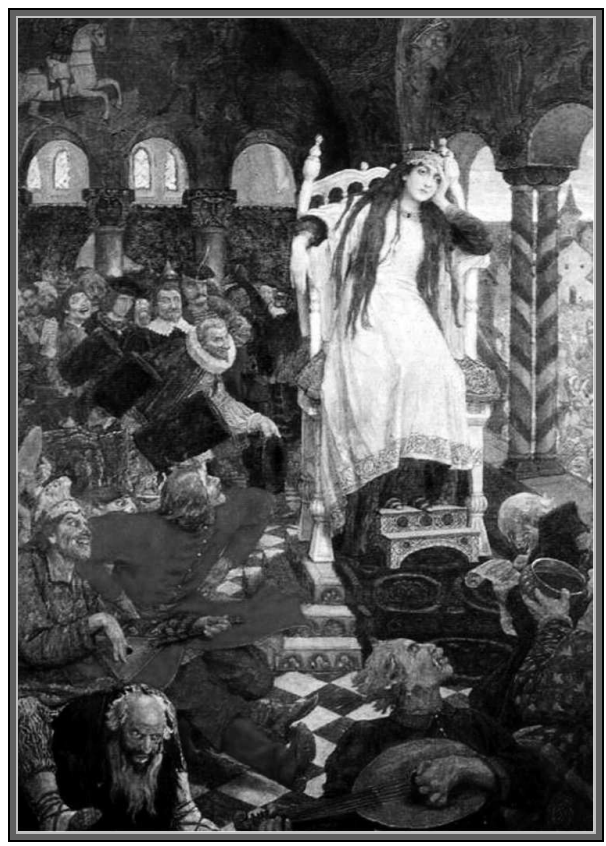
GEORGIAN FOLK TALES

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[Illustrated]

By

Anonymous



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PREFACE

As the first attempt to translate into English any part of the varied and interesting secular literature of the Georgian people, this little book may perhaps claim some attention from the public. A volume of sermons by Bishop Gabriel of Kutaïs was published by the Rev. S. C. Malan in 1867, but, with this single exception, I do not know of any other work in the Iberian tongue which has been offered to English readers. The state of comparative neglect into which Oriental studies in general have fallen of late among us, the rulers of the East, accounts, to some extent, for this fact; it is to be hoped that an improvement in this respect may soon be apparent.

Some years ago, a book written by my brother[1] first excited my interest in the Caucasus and its brave and beautiful inhabitants. A study of the classical literature, especially of the great epic poet, Shota Rusthaveli, of the twelfth century, has profitably occupied much of my time during the past two years, and it is my intention to give my countrymen an early opportunity of sharing in the pleasure I have derived therefrom.

As a relaxation from these more arduous studies, I amused myself by turning into English the originals of the following stories. I showed the manuscript to Dr. E. B. Tylor, who told me that it presented many features of interest to folklorists, and advised me to publish it; it is, therefore, fitting that I should dedicate the book to the creator of the modern science of anthropology, and he has kindly given me permission to do so.

The geographical position of Georgia, a region lying between East and West, forming a bridge along which a great part of the

traffic in ideas as well as in commodities must pass, makes it a rich field of inquiry for the student. By their religious and political connection with Byzantium on the one hand, and by their constant intercourse with Persia and Turkey on the other, the Iberians have gained much from both Christendom and Islam, and among them may yet be found lost links in several chains of historical and literary investigations.

The sources from which I have taken the stories are the following:—

Part I. is a collection edited by Mr. Aghniashvili, and published in Tiflis, in 1891, by the Georgian Folklore Society, under the title, *Khalkhuri Zghaprebi.*

Part II. comprises the Mingrelian stories in Professor A. A. Tsagareli's *Mingrelskie Etyudy, S. Pbg.*, 1880 (in Mingrelian and Russian).

These were collected by Professor Tsagareli during the years 1876–79, chiefly in the districts of Sachichuo and Salipartiano, which lie almost in the centre of Mingrelia, far removed from foreign influence, and are famous for the purity of their Mingrelian idiom. The Mingrelian dialect is rapidly being replaced by pure Georgian throughout the country.

Part III. is an anonymous collection, entitled *Gruzinskiya Narodnyya Skazki. Sobr. Bebur B.*[*] *S. Pbg.*, 1884.

It will be found that, besides the differences due to geographical position, the three groups of stories are not of the same character. Part II. is more naïve and popular than Part I., and Part III. exhibits more appreciation of the ridiculous than the rest of the book, and is of a more didactic nature.

The points of resemblance between the following stories and those quoted by the late Mr. Ralston, in his well-known *Russian Folk Tales*, are so numerous, and so apparent, that I have not thought it necessary to refer to them in the notes.

In conclusion, I must express my thanks to Prince Ivané Machabeli, of Tiflis, the Georgian translator of Shakespeare, for his kindness in reading my proofs, and to my brother, who did the Russian part of the work for me.

M. W.

Chislehurst, *April 1894.*

1

The Kingdom of Georgia: Notes of Travel in a Land of Women, Wine, and Song. To which are appended Historical, Literary, and Political Sketches, Specimens of the National Music, and a Compendious Bibliography, with Illustrations and Maps. By Oliver Wardrop. London: Sampson Low, 1888.

PART I GEORGIAN FOLK TALES

'I quite understand, my good friend,' said I, 'the contempt you bestow upon the nursery tales with which the Hajee and I have been entertaining each other; but, believe me, he who desires to be well acquainted with a people will not reject their popular stories or local superstitions. Depend upon it, that man is too far advanced into an artificial state of society who is a stranger to the effects which tales and stories like these have upon the feelings of a nation....'

Sir John Malcolm's Sketches of Persia, ch. xvi.

I Master and Pupil

(or the Devil Outwitted)



Once upon a time there was a poor peasant who had one son. And it came to pass that his wife said to him: 'He should learn some trade, for when he is separated from thee, what will he do if he is left ignorant like thee?' The wife importuned him; she gave him no rest. So the peasant took his child, and went to seek a master for him. On the way they were thirsty. He saw a rivulet, drank eagerly till his thirst was quenched, and when he lifted up his head he cried out: 'Ah! how good thou art!'[1] On saying this, there came forth from the water a devil in the form of a man, and said to the peasant: 'What dost thou want, O man! I am Vakhraca; what troubles thee?' The peasant told him all his story. The devil, when he learnt this, said: 'Give me this son of thine: I will teach him for one year, then come hither; if thou knowest him, it is well, he will go with thee; if not, he is mine and mine alone, he shall be lost to thee.'

Now this devil had other children to bring up on the same conditions; and, since in a year children change so much that their parents may no longer know them, the devil always had the best of it. The peasant knew nothing about this; he agreed to the proposal, and went home. A year passed by, and the father of the child came to the devil; he did not find the devil at home. He saw in the courtyard a multitude of boys, and looked again and again, but could not recognise his boy. He was sad. However, his own son came up and knew him. Then the boy said: 'Presently my instructor will come; he will turn us all into doves, and we shall fly away; in the flight I shall fly before all, and in the return I shall be behind all; and when my master asks thee which is thy son, thou wilt point to me.' The peasant rejoiced, and awaited the master with a hopeful heart. In a little while the master appeared. He called his pupils, turned them into doves, and or-

dered them to fly away. The peasant's son flew before all, and when they returned remained behind. The master inquired: 'Now, dost thou know which is thy son?' The peasant pointed him out. The devil was enraged when he perceived the trick his pupil had played him, but what did it matter! The boy left him.

The father went and took his son with him. They came to a place where nobles were hunting: some greyhounds were pursuing a hare, but they could not catch it. The boy said to his father: 'Go thou into the wood, raise a hare. I will turn into a hound, and will seize it before the eyes of these nobles. The nobles will follow thee, and will be anxious to buy me. Ask a high price, and sell me to them. Then I shall seize the first opportunity to escape, and overtake thee on the road.' The father went into the wood and started a hare; his son turned into a hound, pursued the hare, and, just before the eyes of the nobles, he pounced on it. They crowded round the peasant, and insisted upon buying the dog. The peasant asked a high price, which they paid in exchange for the hound. The nobles attached a cord to the dog, and went away. When they had travelled a little way along the road a hare started from the thicket. They let the hound loose, and sent him after it. When he had chased the hare a long way, and had lost sight of the nobles, he changed again into a boy, and followed his father.

The father and son went on their way; the money seemed inadequate. 'I must get some more,' said the son. They looked round; another party of nobles were pursuing a pheasant; the falcons flew after it, but for some reason could not catch it. The boy changed himself into a falcon, and sported with the pheasant in the air, just before the nobles' eyes. He brought it down; they were frantic with pleasure, and said to the peasant: 'Thou must sell this falcon to us.' The peasant again fixed a high price, to which the nobles agreed, and this they paid him in exchange

for the falcon. The peasant went on his way. The nobles, after travelling some distance, sent the falcon in pursuit of another pheasant. The falcon flew after the bird, and, when he was out of the nobles' sight, changed into a boy and joined his father.

The father and son went on with their money, but the son was not content with it. He said to his father: 'Come, I will change into a splendid horse; mount me, go into a town and sell me. But remember not to sell me to a man with variegated eyes; if thou dost, do not give him the bridle, for then, thou knowest, I shall not be able to free myself from his hands.' On saying this, the boy changed into a splendid, spirited horse, his father mounted and rode into the town. Here he saw many who wanted to buy it, but more eager than any was a man with variegated eyes. Whenever any one added a *manethi* (rouble) to the price, he added a *thuman* (ten roubles). Love of money conquered the peasant, and he sold the horse to the man with variegated eyes. He bought the bridle with it, mounted the horse and spurred it on. He went, disappeared, and could no longer contain his joy that he had his pupil once more in his power. He reached home, shut the horse in a dark room, and locked the door. His pupil lay down and was sad; he thought and grieved, but there seemed to be no help for him; time passed, and he could contrive no means of escape.

One day he noticed that a sunbeam entered the stable through a hole. He changed himself into a mouse and ran out. His master saw him, however, and pursued him as a cat. The mouse ran, the cat followed. Just when the cat was about to seize him in his mouth, the mouse turned into a fish swimming in a stream. The master turned into a net and followed him; the fish swam away, but the net came after him. Just when the net was going to cover him, the fish changed into a pheasant and flew away. The master pursued him as a falcon. The pheasant flew on

and the falcon followed. When the falcon was about to put its claws into him, he turned into a red apple, and rolled into the king's lap. The falcon changed into a knife in the king's hand. Just when the king was going to cut the apple, it changed into a *codi* (80 lbs.) of millet spread on a cloth. The devil changed himself into a brood-hen, and began to eat it. When it had eaten almost all, and only left one grain, this grain turned into a needle, and rolled in front of the hen, which changed into a thread in the eye of the needle. As it was about to hold back the needle, the needle ran into the fire and burned the thread. The boy thus escaped from the devil, went home to his father, and lived happily ever afterwards.2

1

In Georgian: *Vakh ra cargi kharo!*

2

Cf. Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion* (1877), p. 472. Taliesin.

II The Three Sisters and their Stepmother



Once upon a time there was a peasant who had three daughters. This man's wife was dead, so he took to himself another. The stepmother hated the girls like the plague. Every day she bothered her husband, saying: 'Take away these daughters of

thine, and get rid of them.' Sometimes she yielded to their father's entreaties, sometimes she gave way to her dislike. At last she could bear it no longer: she became ill, went to bed, took with her crisp, flat bread, and began to moan. She turned on one side, made the loaves crack, and cried out: 'My sides are breaking. Oh! turn me on my other side!' The cause of all this was her stepdaughters, so her husband, seeing that nothing was to be done, consented to get rid of them.

He went away into the forest. There he saw a large apple-tree bearing fruit; underneath it he dug a deep hole, took an apple for each, and went home. When he came in, he gave each her apple. The girls liked the taste of the apples, and said to their father: 'Where didst thou find these? canst thou not bring some more?' The father replied: 'There are many of these apples in the forest, but I have not time to bring more. If you like, you can come with me; I will shake them down, you can gather them up and bring them away.' The girls were delighted, and went with their father.

Their father had secretly covered up the hole, and said to the girls: 'Here are the apples. I will shake them down, but until I tell you do not gather them up. Then, when I speak, you can all scramble for them, and whoever picks up an apple, it is hers.' The father went up to the tree, and when he had shaken it well, called out to his daughters: 'Now, catch who can!' The girls suddenly rushed on to the covering, which could not bear their weight; it fell into the hole, taking with it the three girls. Their father threw them in a great many apples, left them, and went away.

The girls could not at first understand their father's conduct, but then they saw that he had brought them into the wood on purpose, and said: 'Our wicked stepmother is to blame for this!' but there was no help for it, so these three little maidens sat

down and wept. They wept and wept until their faces were pale; their tears shook heaven above and the earth beneath. At last the apples were finished. They thought and thought, and decided that each should let blood from her little finger, and that they should eat her whose blood tasted sweetest. They let blood, and it was agreed by all that the youngest sister's was sweetest. She said: 'O sisters! do not eat me. I have three apples hidden; eat them, and perhaps God will help us.'

Then she bent on her knees, and prayed to God: 'O God, for Thy name's sake, I beseech Thee, let one of my hands turn into a pickaxe, and the other into a shovel.' God heard her prayer. One of her hands changed into a pickaxe, and the other into a shovel. With one hand she dug a hole, and with the other shovelled away the earth. She dug and dug until she came to a mouse's hole. She took thence nuts, little nuts, and gave them to her sisters. She went on digging, and broke down a stable wall. This stable belonged to the king, and almonds and raisins were strewed about in it. The girls used to go to the stable; they stole the almonds and raisins, and ate them. The grooms were astonished, and said: 'Who can it be that steals the almonds and raisins? The horses are dying of starvation.'

The little maiden, in her digging, next broke the window of an old woman's hut. Every morning the mistress of this hut went to mass. Feeling sorry for the old woman, the girls stole into the hut, cleaned and tidied everything, put beans on the fire to cook, broke off sufficient bread for themselves, and stole away again. When the old woman came home she was filled with surprise. Who could have been there and stolen her bread? Perhaps she could find out. She did not go to mass next day. She rolled herself in a mat, and stuck herself up, like a stick, near the door. The girls came; they thought the old woman had gone to mass, and stole into the hut one by one. The old woman watched from the

mat with both her eyes, and she could scarcely believe what she saw. She saw the three maidens enter—each more beautiful than the other, all fair, as if the sun had never frowned upon them. She gazed and gazed until she could bear it no longer: she threw off the mat, seized one of them in her arms, and said: 'Who art thou, who art so angelic? Art thou human or an angel?' The maiden replied: 'We are three sisters, we are human. Thus and thus has it befallen us.' And she told their tale to the old woman, who was delighted that she had found the three sisters. She guarded them as the light of her eyes, and, when she went out, turned up baskets over them, that none should see them and take them away.

Once the woman went to mass. She left the girls under baskets, and shut the doors. Then the idea came into the girls' heads that they would like some raisins. They rose, took off the baskets, and crept into the stable. Just as they were beginning to steal raisins, the groom hastened in, seized the three sisters, and took them before the king. The king asked them who they were, and they told him all their history. The king said: 'Tell me, what can you do?' The eldest sister said: 'I can weave such a carpet that every man in thy army could sit on it, and still half of it would not be unrolled.' The second sister said: 'I can cook enough food in an egg-shell to feed thine army, and when they have eaten, half yet shall remain.' The king said to the youngest: 'What canst thou do?' She replied: 'I can bear golden-haired boys.' The king was pleased with this answer, and wedded her. He tried her sisters' skill, but the eldest could not weave a carpet large enough for one man, while the food cooked by the second sister would not have satisfied a bird. The king waxed wroth, and said to his wife: 'If thou deceivest me too, none of you shall live.'

Some time passed, and the youngest sister was with child. At that time the king's enemy came against him, and he prepared to

go forth to battle. Before he set out he left this message: 'If my wife bears a son, let a sword be suspended over the door; if she bears a daughter, let a spinning-wheel be hung up.' Shortly after this his wife went to bed. Her sisters would allow no one to enter the bed-room; they tended her and nursed her themselves.

The king's wife brought forth a golden-haired boy. Her two sisters were angry that their youngest sister should be proved truthful in the sight of the king, while they were liars; they wished her also to appear untruthful. They arose, and, without the mother's knowledge, took away the golden-haired boy, and put in his place a puppy dog. They did not dare to kill the child, so they made a box, laid him in it, and put it in a river. The river carried it away, and it stuck in a mill-race. The race was dammed up and the mill stopped. The miller came out, and saw the box fixed in the race; he took it up and opened it. Behold, there lay a golden-haired child! He was childless, so he took it home and brought it up. In the meantime the sisters hung up a pestle over the door. The king returned from the battle and saw the pestle. He was very much surprised, and said: 'What does this mean? what has my wife brought forth?' They said: 'A puppy.' The king was very angry, but thought: 'Perhaps some one has done this; I will wait and see if she has a son.'

A year passed, and his wife was again with child. One day, when the king was out hunting, a golden-haired boy was born. The sisters, as before, would allow no one in the room. They took the child away secretly, and put a kitten in its place. They again put the child in a box in the river, and the miller found it again. The sisters hung the pestle over the door. When the king returned from the chase, and saw the pestle, he burned with fires of rage, and sparks shot from his eyes. He took his wife out, caused her to be wrapped in a bullock's skin, and bound to a column in front of the palace. Every one who passed by was or-

dered to spit in her face and strike her. Thus unjustly did he torture an innocent being! The miller loved the two golden-haired children as if they were the apple of his eye. They became very wise, brave, and handsome, and grew as much in a day as other children grow in a year.

Once when the king was out hunting, he saw a group of children playing, but among them were two who far excelled the others. The king was very much taken with these two children, and could not withdraw his eyes from them. He looked and looked, and would never have been tired of looking; he wished to gaze on them for ever. He noticed how strongly they resembled himself. He was astonished, and said to himself: 'Who can these children be, who are so like myself?' But he could not guess the truth. Just then, while playing, the cap fell from the head of one of the brothers, and showed his golden hair. The king was struck, and inquired: 'Whose children are these?' He was told they were the miller's sons.

The next day the king gave a banquet, and invited the miller and his golden-haired sons. When the children came into the king's courtyard, they saw a woman bound to a column, and they looked long, and knew that this must be their mother. The cook was roasting a pheasant. The elder brother went inside, took the spit from the cook, sat down by the fireside, and turned the pheasant round. When it became red and was cooked, he began to tell a tale. All ears were pricked up, and the people looked into his face. The boy began to tell his mother's tale. After he had told how his mother bore the golden-haired boys, and how the sisters were so treacherous, he concluded by saying: 'If this story is true, the bullock's skin will burst, and my mother be free.' And the bullock's skin burst, and his mother came in.