edda, Odin is mentioned in conjunction with Hár (the High) and Jafnhár (the Equally High), as Thrithi (the Third); and, in Greece Zeus was, in like manner, occasionally called τρίτος σωτήρ.† Sir William Jones says:—"It is possible that the triple Divinity of the Hindus was originally no more than a personification of the sun, whom they call Trejitone or Triton, or three-bodied, in his triple capacity of producing forms by his genial heat, preserving them by his light, or destroying them by the concentrated force of his igneous matter." Trita or Tristan in such case would be a most appropriate appellation of the Sun-god, as exemplifying in a striking manner one of his three attributes of Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer.‡ It seems, therefore,

* Rig-Veda. 1. 22, 7, 2.

† Kuhn (Herakunft des Feuers, etc. p. 158) derives the designation of Zeus as τρίτος from the third drink, which was dedicated to him as σωτήρ by the Greeks at their feasts. He also compares this custom with the three mighty draughts attributed in myth to Indra, Odin, and Thor respectively. But instead of the name of the god being derived from the drink, may not rather the drink have been suggested by the name of the god? See also Grimm (Deutsche Mythologie, Vol. I., p. 148).

‡ Burnouf informs us (Journal Asiatique, 4th Series, vol. IV, p. 497), that the word Trejitone has been supposed to mean "the one with three bodies," on account of the elements thrō (for thrī) three, and tanus (for tanu) body. He does not, however, accept this derivation, because the crude form of the word
by no means improbable, that the name Trita was originally employed to express the third person in an ancient Hindu Triad; and Tristan himself may be some day possibly identified with one of the three chief Celtic deities, Hesus, Teutates, and Tarman.

The Aryan idea of a Celestial Ocean lies in the waters of Āra and of Vouru-Kasha, in which, as we have seen, the Hindus and Persians respectively placed their world-trees. We even find it at home among the Hebrews, for we read of the great Elohim, who made the firmament, and divided the waters under the firmament from the waters above the firmament. The ancient Egyptians conceived the sun as a vessel sailing across the heavenly sea or Ethere; hence the crescent-shaped bark which they launched at the new moon, when the god Osiris was said to enter the crescent in order to render the Earth fruitful. Whether this bark has any connection with that of Tristan, and with the golden cup, in which the solar hero Heracltes sailed across the sea, is an interesting question. It is a significant fact, that in India the divine C̩ri, and in Hellas the Sun-bride Aphrodite, were fabled to have risen from the sea-foam; and that Poseidon, conceived as Sun-god as well as Water-god, was made to woo Demeter. Were it not indeed too bold an hypothesis, I would be tempted here to suggest the possibility of that Sea-god's offspring Tríton, being merely a Hellenised form of the older Aryan Trita, "the Water-born," in his capacity of celestial Water-god. There cannot be any doubt but that the Sun-god and Rain-god were originally identical in most mythologies. The fecundation of the Earth

is Thraëtaona, and Taonav does not offer the slightest analogy to tanu (body). It should be here stated, that the above passage from Sir William Jones was not cited with a view to connect in any way Thraëtaona or Tríta with Trepitenu (Trayitana.)

* In the Vedas we meet with the Ápas, nymphs of the waters, who are also called Náya, or those that sail on the sea of Heaven. Sister-forms were the Apsarovas, types of the Swan-maidens of German folk-lore.

† Since the above was written, Professor Buchler has kindly placed in my hands a most interesting paper, recently read by the learned Professor Benfey before the Royal Society of Sciences, Göttingen, entitled Trítouna, 'Aðéna Femininum des Zendischen Masculinum Thraëtana áthwyana, in which the connection between Tríta and Trítoun is specially pointed out. The eminent Celtic scholar Mr. Whitley Stokes, in his edition of Cormac's Glossary, states, on the authority of Dr. Siegfried, that, although the names Tríta, Thraëtaona, Tríton and 'Ampa-tríth point to the meaning "sea," it is only Irish which supplies the vocable in tríth, gen. tríthan. (See Preface, p. xix.)
by light and water from the Sun-god was typified in the Dionysian
and Mithraic Mysteries by a sacrament of bread and wine. This may
explain in some measure the rose and vine on Tristan's grave, if we
take the former to be the emblem of Aphrodite-Ceres and the latter of
Dionysos.* With the Hindus the Sun appeared as the Day-spring,
whence both light and water derived their being. Their early
cosmogonists said, "from the sun comes rain," "the sun pours out
water."† In the Vedas the sun is invoked as "the germ of the waters
the displayer of herbs, the cherisher of lakes, replenishing the ponds
with rain,"‡ and we meet with numerous other passages that bear
out our view. The following examples may suffice:—

"Agni, abiding in the waters. . . Benefactor of the universe in
the waters, manifested as it were in the womb of the waters."§

"May those waters which are contiguous to the sun, and those with
which the sun is associated, be propitious to our rite."¶

"O Soma, descend with that stream with which thou lightedst up
the Sun; do thou descend, and send water for the use of man."||

* The rose and vine, however, have probably taken the place of the hazel and
honesuckle. We find both the latter in the Lai du Chevrefoil of Marie de France,
which celebrates an incident in the Tristan legend to be met with nowhere else.
The hero sends his love a message, carved on a hazel branch, in which he
likens himself and her to the hazel and honeysuckle, that, if once united, cannot
afterwards be severed without dying. As the poetess obtained her materials from
original Welsh and Breton sources, this tale possesses very great importance for
us. The hazel is a well-known lightning-tree among the Aryans of Europe, and
its union to a creeper like the honeysuckle would illustrate in a remarkable manner
Kuhn's theory regarding the origin of the Terrestrial Fire and Drink. The hone-
suckle itself, from the sweet juice of its blossoms, would further be a natural
emblem of the mythic plant, which yields the Celestial Soma or Mead. Its name
of "Goat's-leaf" in both French and German, also, in a measure strengthens
this view, if we consider that the goat was specially sacred to the God of
Fire and Thunder; and that the modern representative of the latter, the Devil,
appeared under the form of that animal at the Witches' Sabbaths. Besides, the
honeysuckle is still sometimes known in Lower Germany as Hexenschlinge or
"Witches'-Snare." Ibid, p. 1030, note. See Grimm. Deutsche Mythologie,
vol. 1, p. 168.

‡ Wilson, Rig-Veda, vol. II, p. 144.
¶ Ibid, p. 57.
|| Stevenson. Sama-Veda, p. 188.
We cannot, therefore, help concluding that Tritavana, Tritan, or Trita was only one of the numerous personifications of the Sun in its different phases, represented in the Vedas under names as various as Agni Vaićyānara, Śūrya, Pūshan, Bhaga, Savitar, Aryaman, Mitra, and Vishnu.

We next come to the heroine, whose original Welsh name of Essyllt is said to have the meaning of "Spectacle."* In France it assumed various forms, of which Ysolt perhaps most nearly resembles the Welsh; and this in Germany afterwards became Isolde. Except in Romance, the figure of the Queen does not stand out in sufficient relief to assist us in discovering her real position in Celtic Myth. All we know of her there is, that she was a Cornish Queen, notorious for her infidelity to her husband, and her attachment to Tristan. But if we consider the mythic character of Tristan and his relation to Isolde, we are justified in viewing the latter as originally a personification of the Earth. In such a case she would hold a position corresponding to that of Cybele-Rhea, the mighty goddess of Earth, and bride of the slain Sun-god of the Mysteries. Her skill in leech-craft, about which the Welsh records are silent,—is probably referable to the myth of the Magic Bason. The other Isolde, named "of the White Hand," has already been compared to Nephthys, Persephone and Chriemhild, and represents no doubt the rival goddess of the Underworld, with whom the Sun-god tarried and forgot his first love for a time. This idea, which has ever been a popular one in both ancient and modern days, is also found in the tales of Odysseus, Baldur, Tanhæuser, Tamlane, and Ogier le Danois.†

In European countries, where rain falls throughout the year, a Dragon combat, such as is contained in the Tristan Legend, would more probably symbolize the change from Winter to Spring, than the bursting of the thunder-cloud which heralds the rainy season of the tropics. I should be inclined, therefore, under the circumstances, to view the Tristan legend among the Celts as a pure Sun-myth.

* I learn through Mr. Whitley Stokes, that Dr. Siegfried identified Essyllt with the old Gaulish Alsalula, which occurs in Henzen; Nos. 5864, 5911.

† Fata Morgana gives the hero a wreath of forgetfulness, which corresponds to the Magic Potion of other myths. See Grimm: Deutsche Mythologie, p. 888.
March or Marc signifies, curiously enough, in Cymric "a horse,"* and, as such, might not unnaturally be supposed to represent the Vedic courser of the Sun. Tristan, however, not Mark, is the Sun-god. Mark, like Rudra, Arthur and Odin, the Wild Huntsmen, is probably the Storm-god, as the flying cloud naturally suggested to the ancients the idea of a horse scouring the gloomy sky. His swine or boars, like the Vedic Maruts, are the raging winds that follow in his train,† whose inactivity during the Summer months would not improbably be figured forth by their being under the custody of the Sun-god Tristan. The antagonism between the aged monarch and his youthful heir would be that between the stormy Winter and the golden Spring-tide. Isolde, retaining the character of Earth-goddess already ascribed to her, gives herself up joyously to the embraces of the youthful Sun-god who woos her. The Magic Draught, brought down by the mythic cloud-bird, becomes the welcome vernal shower, through whose life-giving influence the Earth is rendered fruitful. At length bleak Winter returns, and, like Mark, re-asserts his power over the hapless Queen; while the stricken Sun-god dies, or wanders to other lands and seeks another bride.

* We have the horse as the embodiment of lightning in the Ucain̄graves of Indra, with its neigh of thunder; the winged Pegasos of Zeus; and the Sleipnir of Odin. The same image is conveyed by the Arion of Poseidon; the Centaurs; the steeds of the Valkyrians; Yggdrasil (i.e. Ygg's or Odin's horse); and the elephant Airāvata of Indra. See Kuhn; Herabkunst des Feuers, etc., pp. 132-134, 251. The expulsion of summer by winter is symbolized in the well-known tradition of the Furious Host. See Grimm. Deutsche Mythologie; vol. II., p. 870, and Liebrecht. Othia Imperialis, p. 173.

† In the Vedas, both Rudra the Storm-god, and the cloud, are called Varāha (boar). The Maruts themselves bear sometimes the designation of Varāhu, which Roth considers identical with Varāha. In Sanscrit the boar is known as Vajradanta (lightning-tooth) from the whiteness and sharpness of his tusks. The mountain-ash, the well-known lightning-tree of the western Aryans, is still sometimes called in German Eberesche (Boar-ash). See Kuhn, Herabkunft des Feuers, etc., p. 202. The Scandinavian god Freyr, from whom came rain and sunshine and to whom men prayed for fruitful seasons, was drawn in his car by a boar with golden bristles (gullinbursti), which turned night into day: hence the sacrifices of a boar (Sónargelte) in his honour. Boars were offered up to the great Earth-goddess Demeter, and traces of a similar custom appear among the Franks. See Grimm. Deutsche Mythologie, Vol. I., pp. 44, 45, 193, 194.
From these facts I think we may conclude that the Tristan Legend was originally an archaic Aryan myth; that it was carried westwards into Britain with the wave of Celtic migration; that it passed at a very early period from thence into Brittany; and that it owed its preservation there mainly to the fact of that province being the last resting-place of the Celtic language in France.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

With regard to the spelling of the proper names that occur in the legend, I may state, that, for the sake of convenience, I have adopted the forms employed by Gottfried von Strassburg. The following list, however, will suffice to show the total absence of any fixed rule in the matter. Isolde is spelt Yscus, Yseut, Ysou, Ysoul, Ysou, Ysult, Essylt, Yssilt, Ysouc, Yself, Isel, Ysalde, Yseuda, Yzeut, Yseult, Iselte, Isot, Isodda, Ysoude, Ysonde, Ysote, Isond, Isotta, Isco, Isawde, Isowde, Isol, Isold, Isiant, and Ysoud. Tristan is spelt Tristans, Tristram, Tristrans, Tristan, Tristran, Tritans, Tridan, Trystram, Trystren, and Trustram. Mark is spelt March, Marc, and Mars. Brangene is spelt Brengain, Brangian, Branwen, Brangien, Brangweyne, Brangueyn, Brangwyna, Bragwaine, Brangwin, Brangwen, and Brengwain. Rual is spelt Rohand, and Rhyhawl. Morold is spelt Moraunt, Morhoul, Marlot, Morolt, Morhot, Morogh, and Martholwch.
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