

**SERBIAN FOLK-LORE:
POPULAR TALES. SELECTED
AND TRANSLATED BY MADAM
CSEDOMILLE MIJATOVIES**

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Serbian Folk-Lore: Popular Tales. Selected and Translated by Madam Csedomille Mijatovics by
W. Denton & Csedomille Mijatovics

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„SERBIAN FOLK-LORE,,

Popular Tales

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

By MADAM CSEDOMILLE MIJATOVIES

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

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INTRODUCTION.

IT is only within the last few years that the importance of folk-lore, the popular legends, tales, drolls, and extravagances which have been handed down from generation to generation among the labourers, peasants and youth of a nation, has been frankly recognised. It is now, however, generally acknowledged that this kind of literature, which more than all other deserves the name of popular, possesses a value beyond any momentary amusement which the tales themselves may afford, and it has assumed an honourable post side by side with other and graver materials, and has obtained a recognised use in deciding the conclusions of the historian and ethnologist. It is fortunate that the utility of these 'tales and old wives' fables' should have been thus recognised, otherwise the dull utilitarianism of modern educators would soon have trampled out these fragments of the 'elder time,' and have left to our children no alternative than that of 'being crammed with geography and natural history.*' The collection of Serbian popular tales, now translated int

* Charles Lamb, in a letter to Coleridge, October, 1802.

English and here published, is an additional contribution to our knowledge of such literature—the most venerable secular literature, it may be, which has come down to our times.

At the wish of the lady who has selected and translated these tales, I have undertaken to edit them. In doing so I have, however, preserved, as far as possible, the literalness of her version, and have limited myself to the addition of a few notes to the text and to occasional corrections of style, rendered necessary by the translator's habit of thinking and writing in another language. The tales included in this volume have been selected from two collections of Serbian folk-lore; the greater part from the well-known 'Srpske narodne pripovijetke,' of Vuk Stefanovics Karadjich, published at Vienna, in 1853, and others from the 'Bosniacke narodne pripovijetke,' collected by the 'Society of Young Bosnia,' the first part of which collection was printed at Sissek, in Croatia, in 1870. The collection of Vuk Stefanovics Karadjich was translated into German by his daughter Wilhelmine, and printed at Berlin, in 1854.* To this volume, which is dedicated to the Princess Julia, widow of the late Prince Michel Obrenovich III., Jacob Grimm, who suggested to Karadjich the utility of making the original collection, has contributed a short but interesting preface.

* 'Volksmärchen der Serben, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Vuk Stephanowitsch Karadschitsch.' Berlin, 1854.

The collection of Vuk Karadjich was gathered by him from the lips of professional story-tellers, and of old peasant women in Serbia and the Herzégovina. One of these stories, translated in the present volume, and here called 'The Wonderful Kiosk,' or 'The Kiosk in the Sky,' was however written out and contributed to this collection by Prince Michel, the late and lamented ruler of Serbia, who had heard it, in childhood, from the lips of his nurse. The Bosniac collection was made by young theological students from that country—members of the college at Dyakovo, in Croatia.

The taste for this species of literature has, during the last few years, led to the publication of various collections of traditional folk-tales, legends, and sagas, from all countries including and lying between Iceland and the southern extremity of Africa and of Polynesia, until a very ample body of such stories have been made accessible even to the mere English reader. Whilst Mr. Thorpe* and Mr. Dasent† have directed their attention to Iceland and the Scandinavian kingdoms, Mr. Campbell has rendered important service by his large collection of West Highland stories.‡ Indian legends, and folk-lore in general, has been illustrated by the volumes of Mr. W. H. Wilson, Dr. Muir,§ Colonel Jacob, Mr.

* 'Northern Mythology,' 3 vols.

† 'Popular Tales from the Norse.'

‡ 'Popular Tales of the West Highlands,' 4 vols. Edinb. 1860—62.

§ 'Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, &c.'

Kelly,* and Miss Frere;† and the Cingalese traditions by the writings of Mr. Turnour, and especially by the volumes of Mr. Spence Hardy.‡ Russian and North Slavonic folk-lore has been made accessible and arranged in the valuable volumes of Mr. Ralston, on 'The Songs of the Russian People,' and on 'Russian Folk-Lore.' Dr. Bleek has collected some of the myths and popular tales of the tribes in the neighbourhood of the Cape of Good Hope;§ and Sir George Grey has done the same good service in preserving specimens of the folk-tales of the people of New Zealand.|| Whilst foreign countries have given up their stores of popular literature to these investigations, similar industry has been shown in collecting the traditions and folk-lore of our own country. The songs collected in Sir Walter Scott's 'Border Minstrelsy,' illustrated as they are by the notes which he added, are a store-house alike for the northern counties of England and the southern counties of Scotland. Mr. Wright and Mr. Cockayne, in their volumes, that on the 'Literature of the Middle Ages,' by the former gentleman, and that on the 'Leechdoms of Early England,' by the latter, have brought together the folk-lore of our forefathers; and in the pages of Baker,¶ Chambers,**

* 'Indo-European Traditions.'

† 'Old Deccan Days.'

‡ 'Manual of Buddhism,' and 'Legends and Theories of the Buddhists.' London. 1866.

§ 'Reynard, the Fox, in South Africa.'

|| 'Polynesian Mythology and Traditions of New Zealand.'

¶ 'Folk-Lore of Northamptonshire.'

** 'The Book of Days.'