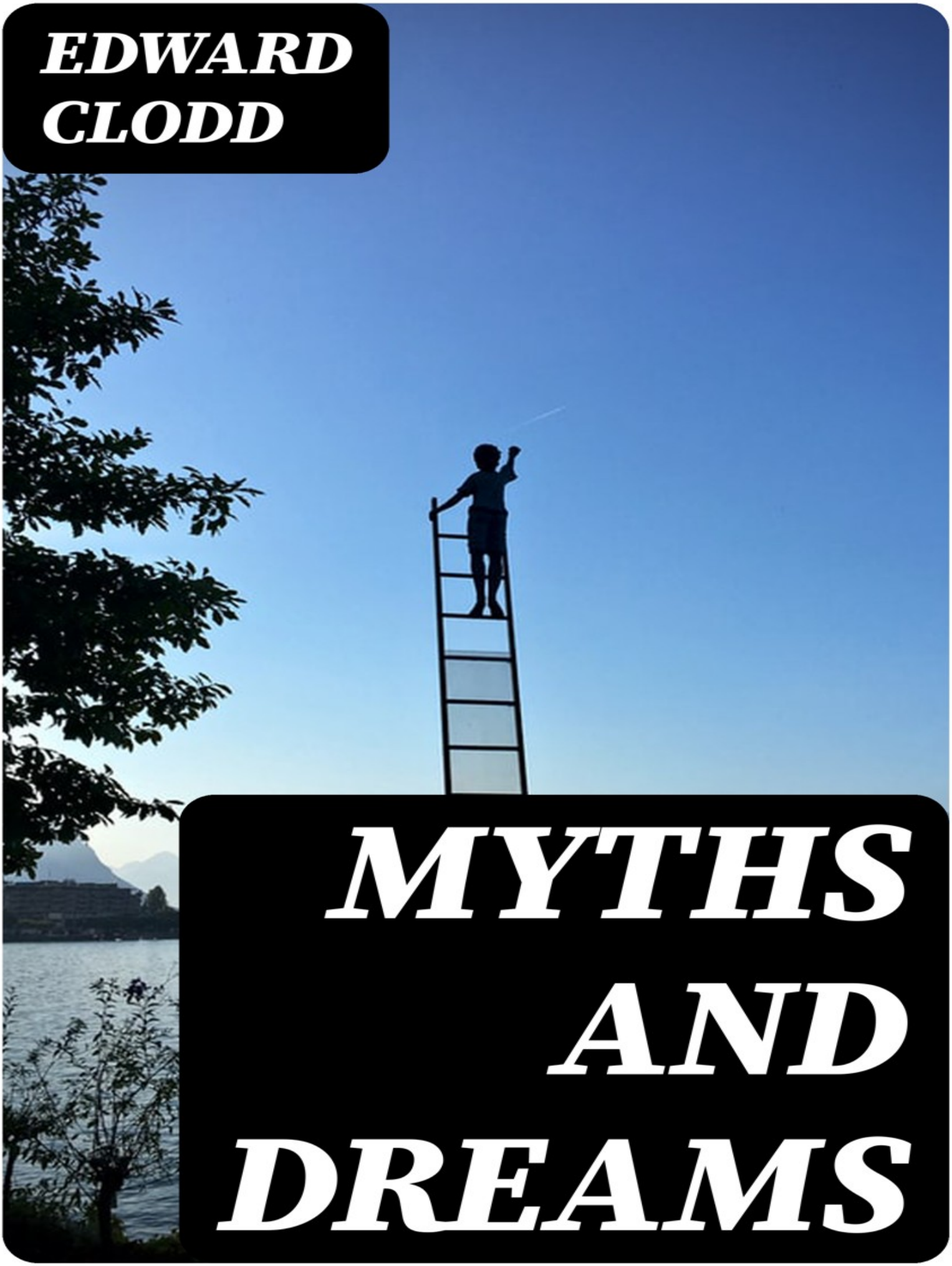
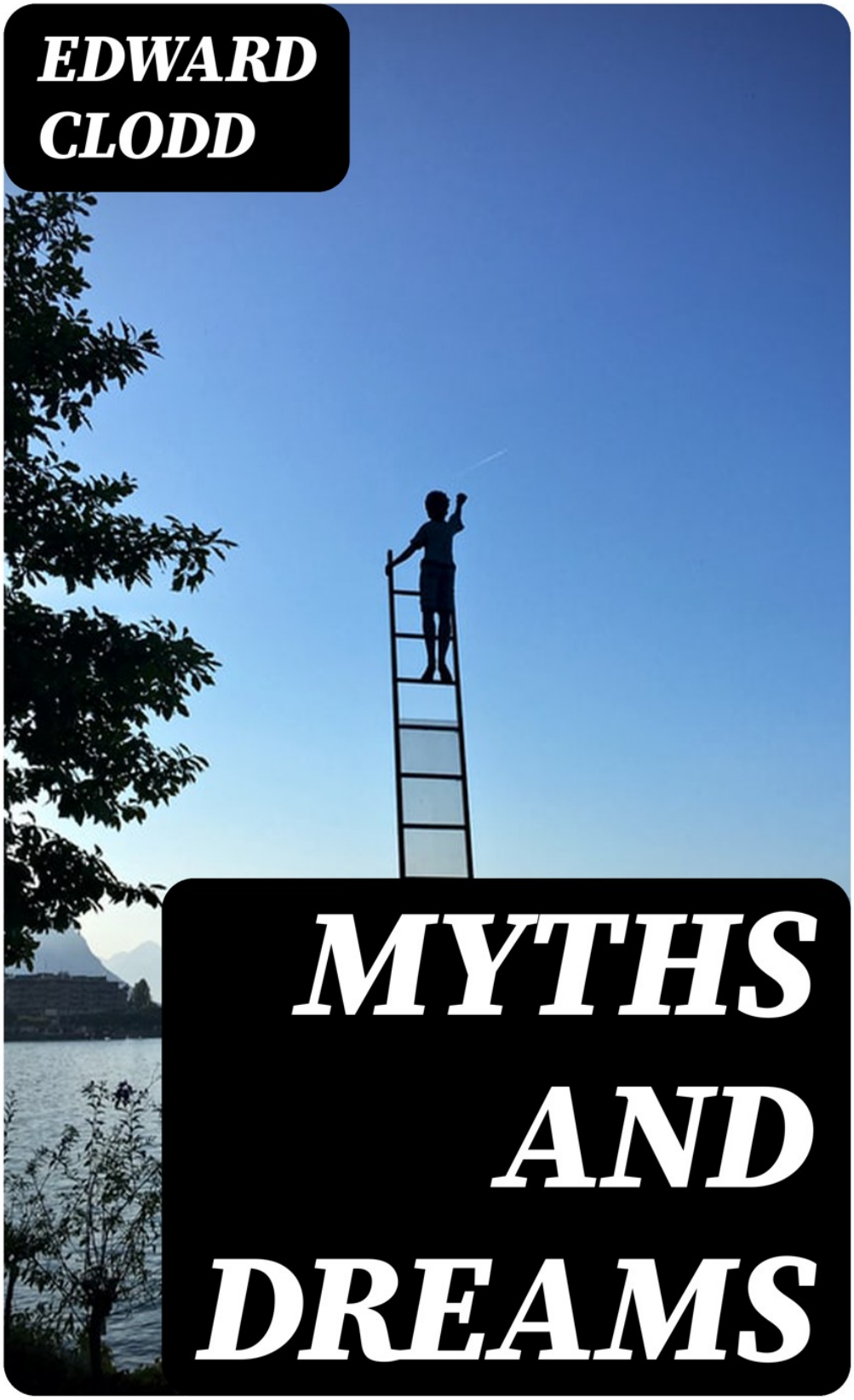
EDWARD CLODD



MYTHS AND DREAMS


EDWARD CLODD
MYTHS AND DREAMS

Edward Clodd

Myths and Dreams

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

The object of this book is to present in compendious form the evidence which myths and dreams supply as to primitive man’s interpretation of his own nature and of the external world, and more especially to indicate how such evidence carries within itself the history of the origin and growth of beliefs in the supernatural.

The examples are selected chiefly from barbaric races, as furnishing the nearest correspondences to the working of the mind in what may be called its “eocene” stage, but examples are also cited from civilised races, as witnessing to that continuity of ideas which is obscured by familiarity or ignored by prejudice.

Had more illustrations been drawn from sources alike prolific, the evidence would have been swollen to undue dimensions without increasing its significance; as it is, repetition has been found needful here and there, under the difficulty of entirely detaching the arguments advanced in the two parts of this work.

Man’s development, physical and psychical, has been fully treated by Mr. Herbert Spencer, Dr. Tylor, and other authorities, to whom students of the subject are permanent debtors, but that subject is so many-sided, so far-reaching, whether in retrospect or prospect, that its subdivision is of advantage so long as we do not permit our sense of inter-relation to be dulled thereby.

My own line of argument will be found to run for the most part parallel with that of the above-named writers; there are

divergences along the route, but we reach a common terminus.

The footnotes indicate the principal works which have been consulted in preparing this book, but I desire to express my special thanks to Mr. Andrew Lang for his kindness in reading the proofs, and for suggestions which, in the main, I have been glad to adopt.

E. C.

ROSEMONT, TUFNELL PARK,
London, *March 1885*.

I.

Table of Contents

MYTH:
ITS BIRTH AND GROWTH.

"Unchecked by external truth, the mind of man has a fatal facility for ensnaring, entrapping, and entangling itself. But, happily, happily for the human race, some fragment of physical speculation has been built into every false system. Here is the weak point. Its inevitable destruction leaves a breach in the whole fabric, and through that breach the armies of truth march in."

Sir H. S. MAINE.

MYTH: ITS BIRTH AND GROWTH.

§ I.

Table of Contents

ITS PRIMITIVE MEANING.

It is barely thirty years ago since the world was startled by the publication of Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, with its theory that human actions are the effect of causes as fixed and regular as those which operate in the universe; climate, soil, food, and scenery being the chief conditions determining progress.

That book was a *tour de force*, not a lasting contribution to the question of man's mental development. The publication of Darwin's epoch-making *Origin of Species*[1] showed wherein it fell short; how the importance of the above-named causes was exaggerated and the existence of equally potent causes overlooked. Buckle probably had not read Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics*, and he knew nothing of the profound revolution in silent preparation in the quiet of Darwin's home; otherwise, his book must have been rewritten. This would have averted the oblivion from which not even its charm of style can rescue it. Its brilliant but defective theories are obscured in the fuller light of that doctrine of descent with modifications by which we learn that external circumstances do not alone account for the widely divergent types of men, so that a superior race, in supplanting an inferior one, will change the face and destiny of a country, "making the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose." Darwin has given us the clue to those subtle and still obscure causes which bring about, stage by stage, the unseen adaptations to requirements varying a type and securing its survival, and which have resulted in the evolution of the manifold species

of living things. The notion of a constant relation between man and his surroundings is therefore untenable.

But incomplete as is Buckle's theory, and all-embracing as is Darwin's, so far as organic life is concerned, the larger issue is raised by both, and for most men whose judgment is worth anything it is settled. Either man is a part of nature or he is not. If he is not, there is an end of the matter, since the materials lie beyond human grasp, and cannot be examined and placed in order for comparative study. Let Christian, Brahman, Bushman, and South Sea Islander each hold fast his "form of sound words" about man's origin. One is as good as another where all are irrational and beyond proof. But if he is, then the inquiry concerning him may not stop at the anatomy of his body and the assignment of his place in the succession of life on the globe. His relation, materially, to the simplest, shapeless specks of living matter; structurally, to the highest and more complex organisms, is demonstrated; the natural history of him is clear. This, however, is physical, and for us the larger question is psychical. The theory of evolution must embrace the genesis and development of mind, and therefore of ideas, beliefs, and speculations about things seen and unseen.

In the correction of our old definitions a wider meaning must be given to the word *myth* than that commonly found in the dictionaries. Opening any of these at random we find myth explained as fable, as something designedly fictitious, whether for amusement only, or to point a moral. The larger meaning which it holds to-day includes much more than this —to wit, the whole area of intellectual products which lie

beyond the historic horizon and overlap it, effacing on nearer view the lines of separation. For the myth, as fable only, has no place for the crude fancies and grotesque imaginings of barbarous races of the present day, and of races at low levels of culture in the remote past. And so long as it was looked upon as the vagrant of fancy, with no serious meaning at the heart of it, and as corresponding to no yearning of man after the truth of things, sober treatment of it was impossible. But now that myth, with its prolific offspring, legend and tradition, is seen to be a necessary travailing through which the mind of man passed in its slow progress towards certitude, the study and comparison of its manifold, yet, at the centre, allied forms, and of the conditions out of which they arose, takes rank among the serious inquiries of our time.

Not that the inquiry is a new one. The limits of this book forbid detailed references to the successive stages of that inquiry—in other words, to the pre-Christian, patristic, and pseudo-scientific theories of myth which remained unchallenged, or varied only in non-essential features, till the rise of comparative mythology. But apology for such omission here is the less needful, since the list of ancient and modern vagaries would have the monotony of a catalogue. However unlike on the surface, they are fundamentally the same, being the products of non-critical ages, and one and all vitiated by assumptions concerning gods and men which are to us as “old wives’ fables.”

In short, between these empirical theories and the scientific method of inquiry into the meaning of myth there can be no relation. Because, for the assigning of its due

place in the order of man’s mental and spiritual development to myth, there is needed that knowledge concerning his origin, concerning the conditions out of which he has emerged, and concerning the mythologies of lower races and their survival in unsuspected forms in the higher races, which was not only beyond reach, but also beyond conception, until this century.

Except, therefore, as curiosities of literature, we may dismiss the Lemprière of our school-days, and with him “Causabon”-Bryant and his symbolism of the ark and traces of the Flood in everything. Their keys, Arkite and Ophite, fit no lock, and with them we must, in all respect be it added, dismiss Mr. Gladstone, with his visions of the Messiah in Apollo, and of the Logos in Athênê.

The main design of this book is to show that in what is for convenience called *myth* lie the germs of philosophy, theology, and science, the beginnings of all knowledge that man has attained or ever will attain, and therefore that in myth we have his serious endeavour to interpret the meaning of his surroundings and of his own actions and feelings. In its unbroken sequence we have the explanation of his most cherished and now, for the most part, discredited beliefs, the persistence of which makes it essential and instructive not to deal with the primitive myth apart from its later and more complex phases. Myth was the product of man’s emotion and imagination, acted upon by his surroundings, and it carries the traces of its origin in its more developed forms, as the ancestral history of the higher organisms is embodied in their embryos. Man wondered before he reasoned. Awe and fear are quick to express

themselves in rudimentary worship; hence the myth was at the outset a theology, and the gradations from personifying to deifying are too faint to be traced. Thus blended, the one as inevitable outcome of the other, they cannot well be treated separately, as if the myth were earth-born and the theology heaven-sent. And to treat them as one is to invade no province of religion, which is quite other than speculation about gods. The awe and reverence which the fathomless mystery of the universe awakens, which steal within us unbidden as the morning light, and unbroken on the prism of analysis; the conviction, deepening as we peer, that there is a Power beyond humanity, and upon which humanity depends; the feeling that life is in harmony with the Divine order when it moves in disinterested service of our kind—these theology can neither create nor destroy, neither verify nor disprove. They can be bound within no formula that man or church has invented, but undefined

> “Are yet the fountain life of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing.”

At what epoch in man’s history we are to place the development of the myth-making faculty must remain undetermined. It is of course coincident with the dawn of thought. We cannot credit the nameless savage of the Ancient Stone Age with it. If he had brains and leisure enough to make guesses about things, he has left us no witness of the fact. His relics, and those of his successors to a period which is but as yesterday in the history of our kind, are material only; and not until we possess the symbols of his thought, whether in language or rude picture, do we get

an inkling of the meaning which the universe had for him, in the details of his pitiless daily life, in the shapes and motions of surrounding objects, and in the majesty of the heavens above him. Even then the thought is more or less crystallised, and if we would watch it in the fluent form we must have a keen eye for the like process going on among savages yet untouched by the Time-spirit, although higher in the scale than the Papuans and hill tribes of the Vindhya. Although we cannot so far lull our faculty of thought as to realise the mental vacuity of the savage, we may, from survivals nowadays, lead up to reasonable guesses of savage ways of looking at things in bygone ages, and the more so when we can detect relics of these among the ignorant and superstitious of modern times.

What meaning, then, had man's surroundings to him, when eye and ear could be diverted from prior claims of the body, and he could repose from watching for his prey, and from listening to the approach of wild beast or enemy? He had the advantage, from greater demand for their exercise, in keener senses of sight, hearing, smell, and touch, than we enjoy; nor did he fail to take in facts in plenty. But there was this vital defect and difference, that in his brains every fact was pigeon-holed, charged with its own narrow meaning only, as in small minds among ourselves we find place given to inane peddling details, and no advance made to general and wide conception of things. In sharpest contrast to the poet's utterance:

> "Nothing in this world is single,
> All things by a law divine
> In one another's being mingle,"

every fact is unrelated to every other fact, and therefore interpreted wrongly.

Man, in his first outlook upon nature, was altogether ignorant of the character of the forces by which he was environed; ignorant of that unvarying relation between effect and cause which it needed the experience of ages and the generalisations therefrom to apprehend, and to express as “laws of nature.” He had not even the intellectual resource of later times in inventing miracle to explain where the necessary relation between events seemed broken or absent.

His first attitude was that of wonder, mingled with fear—fear as instinctive as the dread of the brute for him. The sole measure of things was himself, consequently everything that moved or that had power of movement did so because it was alive. A personal life and will was attributed to sun, moon, clouds, river, waterfall, ocean, and tree, and the varying phenomena of the sky at dawn or noonday, at gray eve or black-clouded night, were the manifestation of the controlling life that dwelt in all. In a thousand different forms this conception was expressed. The thunder was the roar of a mighty beast; the lightning a serpent darting at its prey, an angry eye flashing, the storm demon’s outshot forked tongue; the rainbow a thirsty monster; the waterspout a long-tailed dragon. This was not a pretty or powerful conceit, not imagery, but an explanation. The men who thus spoke of these phenomena meant precisely what they said. What does the savage know about heat, light, sound, electricity, and the other modes of motion through which the Proteus-force beyond our ken is manifest? How many

persons who have enjoyed a “liberal” education can give correct answers, if asked off-hand, explaining how glaciers are born of the sunshine, and why two sounds, travelling in opposite directions at equal velocities, interfere and cause silence? The percentage of young men, hailing from schools of renown, who give the most ludicrous replies when asked the cause of day and night, and the distance of the earth from the sun, is by no means small.

Whilst the primary causes determining the production of myths are uniform, the secondary causes, due in the main to different physical surroundings, vary, bringing about unlikeness in subject and detail. Nevertheless, in grouping the several classes of myths, those are obviously to be placed prominently which embrace explanations of the origin of things, from sun and star to man and insect, involving ideas about the powers to whom all things are attributed. But in this book no exhaustive treatment is possible, only some indication of the general lines along which the myth-making faculty has advanced, and for this purpose a few illustrations of barbaric mental confusion between the living and the not living are chosen at the outset. They will, moreover, prepare us for the large element of the irrational present in barbaric myth, and supply a key to the survival of this in the mythologies of civilised races.

§ II.

Table of Contents

CONFUSION OF EARLY THOUGHT BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE NOT LIVING.

In selecting from the literature of savage mythology the material overburdens us by its richness. Much of it is old, and, like refuse-heaps in our mining districts once cast aside as rubbish but now made to yield products of value, has, after long neglect, been found to contain elements of worth, which patience and insight have extracted from its travellers' tales and quaint speculations. That for which it was most prized in the days of our fathers is now of small account; that within it which they passed by we secure as of lasting worth. Much of that literature is, however, new, for the impetus which has in our time been given to the rescue and preservation of archaic forms has reached this, and a host of accomplished collectors have secured rich specimens of relics which, in the lands of their discovery, have still the authority of the past, unimpaired by the critical exposure of the present.

The subject itself is, moreover, so wide reaching, bringing the ancient and the modern into hitherto unsuspected relation, showing how in customs and beliefs, to us unmeaning and irrational, there lurk the degraded representations of old philosophies, and in what seems to us burlesque, the survivals of man's most serious thought.

One feels this difficulty of choice and this temptation to digress in treating of the confusion inherent in the savage mind between things living and not living, arising from superficial analogies and its attribution of life and power to lifeless things. The North American Indians prefer a hook that has caught a big fish to the handful of hooks that have never been tried, and they never lay two nets together lest they should be jealous of each other. The Bushmen thought

that the traveller Chapman’s big waggon was the mother of his smaller ones; and the natives of Tahiti sowed in the ground some iron nails given them by Captain Cook, expecting to obtain young ones. When that ill-fated discoverer’s ship was sighted by the New Zealanders they thought it was a whale with wings. The king of the Coussa Kaffirs having broken off a piece of the anchor of a stranded ship soon afterwards died, upon which all the Kaffirs made a point of saluting the anchor very respectfully whenever they went near it, regarding it as a vindictive being. But perhaps one of the most striking and amusing illustrations is that quoted by Sir John Lubbock from the *Smithsonian Reports* concerning an Indian who had been sent by a missionary to a colleague with four loaves of bread, accompanied by a letter stating their number. The Indian ate some of the bread, and his theft was, of course, found out. He was sent on a second errand with a similar batch of bread and a letter, and repeated the theft, but took the precaution to hide the letter under a stone while he was eating the loaves, so that it might not see him! As the individual is a type of the race, so in the child’s nature we find analogy of the mental attitude of the savage ready to hand. To the child everything is alive. With what timidity and wonder he first touches a watch, with its moving hands and clicking works; with what genuine anger he beats the door against which he has knocked his head, whips the rocking-horse that has thrown him, then kisses and strokes it the next moment in token of forgiveness and affection.

“As children of weak age
Lend life to the dumb stones

Whereon to vent their rage,
And bend their little fists, and rate
the senseless ground."[2]

Even among civilised adults, as Mr. Grote remarks, "the force of momentary passion will often suffice to supersede the acquired habit, and an intelligent man may be impelled in a moment of agonising pain to kick or beat the lifeless object from which he has suffered." The mental condition which causes the wild native of Brazil to bite the stone he stumbled over may, as Dr. Tylor has pointed out in his invaluable *Primitive Culture*, be traced along the course of history not merely in impulsive habit, but in formally enacted law. If among barbarous peoples we find, for example, the relatives of a man killed by a fall from a tree taking their revenge by cutting the tree down and scattering it in chips, we find a continuity of idea in the action of the court of justice held at the Prytaneum in Athens to try any inanimate object, such as an axe, or a piece of wood or stone, which has caused the death of any one without proved human agency, and which, if condemned, was cast in solemn form beyond the border. "The spirit of this remarkable procedure reappears in the old English law, repealed only in the present reign, whereby not only a beast that kills a man, but a cart-wheel that runs over him, or a tree that falls on him and kills him, is deodand or given to God, *i.e.* forfeited and sold for the poor." Among ancient legal proceedings at Laon we read of animals condemned to the gallows for the crime of murder, and of swarms of caterpillars which infected certain districts being admonished by the Courts of Troyes in 1516 to take

themselves off within a given number of days, on pain of being declared accursed and excommunicated.[3]

Barbaric confusion in the existence of transferable qualities in things, as when the New Zealander swallows his dead enemy's eye that he may see farther, or gives his child pebbles to make it stony and pitiless of heart; and as when the Abipone eats tiger's flesh to increase his courage, has its survival in the old wives' notion that the eye-bright flower, which resembles the eye, is good for diseases of that organ, in the mediæval remedy for curing a sword wound by nursing the weapon that caused it, and in the old adage, "Take a hair of the dog that bit you." As illustrating this, Dr. Dennys[4] tells a story of a missionary in China whose big dog would now and again slightly bite children as he passed through the villages. In such a case the mother would run after him and beg for a hair from the dog's tail, which would be put to the part bitten, or when the missionary would say jocosely, "Oh! take a hair from the dog yourself," the woman would decline, and ask him to spit in her hand, which itself witnesses to the widespread belief in the mystical properties of saliva.[5] Among ourselves this survives, degraded enough, in the cabmen's and boatmen's habit of spitting on the fare paid them. *Treacle* (Greek *thēriake*, from *thērion*, a name given to the viper) witnesses to the old-world superstition that viper's flesh is an antidote to the viper's bite. Philips, in his *World of Words*, defines treacle as a "physical compound made of vipers and other ingredients," and this medicament was a favourite against all poisons. The word then became applied to any confection

or sweet syrup, and finally and solely to the syrup of molasses.

The practice of burning or hanging in effigy, by which a crowd expresses its feelings towards an unpopular person, is a relic of the old belief in a real and sympathetic connection between a man and his image; a belief extant among the unlettered in by-places of civilised countries. When we hear of North American tribes making images of their foes, whose lives they expect to shorten by piercing those images with their arrows, we remember that these barbarous folk have their representatives among us in the Devonshire peasant, who hangs in his chimney a pig's heart stuck all over with thorn-prickles, so that the heart of his enemy may likewise be pierced. The custom among the Dyaks of Borneo of making a wax figure of the foe, so that his body may waste away as the wax is melted, will remind the admirers of Dante Rossetti how he finds in a kindred mediæval superstition the subject of his poem "Sister Helen," while they who prefer the authority of sober prose may turn to that storehouse of the curious, Brand's *Popular Antiquities*. Brand quotes from King James, who, in his *Dæmonology*, book ii. chap. 5, tells us that "the devil teacheth how to make pictures of wax or clay, that by roasting thereof the persons that they bear the name of may be continually melted or dried away by continual sickness;" and also cites Andrews, the author of a *Continuation of Henry's Great Britain*, who, speaking of the death of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby, by poison, in the reign of Elizabeth, says, "The credulity of the age attributed his death to witchcraft. The disease was odd, and operated as a perpetual emetic; and a

waxen image, with hair like that of the unfortunate earl, found in his chamber, reduced every suspicion to certainty." A century and half before this the Duchess of Gloucester did penance for conspiring with certain necromancers against the life of Henry VI. by melting a waxen image of him, while, as hinging the centuries together, "only recently a *corp cré*, or clay image, stuck full of birds' claws, bones, pins, and similar objects, was found in one of the Inverness-shire rivers. It was a fetish which, as it dissolved away by the action of the stream, was supposed to involve the 'wearing away' of the person it was intended to represent."[6] The passage from practices born of such beliefs to the use of charms as protectives against the evil-disposed and those in league with the devil, and as cures for divers diseases, is obvious. Upon this it is not needful to dwell; the superstitious man is on the same plane as the savage, but, save in rare instances, without such excuse for remaining, as Bishop Hall puts it, with "old wives and starres as his counsellors, charms as his physicians, and a little hallowed wax as his antidote for all evils."

But we have travelled in brief space a long way from our picture of man, weaving out of streams and breezes and the sunshine his crude philosophy of personal life and will controlling all, to the peasant of to-day, his intellectual lineal descendant, with his belief in signs and wonders, his forecast of fate and future by omens, by dreams, and by such pregnant occurrences as the spilling of salt, the howling of dogs, and changes of the moon; in short, by the great mass of superstitions which yet more or less influence

the intelligent, terrorise the ignorant, and delight the student of human development.

§ III.

Table of Contents

PERSONIFICATION OF THE POWERS OF NATURE.

(*a.*) *The Sun and Moon.*

A good deal hinges upon the evidences in savage myth-making of the personification of the powers of nature. Obviously, the richest and most suggestive material would be supplied by the striking phenomena of the heavens, chiefly in sunrise and sunset, in moon, star, star-group and meteor, cloud and storm, and, next in importance, by the strange and terrible among phenomena on earth, whether in the restless waters, the unquiet trees, the grotesquely-shaped rocks, and the fear inspired in man by creatures more powerful than himself. Through the whole range of the lower culture, sun, moon, and constellations are spoken of as living creatures, often as ancestors, heroes, and benefactors who have departed to the country above, to heaven, the *heaved*, up-lifted land. The Tongans of the South Pacific say that two ancestors quarrelled respecting the parentage of the first-born of the woman Papa, each claiming the child as his own. No King Solomon appears to have been concerned in the dispute, although at last the infant was cut in two. Vatea, the husband of Papa, took the upper part as his share, and forthwith squeezed it into a ball and tossed it into the heavens, where it became the sun.

Tonga-iti sullenly allowed the lower half to remain a day or two on the ground, but, seeing the brightness of Vatea’s half, he compressed his share into a ball and tossed it into the dark sky, during the absence of the sun in the nether world. Thus originated the moon, whose paleness is owing to the blood having all drained out of Tonga-iti’s half as it lay upon the ground. Mr. Gill, from whose valuable collection of southern myth this is quoted, says that it seems to have its origin in the allegory of an alternating embrace of the fair Earth by Day and Night. But despite the explanations, more or less strained, which some schools of comparative mythologists find for every myth, the savage is not a conscious weaver of allegories, or an embryo Cabalist, and we shall find ourselves more in accord with the laws of his intellectual growth if, instead of delving for recondite and subtle meanings in his simple-sounding explanations of things, we take the meaning to be that which lies on the surface. More on this, however, anon. Among the Red races one tribe thought that sun, moon, and stars were men and women who went into the sea every night and swam out by the east. The Bushmen say that the sun was once a man who shed light from his body, but only for a short distance, until some children threw him into the sky while he slept, and thus he shines upon the wide earth. The Australians say that all was darkness around them till one of their many ancestors, who still shine from the stars, shedding good and evil, threw, in pity for them, an emu’s egg into space, when it became the sun. Among the Manacicas of Brazil, the sun was their culture-hero, virgin-born, and their jugglers, who claimed power to fly through the air, said that his luminous

figure, as that of a man, could be seen by them, although too dazzling for common mortals.

The sun has been stayed in his course in other places than Gibeon, although by mechanical means of which Joshua appears to have been independent. Among the many exploits of Maui, abounding in Polynesian myth, are those of his capture of the sun. He had, like Prometheus, snatched fire from heaven for mortals, and his next task was to cure Ra, the sun-god, of his trick of setting before the day's work was done. So Maui plaited thick ropes of cocoa-nut fibre, and taking them to the opening through which Ra climbed up from the nether world, he laid a slip-noose for him, placing the other ropes at intervals along his path. Lying in wait as Ra neared, he pulled the first rope, but the noose only caught Ra's feet. Nor could Maui stop him until he reached the sixth rope, when he was caught round the neck and pulled so tightly by Maui that he had to come to terms, and agree to slacken his pace for the future. Maui, however, took the precaution to keep the ropes on him, and they may still be seen hanging from the sun at dawn and eve. In Tahitian myth Maui is a priest, who, in building a house which must be finished by daylight, seizes the sun by its rays and binds it to a tree till the house is built. In North American myth a boy had snared the sun, and there was no light on the earth. So the beasts held council who should undertake the perilous task of cutting the cord, when the dormouse, then the biggest among them, volunteered. And it succeeded, but so scorched was it by the heat that it was shrivelled to the smallest of creatures. Such a group of myths is not easy of explanation; but when we find the sun

regarded as an ancestor, and as one bound, mill-horse like, to a certain course, the notion of his control and check would arise, and the sun-catchers take their place in tradition among those who have deserved well of their race. It is one among numberless aspects under which the doings of the sun and of other objects in nature are depicted as the doings of mortals, and the crude conceptions of the Ojibwas and the Samoans find their parallel in the mythologies of our Aryan ancestors. Only in the former we see the mighty one shorn of his dignity, with noose round his neck or chains on either side; whilst in the latter we see him as Herakles, with majesty unimpaired, carrying out the twelve tasks imposed by Eurystheus, and thus winning for himself a place among the immortals.

The names given to the sun in mythology are as manifold as his aspects and influences, and as the moods of the untutored minds that endowed him with the complex and contrary qualities which make up the nature of man. *Him*, we say, not *it*, thus preserving in our common speech a relic not only of the universal personification of things, but of their division into sex.

The origin of gender is most obscure, but its investment of both animate and inanimate things with sexual qualities shows it to be a product of the mythopœic stage of man’s progress, and demands some reference in these pages. The languages of savages are in a constant state of flux, even the most abiding terms, as numerals and personal pronouns, being replaced by others in a few years. And the changes undergone by civilised speech have so rubbed away and obscured its primitive forms that, look where he

may, the poverty of the old materials embarrasses the inquirer. If the similar endings to such undoubtedly early words as father, mother, brother, sister, in our own and other related languages, notably Sanskrit, afford any clue, it goes rather to show that gender was a later feature than one might think. But there is no uniformity in the matter. It seems pretty clear that in the early forms of our Indo-European speech there were two genders only, masculine and feminine. The assignment of certain things conceived of as sexless to neither gender, *neutrius generis*, is of later origin. Some of the languages derived from Latin, and, to name one of a different family, the Hebrew, have no neuter gender, whilst others, as the ancient Turkish and Finnish, have no grammatical gender. In our own, under the organic changes incident to its absorption of Norman and other foreign elements, gender has practically disappeared (although ships and nations are still spoken of as feminine), the pronouns *he*, *she*, *it*, being its representatives. Such a gain is apparent when we take up the study of the ancestral Anglo-Saxon, with its masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns, or of our allied German with its perplexities of sex, as, *e.g.*, its masculine spoon, its feminine fork, and its neuter knife. Turning for a moment to such slight aid as barbaric speech gives, we find in the languages of the hill tribes of South India a curious distinction made; rational beings, as gods and men, being grouped in a “high-caste or major gender,” and living animals and lifeless things in a “casteless or minor gender.” The languages of some North American and South African tribes make a distinction into animate and inanimate gender; but as non-living things, the

sun, the thunder, the lightning, are regarded as persons, they are classed in the animate gender.

Further research into the radicals of so relatively fixed a language as Chinese, and into more mobile languages related to it, may, perhaps, enlighten the present ignorance; but one thing is certain, that language was “once the scene of an immense personification,” and has thereby added vitality to myth. Analogies and conceptions apparent to barbaric man, and in no way occurring to us, caused him to attribute sexual qualities not only to dead as to living things, but to their several parts, as well as, in the course of time, to intellectual and abstract terms. Speaking broadly, things in which were manifest size and qualities, as strength, independence, governing or controlling power, usually attaching to the male, were classed as masculine; whilst those in which the gentler and more subordinate features were apparent were classed as feminine. Of course marked exceptions to this will at once occur to us, as, *e.g.*, in certain savage and civilised languages, where the sun is feminine and the moon is masculine, but in the main the division holds good. The big is male and the small is female. The Dyaks of Borneo call a heavy downpour of rain a *he* rain; and, if so strength-imparting a thing as bread is to be classed as either masculine or feminine, we must agree with the negro who, in answer to his master’s question, “Sambo, where’s the bread?” replied, “De bread, massa? him lib in de pantry.” The mediæval Persians are said to have distinguished between male and female even in such things as food and cloth, air and water, and prescribed their proper use accordingly; while, as Dr. Tylor, from whom the above is