his master's sword which he has lost. There is no help for it, he must go back and make a clean breast of it. His master is very angry; and the two, after consulting together, await the stranger's return from the shrine. The latter makes his appearance, and announces that he is going home. Tarôkaja's master falls upon the stranger from behind, and pinions him, ordering Tarôkaja to fetch a a rope and bind him. The knave brings the cord; but, while he is getting it ready, the stranger knocks him over with the sword. His master calls out to him to get up quickly and bind the gentleman from behind, and not from before. Tarôkaja runs behind the struggling pair, but is so clumsy that he slips the noose over his master's head by mistake, and drags him down. The stranger seeing this, runs away laughing with the two swords. Tarôkaja, frightened at his blunder, runs off too, his master pursuing him off the stage. A general run off, be it observed, something like the "spill-and-pelt" scene in an English pantomime, is the legitimate and invariable termination of the Kiyôgen. But it is getting late, and we must wend our way homewards. Following the crowded main street, we come to the famous Nihon Bashi, or Japan Bridge, the Hyde Park corner of Yedo, from which all distances are reckoned. At one end of the bridge is a handsome tile-roofed stand, to which are hung the edicts and proclamations of the Mikado, painted on white wood. In spite, however, of imperial proclamations, and of the undoubted good-will of many of the rulers of the land, it is well to keep a good look-out as you ride home in the evening through the streets of Yedo. A sword-cut is quickly given, and there are plenty of roisterers who, in their cups, would think but little of sacrificing a western barbarian to the honour of the country of the gods.

A. B. MITFORD.

THE ORIGIN OF ANIMAL-WORSHIP, ETC.

MR. M'LENNAN'S recent essays on the Worship of Animals and Plants, have done much to elucidate a very obscure subject. By pursuing in this case, as before in another case, the truly scientific method of comparing the phenomena presented by existing uncivilised races with those which the early traditions of civilised races present, he has rendered both more comprehensible than they were before.

It seems to me, however, that Mr. M'Lennan gives but an indefinite answer to the essential question—How did the worship of animals and plants arise? Indeed, in his concluding paper, he expressly leaves this problem without a solution; saying that his "is

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

not an hypothesis explanatory of the origin of *Totemism*, be it remembered, but an hypothesis explanatory of the animal and plant worship of the ancient nations." So that we have still to ask—Why have savage tribes so generally taken animals and plants and other things as their totems? What can have induced this tribe to ascribe special sacredness to one creature, and that tribe to another? And if to these questions the general reply is, that each tribe considers itself to be descended from the object of its reverence, then there presses for answer the further question—How came so strange a notion into existence? If this notion occurred in one case only, we might set it down to some whim of thought, or some illusive occurrence. But appearing as it does with multitudinous variations among so many uncivilised races in different parts of the world, and having left equally numerous traces in the superstitions of the extinct civilised races, we cannot assume any special or exceptional cause. Moreover, the general cause, whatever it may be, must be such as does not negative an aboriginal intelligence essentially like our own. After studying the grotesque beliefs of savages, we are apt to suppose that their reason is not as our reason. But this supposition is inadmissible. Given the amount of knowledge which primitive men possess, and given the imperfect verbal symbols used by them in speech and thought, and the conclusions they habitually reach will be those that are *relatively* the most rational. This must be our postulate; and setting out with this postulate, we have to ask how primitive men came so generally, if not universally, to believe themselves the progeny of animals or plants or inanimate bodies. There is, I believe, a satisfactory answer.

The proposition with which Mr. M'Lennan sets out, that totem-worship preceded the worship of anthropomorphic gods, is one to which I can yield but a qualified assent. It is true in a sense, but not wholly true. If the words "gods" and "worship" carry with them their ordinary definite meanings, the statement is true; but if their meanings are widened so as to comprehend those earliest vague notions out of which the definite ideas of gods and worship are evolved, I think it is not true. The rudimentary form of all religion is the propitiation of dead ancestors, who are supposed to be still existing, and to be capable of working good or evil to their descendants. As a preparation for dealing hereafter with the principles of sociology, I have, for some years past, directed much attention to the modes of thought current in the simpler human societies; and evidence of many kinds, furnished by all varieties of uncivilised men, have forced on me a conclusion harmonising with that lately expressed in this Review by Professor Huxley—namely, that the savage, conceiving a corpse to be deserted by the active personality

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

who dwelt in it, conceives this active personality to be still existing, and that his feelings and ideas concerning it form the basis of his superstitions. Everywhere, we find expressed or implied the belief that each person is double; and that when he dies, his other self, whether remaining near at hand or gone far away, may return, and continues capable of injuring his enemies and aiding his friends.[1]

(1) A critical reader may raise an objection. If animal-worship is to be rationally interpreted, how can the interpretation set out by assuming a belief in the spirits of dead ancestors—a belief which just as much requires explanation? Doubtless there is here a wide gap in the argument. I hope eventually to fill it up. Here, out of many experiences which conspire to generate this belief, I can but briefly indicate the leading ones. 1. It is not impossible that his shadow, following him everywhere, and moving as he moves, may have some small share in giving to the savage a vague idea of his duality. It needs but to watch a child's interest in the movements of its shadow, and to remember that at first a shadow cannot be interpreted as a negation of light, but is looked upon as an entity, to perceive that the savage may very possibly consider it as a specific something which forms part of him. 2. A much more decided suggestion of the same kind, is likely to result from the reflection of his face and figure in water: imitating him as it does in his form, colours, motions, grimaces. When we remember that not unfrequently a savage objects to have his portrait taken, because he thinks whoever carries away a representation of him carries away some part of his being, will see how probable it is that he thinks his double in the water is a reality in some way belonging to him. 3. Echoes must greatly tend to confirm the idea of duality otherwise arrived at. Incapable as he is of understanding their natural origin, the primitive man necessarily ascribes them to living beings—beings who mock him and elude his search. 4. The suggestions resulting from these and other physical phenomena are, however, secondary in importance. The root of this belief in another self lies in the experience of dreams. The distinction so easily made by us between our life in dreams and our real life, is one which the savage recognises in but a vague way; and he cannot express even that distinction which he perceives. When he awakes, and to those who have seen him lying quietly asleep, describes where he has been, and what he has done, his rude language fails to state the difference between seeing and dreaming that he saw, doing and dreaming that he did. From this inadequacy of his language it not only results that he cannot truly represent this difference to others, but also that he cannot truly represent it to himself. Hence in the absence of an alternative interpretation, his belief, and that of those to whom he tells his adventures, is that his other self has been away and came back when he awoke. And this belief which we find among various existing savage tribes, we equally find in the traditions of the early civilised races. 5. The conception of another self capable of going away and returning, receives what to the savage must seem conclusive verifications from the abnormal suspensions of consciousness, and derangements of consciousness, that occasionally occur in members of his tribe. One who has fainted, and cannot be immediately brought back to himself (note the significance of our own phrases "returning to himself," &c.) as a sleeper can, shows him a state in which the other self has been away for a time beyond recall. Still more is this prolonged absence of the other self shown him in cases of apoplexy, catalepsy, and other forms of suspended animation. Here for hours the other self persists in remaining away, and on returning refuses to say where he has been. Further verification is afforded by every epileptic subject, into whose body, during the absence of the other self, some enemy has entered; for how else does it happen that the other self on returning denies all knowledge of what his body has been doing? And this supposition that the body has been "possessed" by some other being, is confirmed by the phenomena of somnambulism and insanity. 6. What then is the interpretation inevitably put upon death? The other self has habitually returned after sleep, which simulates death. It has returned, too, after fainting, which simulates death much more. It has even returned after the rigid state of catalepsy, which simulates death very greatly. Will it not return also after this still more prolonged quiescence and rigidity? Clearly it is

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

But how out of the desire to propitiate this second personality of a deceased man (the words "ghost" or "spirit" are somewhat misleading, since the savage believes that the second personality re-appears in a form equally tangible with the first) does there grow up the worship of animals, plants, and inanimate objects? Very simply. Savages habitually distinguish individuals by names that are either directly suggestive of some personal trait or fact of personal history, or else express an observed community of character with some well-known object. Such a genesis of individual names, before surnames have arisen, is inevitable; and how easily it arises we shall see on remembering that it still goes on in its original form, even when no longer needful. I do not refer only to the significant fact that in some parts of England, as in the nail-making districts, nicknames are universal, and surnames scarcely recognised; but I refer to the general usage among both children and adults. The rude man is apt to be known as "a bear;" a sly fellow, as an "old fox;" a hypocrite, as "the crocodile." Names of plants, too, are used; as when the red-haired boy is called "carrots" by his school-fellows. Nor do we lack nicknames derived from inorganic objects and agents: instance that given by Mr. Carlyle to the elder Sterling—"Captain Whirlwind." Now in the earliest savage state, this metaphorical naming will in most cases commence afresh in each generation—must do so, indeed, until surnames of some kind have been established. I say in most cases, because there will occur

quite possible—quite probable even. The dead man's other self is gone away for a long time, but it still exists somewhere, far or near, and may at any moment come back to do all he said he would do. Hence the various burial rites—the placing of weapons and valuables along with the body, the daily bringing of food to it, &c. I hope hereafter to show that with such knowledge of the facts as he has, this interpretation is the most reasonable the savage can arrive at. Let me here, however, by way of showing how clearly the facts bear out this view, give one illustration out of many. "The ceremonies with which they [the Veddahs] invoke them [the shades of the dead] are few as they are simple. The most common is the following. An arrow is fixed upright in the ground, and the Veddah dances slowly round it, chanting this invocation, which is almost musical in its rhythm:

'Mâ miya, mâ miy, mâ deyâ,
Topang Koyichetti mittigan yandâh?'

'My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering?'

"This invocation appears to be used on all occasions when the intervention of the guardian spirits is required in sickness, preparatory to hunting, &c. Sometimes in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt. Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name, 'Come and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come, wheresoever you may be, on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!' And dance round the food, half chanting half shouting the invocation."—*Bailey, Trans. Eth. Soc.*, London, N.S., ii. p. 301.

Digitized by Google
Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

exceptions in the cases of men who have distinguished themselves. If "the Wolf," proving famous in fight, becomes a terror to neighbouring tribes, and a dominant man in his own, his sons, proud of their parentage, will not let fall the fact that they descended from the Wolf; nor will this fact be forgotten by the rest of the tribe who held "the Wolf" in awe, and see some reason to dread his sons. In proportion to the power and celebrity of the Wolf will this pride and this fear conspire to maintain among his grandchildren and great grandchildren, as well as among those over whom they dominate, the remembrance of the fact that their ancestor was the Wolf. And if, as will occasionally happen, this dominant family becomes the root of a new tribe, the members of this tribe will become known to themselves and others as the Wolves.

We need not rest satisfied with the inference that this inheritance of nicknames *will* take place: there is proof that it *does* take place. As nicknaming after animals, plants, and other objects still goes on among ourselves, so among ourselves does there go on the descent of nicknames. An instance has come under my own notice on an estate in the West Highlands, belonging to some friends with whom I frequently have the pleasure of spending a few weeks in the autumn. "Take a young Croshek," has more than once been the reply of my host to the inquiry, who should go with me, when I was setting out salmon-fishing. The elder Croshek I knew well; and supposed that this name, borne by him and by all belonging to him, was the family surname. Some years passed before I learned that the real surname was Cameron; that the father was called Croshek, after the name of his cottage, to distinguish him from other Camerons employed about the premises; and that his children had come to be similarly distinguished. Though here, as very generally in Scotland, the nick-name was derived from the place of residence, yet had it been derived from an animal, the process would have been the same —inheritance of it would have occurred just as naturally. Not even for this small link in the argument, however, need we depend on inference: there is fact to bear us out. Mr. Bates, in his *Naturalist on the River Amazon* (2nd ed., p. 376), describing three half-castes who accompanied him on a hunting trip, says:—"Two of them were brothers—namely, João (John) and Zephyrino Jabutí; Jabutí, or tortoise, being a nickname which their father had earned for his slow gait, and which, as is usual in this country, had descended as the surname of the family." Let me add the statement made by Mr. Wallace respecting this same region, that "one of the tribes on the river Isánna is called 'Jurupari' (Devils). Another is called 'Ducks;' a third, 'Stars;' a fourth, 'Mandiocca.'" Putting these two statements together, can there be any doubt about the genesis of these tribal names? Let the tortoise become

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

sufficiently distinguished (not necessarily by superiority—great inferiority may occasionally suffice) and the tradition of descent from him, preserved by his descendants themselves if he was superior, and by their contemptuous neighbours if he was inferior, may become a tribal name.[1]

"But this," it will be said, "does not amount to an explanation of animal-worship." True: a third factor remains to be specified. Given a belief in the still-existing other self of the deceased ancestor, who must be propitiated; given this survival of his metaphorical name among his grandchildren, great grandchildren, &c.; and the further requisite is that the distinction between metaphor and reality shall be forgotten. Let the tradition of the ancestor fail to keep clearly in view the fact that he was a man called the Wolf—let him be habitually spoken of as the Wolf, just as when alive; and the natural mistake of taking the name literally will bring with it, firstly, a belief in descent from the actual wolf, and, secondly, a treatment of the wolf in a manner likely to propitiate him—a manner appropriate to one who may be the other self of the dead ancestor, or one of the kindred, and therefore a friend.

That a misunderstanding of this kind will naturally grow up, becomes obvious when we bear in mind the great indefiniteness of primitive language. As Professor Max Müller says, respecting certain misinterpretations of an opposite kind, "These metaphors * * * would become mere names handed down in the conversation of a family, understood perhaps by the grandfather, familiar to the father, but strange to the son, and misunderstood by the grandson." We have ample reason, then, for thinking that such misinterpretations are likely to occur. Nay, we may go further. We are justified in saying that they are certain to occur. For undeveloped languages contain no words capable of indicating the distinction to be kept in view. In the tongues of existing inferior races, only concrete objects and acts are expressible. The Australians have a name for each kind of tree, but no name for tree irrespective of kind. And though some witnesses allege that their vocabulary is not absolutely destitute of generic names, its extreme poverty in such is unquestionable. Similarly with the Tasmanians. Doctor Milligan

(1) Since the foregoing pages were written, my attention has been drawn by Sir John Lubbock to a passage in the appendix to the second edition of *Pre-Historic Times*, in which he has indicated this derivation of tribal names. He says:—"In endeavouring to account for the worship of animals, we must remember that names are very frequently taken from them. The children and followers of a man called the Bear or the Lion would make that a tribal name. Hence the animal itself would be first respected, at last worshipped." Of the genesis of this worship, however, Sir John Lubbock does not give any specific explanation. Apparently he inclines to the belief, tacitly adopted also by Mr. M'Lennan, that animal-worship is derived from an original Fetichism, of which it is a more developed form. As will shortly be seen, I take a different view of its origin.

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

says they "had acquired very limited powers of abstraction or generalisation. They possessed no words representing abstract ideas; for each variety of gum tree and wattle tree, &c., &c., they had a name, but they had no equivalent for the expression, 'a tree;' neither could they express abstract qualities, such as hard, soft, warm, cold, long, short, round, &c.; for 'hard,' they would say 'like a stone,' for 'tall,' they would say 'long legs,' &c., and for 'round,' they said 'like a ball,' 'like the moon,' and so on, usually suiting the action to the word, and confirming, by some sign, the meaning to be understood."[1] Now, even making allowance for over-statement here (which seems needful, since the word "long," said to be inexpressible in the abstract, subsequently occurs as qualifying a concrete in the expression, "long legs"), it is sufficiently manifest that so imperfect a language must fail to convey the idea of a name, as something separate from a thing; and that still less can it be capable of indicating the act of naming. Familiar use of such partially abstract words as are applicable to all objects of a class, is needful before there can be reached the conception of a name—a word symbolising the symbolic character of other words; and the conception of a name, with its answering abstract term, must be long current before the verb to name can arise. Hence, among tribes with speech so rude, it will be impossible to transmit the tradition of an ancestor named the Wolf, as distinguished from the actual wolf. The children and grandchildren who saw him will not be led into error; but in later generations, descent from the Wolf will inevitably come to mean descent from the animal known by that name. And the ideas and sentiments which, as above shown, naturally grow up around the belief that the dead parents and grandparents are still alive, and ready, if propitiated, to befriend their descendants, will be extended to the wolf species.

Before passing to other developments of this general view, let me point out how not simply animal-worship is thus accounted for, but also the conception, so variously illustrated in ancient legends, that animals are capable of displaying human powers of speech and thought and action. Mythologies are full of stories of beasts and birds and fishes that have played intelligent parts in human affairs, —creatures that have befriended particular persons by giving them information, by guiding them, by yielding them help; or else that have deceived them, verbally or otherwise. Evidently all these traditions, as well as those about abductions of women by animals and fostering of children by them, fall naturally into their places as results of the habitual misinterpretation I have described.

The probability of the hypothesis will appear still greater when

(1) *Proc. Royal Soc. Tasmania*, iii. p. 280.

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

we observe how readily it applies to the worship of other orders of objects. Belief in actual descent from an animal, strange as we may think it, is one by no means incongruous with the unanalysed experiences of the savage; for there come under his notice many metamorphoses, vegetal and animal, which are apparently of like character. But how could he possibly arrive at so grotesque a conception as that the progenitor of his tribe was the sun, or the moon, or a particular star? No observation of surrounding phenomena affords the slightest suggestion of any such possibility. But by the inheritance of nicknames that are eventually mistaken for the names of the objects from which they were derived, the belief readily arises—is sure to arise. That the names of heavenly bodies will furnish metaphorical names to the uncivilised, is manifest. Do we not ourselves call a distinguished singer or actor a star? And have we not in poems, numerous comparisons of men and women to the sun and moon; as in *Love's Labour Lost*, where the princess is called "a gracious moon," and as in *Henry VIII.*, where we read—"Those suns of glory, those two lights of men"? Clearly, primitive men will be not unlikely thus to speak of the chief hero of a successful battle. When we remember how the arrival of a triumphant warrior must affect the feelings of his tribe, dissipating clouds of anxiety and irradiating all faces with joy, we shall see that the comparison of him to the sun is extremely natural; and in early speech this comparison can be made only by calling him the sun. As before, then, it will happen that through a confounding of the metaphorical name with the actual name, his progeny, after a few generations, will be regarded by themselves and others as descendants of the sun. And as a consequence, partly of actual inheritance of the ancestral character and partly of maintenance of the traditions respecting the ancestor's achievements, it will also naturally happen that the solar race will be considered a superior race, as we find it habitually is.

The origin of other totems, equally strange if not even stranger, is similarly accounted for, though otherwise unaccountable. One of the New Zealand chiefs claimed as his progenitor the neighbouring great mountain, Tongariro. This seemingly whimsical belief becomes intelligible when we observe how easily it may have arisen from a nickname. Do we not ourselves sometimes speak figuratively of a tall, fat man as a mountain of flesh? And among a people prone to speak in still more concrete terms, would it not happen that a chief remarkable for his great bulk would be nicknamed after the highest mountain within sight, because he towered above other men as this did above surrounding hills? Such an occurrence is not simply possible, but probable. And if so, the confusion of metaphor with fact would originate this surprising genealogy. A notion perhaps yet more grotesque, thus receives a satisfactory interpre-

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

tation. What could have put it into the imagination of any one that he was descended from the dawn? Given the extremest credulity joined with the wildest fancy, it would still seem requisite that the ancestor should be conceived as an entity; and the dawn is entirely without that definiteness and comparative constancy which enter into the conception of an entity. But when we remember that "the Dawn" is a natural complimentary name for a beautiful girl opening into womanhood, the genesis of the idea becomes, on the above hypothesis, quite obvious.

Another indirect verification is that we thus get a clear conception of Fetichism in general. Under the fetichistic mode of thought, surrounding objects and agents are regarded as having powers more or less definitely personal in their natures. And the current interpretation is, that human intelligence, in its early stages, is obliged to conceive of their powers under this form. I have myself hitherto accepted this interpretation; though always with a sense of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction was, I think, well grounded. The theory is scarcely a theory properly so called; but rather, a re-statement in other words. Uncivilised men *do* habitually form anthropomorphic conceptions of surrounding things; and this observed general fact is transformed into the theory that at first they *must* so conceive them—a theory for which the psychological justification attempted, seems to me inadequate. From our present stand-point, it becomes manifest that Fetichism is not primary but secondary. What has been said above almost of itself shows this. Let us, however, follow out the steps of its genesis. Respecting the Tasmanians, Dr. Milligan says—"The names of men and women were taken from natural objects and occurrences around, as, for instance, a kangaroo, a gum tree, snow, hail, thunder, the wind, flowers in blossom, &c." Surrounding objects, then, giving origin to names of persons, and being, in the way shown, eventually mistaken for the actual progenitors of those who descend from persons nicknamed after them, it results that these surrounding objects come to be regarded as in some manner possessed of personalities like the human. He whose family tradition is that his ancestor was "the Crab," will conceive the crab as having a disguised inner power like his own; and alleged descent from "the palm tree" will entail belief in some kind of consciousness dwelling in the palm tree. Hence, in proportion as the animals, plants, and inanimate objects or agents that originate names of persons, become numerous (which they will do in proportion as a tribe becomes large and the number of persons to be distinguished from one another increases), multitudinous things around will acquire imaginary personalities. And so it will happen that, as Mr. M'Lennan says of the Fijians—"Vegetables and stones, nay, even

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

tools and weapons, pots and canoes, have souls that are immortal, and that, like the souls of men, pass on at last to Mbulu, the abode of departed spirits." Setting out then with a belief in the still-living other self of the dead ancestor, the alleged general cause of misapprehension affords us an intelligible origin of the fetichistic conception; and we are enabled to see how it tends to become a general, if not a universal, conception.

Other apparently inexplicable phenomena are at the same time divested of their strangeness. I refer to the beliefs in, and worship of, compound monsters,—impossible hybrid animals, and forms that are half human, half brutal. The theory of a primordial Fetichism, supposing it otherwise adequate, yields no feasible solution of these. Grant the alleged original tendency to think of all natural agencies as in some way personal. Grant, too, that hence may arise a worship of animals, plants, and even inanimate bodies. Still the obvious implication is that the worship so derived will be limited to things that are, or have been, perceived. Why should this mode of thought lead the savage to imagine a combination of bird and mammal; and not only to imagine it, but worship it as a god? If even we admit that some illusion may have suggested the belief in a creature half man, half fish, we cannot thus explain the prevalence among eastern races of idols representing bird-headed men, men having their legs replaced by the legs of a cock, and men with the heads of elephants.

Carrying with us the inferences above drawn, however, it is a manifest corollary that ideas and practices of these kinds will arise. When tradition preserves both lines of ancestry—when a chief nicknamed the Wolf, carries away from an adjacent tribe a wife who is remembered either under the animal name of her tribe, or as a woman; it will happen that if a son distinguishes himself, the remembrance of him among his descendants will be that he was born of a wolf and some other animal, or of a wolf and a woman. Misinterpretation, arising in the way described from defects of language, will entail belief in a creature uniting the attributes of the two; and if the tribe grows into a society, representations of such a creature will become objects of worship. One of the cases cited by Mr. M'Lennan may here be repeated in illustration. "The story of the origin of the Dikokamenni Kirghiz," they say, "from a red greyhound and a certain queen with her forty handmaidens, is of ancient date." Now, if "the red greyhound" was the nickname of a man extremely swift of foot (celebrated runners have been similarly nicknamed among ourselves), a story of this kind would naturally arise; and if the metaphorical name was mistaken for the actual name, there might result as the idol of the race, a compound form appropriate to

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

the story. We need not be surprised, then, at finding among the Egyptians, the goddess Pasht represented as a woman with a lion's head, and the god Month as a man with the head of a hawk. The Babylonian gods—one having the form of a man with an eagle's tail and another uniting a human bust to a fish's body—no longer appear such unaccountable conceptions. We get feasible explanations, too, of sculptures representing sphinxes, winged human-headed bulls, &c.; as well as of the stories about centaurs, satyrs, and the rest.

Ancient myths in general thus acquire meanings considerably different from those ascribed to them by comparative mythologists. Though these last may be in part correct, yet if the foregoing argument is valid, they can scarcely be correct in their main outlines. Indeed, if we read the facts the other way upwards, regarding as secondary or additional the elements that are said to be primary, while we regard as primary, certain elements which are considered as accretions of later times, we shall, I think, be nearer the truth.

The current theory of the myth is that it has grown out of the habit of symbolising natural agents and processes, in terms of human personalities and actions. Now it may in the first place be remarked, that though symbolisation of this kind is common enough among civilised races, it is not common among races that are the most uncivilised. By existing savages, surrounding objects, motions, and changes, are habitually used to convey ideas respecting human transactions. It is by no means so much the habit to express by the doings of men the course of natural phenomena. It needs but to read the speech of an Indian chief, to see that just as primitive men name one another metaphorically after surrounding objects, so do they metaphorically describe one another's doings as though they were the doings of natural objects. But assuming a contrary habit of thought to be the dominant one, ancient myths are explained as results of the primitive tendency to symbolise inanimate things and their changes, by human beings and their doings.

A kindred difficulty must be added. The change of verbal meaning from which the myth is said to arise, is a change opposite in kind to that which prevails in the earlier stages of linguistic development. It implies a derivation of the concrete from the abstract; whereas at first, abstracts are derived only from concretes: the concreting of abstracts being a subsequent process. In the words of Professor Max Müller, there are "dialects spoken at the present day which have no abstract nouns, and the more we go back in the history of languages, the smaller we find the number of these useful expressions" (*Chips*, vol. ii. p. 54); or, as he says more recently,—"Ancient words and ancient thoughts, for both go together, have not yet arrived at that

Digitized by Google
Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

stage of abstraction in which, for instance, active powers, whether natural or supernatural, can be represented in any but a personal and more or less human form." (*Fraser's Magazine*, April, 1870.) Here the concrete is represented as original, and the abstract as derivative. Immediately afterwards, however, Professor Max Müller, having given as examples of abstract nouns, "day and night, spring and winter, dawn and twilight, storm and thunder," goes on to argue that "as long as people thought in language, it was simply impossible to speak of morning or evening, of spring and winter, without giving to these conceptions something of an individual, active, sexual, and at last, personal character." (*Chips*, &c., vol. ii. p. 55.) Here the concrete is derived from the abstract—the personal conception is represented as coming *after* the impersonal conception; and through such transformation of the impersonal into the personal, Professor Max Müller considers ancient myths to have arisen. How are these propositions reconcilable? One of two things must be said. If originally there were none of these abstract nouns, then the earliest statements respecting the daily course of nature were made in concrete terms—the personal elements of the myth were the primitive elements, and the impersonal expressions which are their equivalents came later. If this is not admitted, then it must be held that until after there arose these abstract nouns, there were no current statements at all respecting these most conspicuous objects and changes which the heavens and the earth present; and that the abstract nouns having been somehow formed, and rightly formed, and used without personal meanings, afterwards became personalized—a process the reverse of that which characterises early linguistic progress.

No such contradictions occur if we interpret myths after the manner that has been indicated. Nay, besides escaping contradictions, we meet with unexpected solutions. The moment we try it, the key unlocks for us with ease what seems a quite inexplicable fact, which the current hypothesis takes as one of its postulates. Speaking of such words as sky and earth, dew and rain, rivers and mountains, as well as of the abstract nouns above named, Professor Max Müller says:—"Now in ancient languages every one of these words had necessarily a termination expressive of gender, and this naturally produced in the mind the corresponding idea of sex, so that these names received not only an individual, but a sexual, character. There was no substantive which was not either masculine or feminine; neuters being of later growth, and distinguishable chiefly in the nominative." (*Chips*, &c., vol. ii. p. 55.) And this alleged necessity for a masculine or feminine implication is assigned as a part of the reason why these abstract nouns and collective nouns became personalized. But should not a true theory of these first steps in the evolution of thought and language show us how it

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

happened that men acquired the seemingly-strange habit of so framing their words for sky, earth, dew, rain, &c., as to make them indicative of sex? Or, at any rate, must it not be admitted that an interpretation which, instead of assuming this habit to be "necessary," shows us how it results, thereby acquires an additional claim to acceptance? The interpretation I have indicated does this. If men and women are habitually nicknamed, and if defects of language lead their descendants to regard themselves as descendants of the things from which the names were taken, then masculine or feminine genders will be ascribed to these things according as the ancestors named after them were men or women. If a beautiful maiden known metaphorically as "the Dawn," afterwards becomes the mother of some distinguished chief called "the North Wind," it will result that when, in course of time, the two have been mistaken for the actual dawn and the actual north wind, these will, by implication, be respectively considered as male and female.

Looking now at the ancient myths in general, their seemingly most inexplicable trait is the habitual combination of alleged human ancestry and adventures, with the possession of personalities otherwise figuring in the heavens and on the earth, with totally non-human attributes. This enormous incongruity, not the exception but the rule, the current theory fails to explain. Suppose it to be granted that the great terrestrial and celestial objects and agents naturally become personalized; it does not follow that each of them shall have a specific human biography. To say of some star that he was the son of this king or that hero, was born in a particular place, and when grown up carried off the wife of a neighbouring chief, is a gratuitous multiplication of incongruities already sufficiently great; and is not accounted for by the alleged necessary personalization of abstract and collective nouns. As looked at from our present standpoint, however, such traditions become quite natural—nay, it is clear that they will necessarily arise. When a nickname has become a tribal name, it thereby ceases to be individually distinctive; and, as already said, the process of nicknaming inevitably continues. It commences afresh with each child; and the nickname of each child is both an individual name and a potential tribal name, which may become an actual tribal name if the individual is sufficiently celebrated. Usually, then, there is a double system of distinguishing the individual; under one of which he is known by his ancestral name, and under the other of which he is known by a name suggestive of something peculiar to himself: just as we have seen happens among the Scotch clans. Consider, now, what will result when language has reached a stage of development such that it can convey the notion of naming, and is able, therefore, to preserve traditions of human ancestry: the preservation of such traditions

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

being furthered by those corruptions of tribal names which render them no longer suggestive of the things they were derived from. It will result that the individual will be known both as the son of such and such a man by a mother whose name was so-and-so, and also as the Crab, or the Bear, or the Whirlwind,—supposing one of these to be his nickname. Such joint use of nicknames and proper names occurs in every school. Now, clearly, in advancing from the early state in which ancestors become identified with the objects they are nicknamed after, to the state in which there are proper names that have lost their metaphorical meanings, there must be passed through a state in which proper names, partially settled only, may or may not be preserved, and in which the new nicknames are still liable to be mistaken for actual names. Under such conditions there will arise (especially in the case of a distinguished man) this seemingly-impossible combination of human parentage with the possession of the non-human, or superhuman, attributes of the thing which gave the nickname. Another anomaly simultaneously disappears. The warrior may have, and often will have, a variety of complimentary nicknames—"the powerful one," "the destroyer," &c. Supposing his leading nickname has been the Sun, then when he comes to be identified by tradition with the sun, it will happen that the sun will acquire his alternative descriptive titles—the swift one, the lion, the wolf—titles not obviously appropriate to the sun, but quite appropriate to the warrior. Then there comes, too, an explanation of the remaining trait of such myths. When this identification of conspicuous persons, male and female, with conspicuous natural agents, has become settled, there will in due course arise interpretations of the actions of these agents in anthropomorphic terms. Suppose, for instance, that Endymion and Selene, metaphorically named, the one after the setting sun the other after the moon, have had their human individualities merged in those of the sun and moon, through misinterpretation of metaphors; what will happen? The legend of their loves having to be reconciled with their celestial appearances and motions, these will be spoken of as results of feeling and will; so that when the sun is going down in the west, while the moon in mid-heaven is following him, the fact will be expressed by saying,—"Selene loves and watches Endymion." Thus we obtain a consistent explanation of the myth without distorting it; and without assuming that it contains gratuitous fictions. We are enabled to accept the biographical part of it, if not as literal fact, still as having had fact for its root. We are helped to see how, by an inevitable misinterpretation, there grew out of a more or less true tradition, this strange identification of its personages, with objects and powers totally non-human in their aspects. And then we are shown how, from

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

the attempt to reconcile in thought these contradictory elements of the myth, there arose the habit of ascribing the actions of these non-human things to human motives.

One further verification may be drawn from facts which are obstacles to the converse hypothesis. These objects and powers, celestial and terrestrial, which force themselves most on men's attention, have some of them several proper names, identified with those of different individuals, born at different places, and having different sets of adventures. Thus we have the sun variously known as Apollo, Endymion, Helios, Tithonos, &c.—personages having irreconcilable genealogies. Such anomalies Professor Max Müller apparently ascribes to the untrustworthiness of traditions, which are "careless about contradictions, or ready to solve them sometimes by the most atrocious expedients" (*Chips*, &c., vol. ii. p. 84). But if the evolution of the myth has been that above indicated, there exist no anomalies to be got rid of: these diverse genealogies become parts of the evidence. For we have abundant proof that the same objects furnish metaphorical names of men in different tribes. There are Duck tribes in Australia, in South America, in North America. The eagle is still a totem among the North Americans, as Mr. M'Lennan shows reason to conclude that it was among the Egyptians, among the Jews, and among the Romans. Obviously, for reasons that have been assigned, it naturally happened in the early stages of the ancient races, that complimentary comparisons of their heroes to the sun were frequently made. What resulted? The sun having furnished names for sundry chiefs and early founders of tribes, and local traditions having severally identified them with the sun, these tribes when they grew, spread, conquered, or came otherwise into partial union, originated a combined mythology, which necessarily contained conflicting stories about the sun-god, as about its other leading personages. If the North American tribes, among several of which there are traditions of a sun-god, had developed a combined civilisation, there would similarly have arisen among them a mythology which ascribed to the sun several different proper names and genealogies.

Let me briefly set down the leading characters of this hypothesis which give it probability.

True interpretations of all the natural processes, organic and inorganic, that have gone on in past times, habitually trace them to causes still in action. It is thus in Geology; it is thus in Biology; it is thus in Philology. Here we find this characteristic repeated. Nicknaming, the inheritance of nicknames, and, to some extent, the misinterpretation of nicknames, go among us still; and were surnames absent, language imperfect, and knowledge as rudi-

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

mentary as of old, it is tolerably manifest that results would arise like those we have contemplated.

A further characteristic of a true cause is that it accounts not only for the particular group of phenomena to be interpreted, but also for other groups. The cause here alleged does this. It equally well explains the worship of animals, of plants, of mountains, of winds, of celestial bodies, and even of appearances too vague to be considered entities. It gives us an intelligible genesis of fetichistic conceptions in general. It furnishes us with a reason for the practice, otherwise so unaccountable, of moulding the words applied to inanimate objects in such ways as to imply masculine and feminine genders. It shows us how there naturally arose the worship of compound animals, and of monsters half man half brute. And it shows us why the worship of purely anthropomorphic deities came later, when language had so far developed that it could preserve in tradition the distinction between proper names and nicknames.

A further verification of this view is, that it conforms to the general law of evolution: showing us how, out of one simple, vague, aboriginal form of belief, there have arisen, by continuous differentiations, the many heterogeneous forms of belief which have existed and do exist. The desire to propitiate the other self of the dead ancestor, displayed among savage tribes, dominantly manifested by the early historic races, by the Peruvians and Mexicans, by the Chinese at the present time, and to a considerable degree by ourselves (for what else is the wish to do that which a lately-deceased parent was known to have desired) has been the universal first form of religious belief; and from it have grown up the many divergent beliefs that have been referred to.

Let me add, as a further reason for adopting this view, that it immensely diminishes the apparently-great contrast between early modes of thought and our own mode of thought. Doubtless the aboriginal man differs considerably from us, both in intellect and feeling. But such an interpretation of the facts as helps us to bridge over the gap, derives additional likelihood from doing this. The hypothesis I have sketched out enables us to see that primitive ideas are not so gratuitously absurd as we suppose, and also enables us to rehabilitate the ancient myth with far less distortion than at first sight appears possible.

These views I hope to develop in the first part of *The Principles of Sociology*. The large mass of evidence which I shall be able to give in support of the hypothesis, joined with the solutions it will be shown to yield of many minor problems which I have passed over, will, I think, then give to it a still greater probability than it seems now to have.

HERBERT SPENCER.

Digitized by Google

Original from
INDIANA UNIVERSITY