









## INTRODUCTION.

Though some of the essays in this volume have appeared in various serials, the majority of them were written expressly for their present purpose, and they are now arranged in a designed order. During some years of study of Greek, Indian, and savage mythologies, I have become more and more impressed with a sense of the inadequacy of the prevalent method of comparative mythology. That method is based on the belief that myths are the result of a disease of language, as the pearl is the result of a disease of the oyster. It is argued that men at some period, or periods, spoke in a singular style of coloured and concrete language, and that their children retained the phrases of this language after losing hold of the original meaning. The consequence was the growth of myths about supposed persons, whose names had originally been mere 'appellations.' In conformity with this hypothesis the method of comparative mythology examines the proper names which occur in myths. The notion is that these names contain a key to the meaning of the story, and that, in fact, of the story the names are the germs and the oldest surviving part.

The objections to this method are so numerous that it is difficult to state them briefly. The attempt, however, must be made. To desert the path opened by the most eminent scholars is in itself presumptuous; the least that an innovator can do is to give his reasons for advancing in a novel direction. If this were a question of scholarship merely, it would be simply foolhardy to differ from men like Max Müller, Adalbert Kuhn, Brial, and many others. But a revolutionary mythologist is encouraged by finding that these scholars usually differ from each other. Examples will be found chiefly in the essays styled 'The Myth of Cronus,' 'A Far-travelled Tale,' and 'Cupid and Psyche.' Why, then, do distinguished scholars and mythologists reach such different goals? Clearly because their method is so precarious. They all analyse the names in myths; but, where one scholar decides that the name is originally Sanskrit, another holds that it is purely Greek, and a third, perhaps, is all for an Accadian etymology, or a Semitic derivation. Again, even when scholars agree as to the original root from which a name springs, they differ as much as ever as to the meaning of the name in its present place.

The inference is, that the analysis of names, on which the whole edifice of philological 'comparative mythology' rests, is a foundation of shifting sand. The method is called 'orthodox,' but, among those who practise it, there is none of the beautiful unanimity of orthodoxy.

These objections are not made by the unscholarly anthropologist alone. Curtius has especially remarked the difficulties which beset the 'etymological operation' in the case of proper names. 'Peculiarly dubious and perilous is mythological etymology. Are we to seek the sources of the divine names in aspects of nature, or in moral conceptions; in special Greek geographical conditions, or in natural circumstances which are everywhere the same: in dawn with her rays, or in clouds with their floods; are we to seek the origin of the names of heroes in things historical and human, or in physical phenomena?' {3a} Professor Tiele, of Leyden, says much the same thing: 'The uncertainties are great, and there is a constant risk of taking mere *jeux d'esprit* for scientific results.' {3b} Every name has, if we can discover or conjecture it, a meaning. That meaning—be it 'large' or 'small,' 'loud' or 'bright,' 'wise' or 'dark,' 'swift' or 'slow'—is always capable of being explained as an epithet of the sun, or of the cloud, or of both. Whatever, then, a name may signify, some scholars will find that it originally denoted the cloud, if they belong to one school, or the sun or dawn, if they belong to another faction. Obviously this process is a mere *jeu d'esprit*. This logic would be admitted in no other science, and, by similar arguments, any name whatever might be shown to be appropriate to a solar hero.

The scholarly method has now been applied for many years, and what are the results? The ideas attained by the method have been so popularised that they are actually made to enter into the education of children, and are published in primers and catechisms of mythology. But what has a discreet scholar to say to the whole business? 'The difficult task of interpreting mythical names has, so far, produced few certain results'—so writes Otto Schrader. {4} Though Schrader still has hopes of better things, it is admitted that the present results are highly disputable. In England, where one set of these results has become an article of faith, readers chiefly accept the opinions of a single etymological school, and thus escape the difficulty of making up their minds when scholars differ. But differ

scholars do, so widely and so often, that scarcely any solid advantages have been gained in mythology from the philological method.

The method of philological mythology is thus discredited by the disputes of its adherents. The system may be called orthodox, but it is an orthodoxy which alters with every new scholar who enters the sacred enclosure. Even were there more harmony, the analysis of names could throw little light on myths. In stories the names may well be, and often demonstrably are, the latest, not the original, feature. Tales, at first told of 'Somebody,' get new names attached to them, and obtain a new local habitation, wherever they wander. 'One of the leading personages to be met in the traditions of the world is really no more than—Somebody. There is nothing this wondrous creature cannot achieve; one only restriction binds him at all—that the name he assumes shall have some sort of congruity with the office he undertakes, *and even from this he oftentimes breaks loose.*' {5} We may be pretty sure that the adventures of Jason, Perseus, Œdipous, were originally told only of 'Somebody.' The names are later additions, and vary in various lands. A glance at the essay on 'Cupid and Psyche' will show that a history like theirs is known, where neither they nor their counterparts in the Veda, Urvasi and Pururavas, were ever heard of; while the incidents of the Jason legend are familiar where no Greek word was ever spoken. Finally, the names in common use among savages are usually derived from natural phenomena, often from clouds, sky, sun, dawn. If, then, a name in a myth can be proved to mean cloud, sky, sun, or what not (and usually one set of scholars find clouds, where others see the dawn), we must not instantly infer that the myth is a nature-myth. Though, doubtless, the heroes in it were never real people, the names are as much common names of real people in the savage state, as Smith and Brown are names of civilised men.

For all these reasons, but chiefly because of the fact that stories are usually anonymous at first, that names are added later, and that stories naturally crystallise round any famous name, heroic, divine, or human, the process of analysis of names is most precarious and untrustworthy. A story is told of Zeus: Zeus means sky, and the story is interpreted by scholars as a sky myth. The modern interpreter forgets, first, that to the myth-maker sky did not at all mean

the same thing as it means to him. Sky meant, not an airy, infinite, radiant vault, but a person, and, most likely, a savage person. Secondly, the interpreter forgets that the tale (say the tale of Zeus, Demeter, and the mutilated Ram) may have been originally anonymous, and only later attributed to Zeus, as unclaimed jests are attributed to Sheridan or Talleyrand. Consequently no heavenly phenomena will be the basis and explanation of the story. If one thing in mythology be certain, it is that myths are always changing masters, that the old tales are always being told with new names. Where, for example, is the value of a philological analysis of the name of Jason? As will be seen in the essay 'A Far-travelled Tale,' the analysis of the name of Jason is fanciful, precarious, disputed, while the essence of his myth is current in Samoa, Finland, North America, Madagascar, and other lands, where the name was never heard, and where the characters in the story have other names or are anonymous.

For these reasons, and others too many to be adduced here, I have ventured to differ from the current opinion that myths must be interpreted chiefly by philological analysis of names. The system adopted here is explained in the first essay, called 'The Method of Folklore.' The name, Folklore, is not a good one, but 'comparative mythology' is usually claimed exclusively by the philological interpreters.

The second essay, 'The Bull-Roarer,' is intended to show that certain peculiarities in the Greek mysteries occur also in the mysteries of savages, and that on Greek soil they are survivals of savagery.

'The Myth of Cronus' tries to prove that the first part of the legend is a savage nature-myth, surviving in Greek religion, while the sequel is a set of ideas common to savages.

'Cupid and Psyche' traces another Aryan myth among savage races, and attempts to show that the myth may have had its origin in a rule of barbarous etiquette.

'A Far-travelled Tale' examines a part of the Jason myth. This myth appears neither to be an explanation of natural phenomena (like part of the Myth of Cronus), nor based on a widespread custom (like Cupid and Psyche.) The question is asked whether the story may have been diffused by slow filtration from race to race all

over the globe, as there seems no reason why it should have been invented separately (as a myth explanatory of natural phenomena or of customs might be) in many different places.

'Apollo and the Mouse' suggests hypothetically, as a possible explanation of the tie between the God and the Beast, that Apollo-worship superseded, but did not eradicate, Totemism. The suggestion is little more than a conjecture.

'Star Myths' points out that Greek myths of stars are a survival from the savage stage of fancy in which such stories are natural.

'Moly and Mandragora' is a study of the Greek, the modern, and the Hottentot folklore of magical herbs, with a criticism of a scholarly and philological hypothesis, according to which Moly is the dog-star, and Circe the moon.

'The Kalevala' is an account of the Finnish national poem; of all poems that in which the popular, as opposed to the artistic, spirit is strongest. The Kalevala is thus a link between *Mdrchen* and *Volkslieder* on one side, and epic poetry on the other.

'The Divining Rod' is a study of a European and civilised superstition, which is singular in its comparative lack of copious savage analogues.

'Hottentot Mythology' is a criticism of the philological method, applied to savage myth.

'Fetichism and the Infinite,' is a review of Mr. Max Müller's theory that a sense of the Infinite is the germ of religion, and that Fetichism is secondary, and a corruption. This essay also contains a defence of the *evidence* on which the anthropological method relies.

The remaining essays are studies of the 'History of the Family,' and of 'Savage Art.'

The essay on 'Savage Art' is reprinted, by the kind permission of Messrs. Cassell & Co., from two numbers (April and May, 1882) of the *Magazine of Art*. I have to thank the editors and publishers of the *Contemporary Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and *Fraser's Magazine*, for leave to republish 'The Early History of the Family,' 'The Divining Rod,' and 'Star Myths,' and 'The Kalevala.' A few sentences in 'The Bull-Roarer,' and 'Hottentot Mythology,' appeared in essays in

the *Saturday Review*, and some lines of 'The Method of Folklore' in the *Guardian*. To the editors of those journals also I owe thanks for their courteous permission to make this use of my old articles.

To Mr. E. B. Tylor and Mr. W. R. S. Ralston I must express my gratitude for the kindness with which they have always helped me in all difficulties.

I must apologise for the controversial matter in the volume. Controversy is always a thing to be avoided, but, in this particular case, when a system opposed to the prevalent method has to be advocated, controversy is unavoidable. My respect for the learning of my distinguished adversaries is none the less great because I am not convinced by their logic, and because my doubts are excited by their differences.

Perhaps, it should be added, that these essays are, so to speak, only flint-flakes from a neolithic workshop. This little book merely skirmishes (to change the metaphor) in front of a much more methodical attempt to vindicate the anthropological interpretation of myths. But lack of leisure and other causes make it probable that my 'Key to All Mythologies' will go the way of Mr. Casaubon's treatise.

## THE METHOD OF FOLKLORE.

After the heavy rain of a thunderstorm has washed the soil, it sometimes happens that a child, or a rustic, finds a wedge-shaped piece of metal or a few triangular flints in a field or near a road. There was no such piece of metal, there were no such flints, lying there yesterday, and the finder is puzzled about the origin of the objects on which he has lighted. He carries them home, and the village wisdom determines that the wedge-shaped piece of metal is a 'thunderbolt,' or that the bits of flint are 'elf-shots,' the heads of fairy arrows. Such things are still treasured in remote nooks of England, and the 'thunderbolt' is applied to cure certain maladies by its touch.

As for the fairy arrows, we know that even in ancient Etruria they were looked on as magical, for we sometimes see their points set, as amulets, in the gold of Etruscan necklaces. In Perugia the arrow-heads are still sold as charms. All educated people, of course, have long been aware that the metal wedge is a celt, or ancient bronze axe-head, and that it was not fairies, but the forgotten peoples of this island who used the arrows with the tips of flint. Thunder is only so far connected with them that the heavy rains loosen the surface soil, and lay bare its long hidden secrets.

There is a science, Archfology, which collects and compares the material relics of old races, the axes and arrow-heads. There is a form of study, Folklore, which collects and compares the similar but immaterial relics of old races, the surviving superstitions and stories, the ideas which are in our time but not of it. Properly speaking, folklore is only concerned with the legends, customs, beliefs, of the Folk, of the people, of the classes which have least been altered by education, which have shared least in progress. But the student of folklore soon finds that these unprogressive classes retain many of the beliefs and ways of savages, just as the Hebridean people use spindle-whorls of stone, and bake clay pots without the aid of the wheel, like modern South Sea Islanders, or like their own prehistoric ancestors. {11a} The student of folklore is thus led to examine the usages, myths, and ideas of savages, which are still retained, in rude enough shape, by the European peasantry. Lastly, he observes that a

few similar customs and ideas survive in the most conservative elements of the life of educated peoples, in ritual, ceremonial, and religious traditions and myths. Though such remains are rare in England, we may note the custom of leading the dead soldier's horse behind his master to the grave, a relic of days when the horse would have been sacrificed. {11b} We may observe the persistence of the ceremony by which the monarch, at his coronation, takes his seat on the sacred stone of Scone, probably an ancient fetich stone. Not to speak, here, of our own religious traditions, the old vein of savage rite and belief is found very near the surface of ancient Greek religion. It needs but some stress of circumstance, something answering to the storm shower that reveals the flint arrow-heads, to bring savage ritual to the surface of classical religion. In sore need, a human victim was only too likely to be demanded; while a feast-day, or a mystery, set the Greeks dancing serpent-dances or bear-dances like Red Indians, or swimming with sacred pigs, or leaping about in imitation of wolves, or holding a dog-feast, and offering dog's flesh to the gods. {12} Thus the student of folklore soon finds that he must enlarge his field, and examine, not only popular European story and practice, but savage ways and ideas, and the myths and usages of the educated classes in civilised races. In this extended sense the term 'folklore' will frequently be used in the following essays. The idea of the writer is that mythology cannot fruitfully be studied apart from folklore, while some knowledge of anthropology is required in both sciences.

The science of Folklore, if we may call it a science, finds everywhere, close to the surface of civilised life, the remains of ideas as old as the stone elf-shots, older than the celt of bronze. In proverbs and riddles, and nursery tales and superstitions, we detect the relics of a stage of thought, which is dying out in Europe, but which still exists in many parts of the world. Now, just as the flint arrow-heads are scattered everywhere, in all the continents and isles, and everywhere are much alike, and bear no very definite marks of the special influence of race, so it is with the habits and legends investigated by the student of folklore. The stone arrow-head buried in a Scottish cairn is like those which were interred with Algonquin chiefs. The flints found in Egyptian soil, or beside the tumulus on the plain of Marathon, nearly resemble the stones which tip the reed arrow of

the modern Samoyed. Perhaps only a skilled experience could discern, in a heap of such arrow-heads, the specimens which are found in America or Africa from those which are unearthed in Europe. Even in the products of more advanced industry, we see early pottery, for example, so closely alike everywhere that, in the British Museum, Mexican vases have, ere now, been mixed up on the same shelf with archaic vessels from Greece. In the same way, if a superstition or a riddle were offered to a student of folklore, he would have much difficulty in guessing its *provenance*, and naming the race from which it was brought. Suppose you tell a folklorist that, in a certain country, when anyone sneezes, people say 'Good luck to you,' the student cannot say *a priori* what country you refer to, what race you have in your thoughts. It may be Florida, as Florida was when first discovered; it may be Zululand, or West Africa, or ancient Rome, or Homeric Greece, or Palestine. In all these, and many other regions, the sneeze was welcomed as an auspicious omen. The little superstition is as widely distributed as the flint arrow-heads. Just as the object and use of the arrow-heads became intelligible when we found similar weapons in actual use among savages, so the salutation to the sneezer becomes intelligible when we learn that the savage has a good reason for it. He thinks the sneeze expels an evil spirit. Proverbs, again, and riddles are as universally scattered, and the Wolufs puzzle over the same *devinettes* as the Scotch schoolboy or the Breton peasant. Thus, for instance, the Wolufs of Senegal ask each other, 'What flies for ever, and rests never?' — Answer, 'The Wind.' 'Who are the comrades that always fight, and never hurt each other?' — 'The Teeth.' In France, as we read in the 'Recueil de Calembours,' the people ask, 'What runs faster than a horse, crosses water, and is not wet?' — Answer, 'The Sun.' The Samoans put the riddle, 'A man who stands between two ravenous fishes?' — Answer, 'The tongue between the teeth.' Again, 'There are twenty brothers, each with a hat on his head?' — Answer, 'Fingers and toes, with nails for hats.' This is like the French '*un phre a douze fils?*' — '*l'an.*' A comparison of M. Rolland's 'Devinettes' with the Woluf conundrums of Boilat, the Samoan examples in Turner's 'Samoa,' and the Scotch enigmas collected by Chambers, will show the identity of peasant and savage humour.

A few examples, less generally known, may be given to prove that the beliefs of folklore are not peculiar to any one race or stock of men. The first case is remarkable: it occurs in Mexico and Ceylon—nor are we aware that it is found elsewhere. In *Macmillan's Magazine*{15} is published a paper by Mrs. Edwards, called 'The Mystery of the Pezazi.' The events described in this narrative occurred on August 28, 1876, in a bungalow some thirty miles from Badiella. The narrator occupied a new house on an estate called Allagalla. Her native servants soon asserted that the place was haunted by a Pezazi. The English visitors saw and heard nothing extraordinary till a certain night: an abridged account of what happened then may be given in the words of Mrs. Edwards:—

Wrapped in dreams, I lay on the night in question tranquilly sleeping, but gradually roused to a perception that discordant sounds disturbed the serenity of my slumber. Loth to stir, I still dozed on, the sounds, however, becoming, as it seemed, more determined to make themselves heard; and I awoke to the consciousness that they proceeded from a belt of adjacent jungle, and resembled the noise that would be produced by some person felling timber.

Shutting my ears to the disturbance, I made no sign, until, with an expression of impatience, E--- suddenly started up, when I laid a detaining grasp upon his arm, murmuring that there was no need to think of rising at present—it must be quite early, and the kitchen cooly was doubtless cutting firewood in good time. E--- responded, in a tone of slight contempt, that no one could be cutting firewood at that hour, and the sounds were more suggestive of felling jungle; and he then inquired how long I had been listening to them. Now thoroughly aroused, I replied that I had heard the sounds for some time, at first confusing them with my dreams, but soon sufficiently awakening to the fact that they were no mere phantoms of my imagination, but a reality. During our conversation the

noises became more distinct and loud; blow after blow resounded, as of the axe descending upon the tree, followed by the crash of the falling timber. Renewed blows announced the repetition of the operations on another tree, and continued till several were devastated.

It is unnecessary to tell more of the tale. In spite of minute examinations and close search, no solution of the mystery of the noises, on this or any other occasion, was ever found. The natives, of course, attributed the disturbance to the *Pezazi*, or goblin. No one, perhaps, has asserted that the Aztecs were connected by ties of race with the people of Ceylon. Yet, when the Spaniards conquered Mexico, and when Sahagun (one of the earliest missionaries) collected the legends of the people, he found them, like the Cingalese, strong believers in the mystic tree-felling. We translate Sahagun's account of the 'midnight axe':—

When so any man heareth the sound of strokes in the night, as if one were felling trees, he reckons it an evil boding. And this sound they call youal-tepuztli (youalli, night; and tepuztli, copper), which signifies 'the midnight hatchet.' This noise cometh about the time of the first sleep, when all men slumber soundly, and the night is still. The sound of strokes smitten was first noted by the temple-servants, called tlamacazque, at the hour when they go in the night to make their offering of reeds or of boughs of pine, for so was their custom, and this penance they did on the neighbouring hills, and that when the night was far spent. Whenever they heard such a sound as one makes when he splits wood with an axe (a noise that may be heard afar off), they drew thence an omen of evil, and were afraid, and said that the sounds were part of the witchery of Tezeatlipoca, that often thus dismayeth men who journey in the night. Now, when tidings of these things came to a certain brave man, one exercised in war, he drew near, being guided by the sound, till he came to the

very cause of the hubbub. And when he came upon it, with difficulty he caught it, for the thing was hard to catch: nathless at last he overtook that which ran before him; and behold, it was a man without a heart, and, on either side of the chest, two holes that opened and shut, and so made the noise. Then the man put his hand within the breast of the figure and grasped the breast and shook it hard, demanding some grace or gift.

As a rule, the grace demanded was power to make captives in war. The curious coincidence of the 'midnight axe,' occurring in lands so remote as Ceylon and Mexico, and the singular attestation by an English lady of the actual existence of the disturbance, makes this *yoyaltepuzlli* one of the quaintest things in the province of the folklorist. But, whatever the cause of the noise, or of the beliefs connected with the noise, may be, no one would explain them as the result of community of *race* between Cingalese and Aztecs. Nor would this explanation be offered to account for the Aztec and English belief that the creaking of furniture is an omen of death in a house. Obviously, these opinions are the expression of a common state of superstitious fancy, not the signs of an original community of origin.

Let us take another piece of folklore. All North-country English folk know the *Kernababy*. The custom of the 'Kernababy' is commonly observed in England, or, at all events, in Scotland, where the writer has seen many a kernababy. The last gleanings of the last field are bound up in a rude imitation of the human shape, and dressed in some tag-rags of finery. The usage has fallen into the conservative hands of children, but of old 'the Maiden' was a regular image of the harvest goddess, which, with a sickle and sheaves in her arms, attended by a crowd of reapers, and accompanied with music, followed the last carts home to the farm. {18} It is odd enough that the 'Maiden' should exactly translate *Kopη*, the old Sicilian name of the daughter of Demeter. 'The Maiden' has dwindled, then, among us to the rudimentary kernababy; but ancient Peru had her own Maiden, her Harvest Goddess. Here it is easy to trace the natural idea at the basis of the superstitious practice which links the shores of the Pacific with our own northern coast. Just as a

portion of the yule-log and of the Christmas bread were kept all the year through, a kind of nest-egg of plenteous food and fire, so the kernababy, English or Peruvian, is an earnest that corn will not fail all through the year, till next harvest comes. For this reason the kernababy used to be treasured from autumn's end to autumn's end, though now it commonly disappears very soon after the harvest home. It is thus that Acosta describes, in Grimston's old translation (1604), the Peruvian kernababy and the Peruvian harvest home:—

This feast is made comming from the chacra or farme unto the house, saying certaine songs, and praying that the Mays (maize) may long continue, the which they call Mama cora.

What a chance this word offers to etymologists of the old school: how promptly they would recognise, in *mama* mother—μητηρ, and in *cora*—κορη, the Mother and the Maiden, the feast of Demeter and Persephone! However, the days of that old school of antiquarianism are numbered. To return to the Peruvian harvest home:—

They take a certaine portion of the most fruitfull of the Mays that growes in their farmes, the which they put in a certaine granary which they do calle Pirua, with certaine ceremonies, watching three nightes; they put this Mays in the richest garments they have, and, being thus wrapped and dressed, they worship this Pirua, and hold it in great veneration, saying it is the Mother of the Mays of their inheritances, and that by this means the Mays augments and is preserved. In this moneth they make a particular sacrifice, and the witches demand of this Pirua, 'if it hath strength sufficient to continue until the next year,' and if it answers 'no,' then they carry this Mays to the farme to burne, whence they brought it, according to every man's power, then they make another Pirua, with the same ceremonies, saying that they renue it, to the ende that the seede of the Mays may not perish.

The idea that the maize can speak need not surprise us; the Mexican held much the same belief, according to Sahagun:—

It was thought that if some grains of maize fell on the ground, he who saw them lying there was bound to lift them, wherein, if he failed, he harmed the maize, which plained itself of him to God, saying, 'Lord, punish this man, who saw me fallen and raised me not again; punish him with famine, that he may learn not to hold me in dishonour.'

Well, in all this affair of the Scotch kernababy, and the Peruvian *Mama cora*, we need no explanation beyond the common simple ideas of human nature. We are not obliged to hold, either that the Peruvians and Scotch are akin by blood, nor that, at some forgotten time, they met each other, and borrowed each other's superstitions. Again, when we find Odysseus sacrificing a black sheep to the dead, {20} and when we read that the Ovahereroes in South Africa also appease with a black sheep the spirits of the departed, we do not feel it necessary to hint that the Ovahereroes are of Greek descent, or have borrowed their ritual from the Greeks. The connection between the colour black, and mourning for the dead, is natural and almost universal.

Examples like these might be adduced in any number. We might show how, in magic, negroes of Barbadoes make clay effigies of their enemies, and pierce them, just as Greeks did in Plato's time, or the men of Accad in remotest antiquity. We might remark the Australian black putting sharp bits of quartz in the tracks of an enemy who has gone by, that the enemy may be lamed; and we might point to Boris Godunof forbidding the same practice among the Russians. We might watch Scotch, and Australians, and Jews, and French, and Aztecs spreading dust round the body of a dead man, that the footprints of his ghost, or of other ghosts, may be detected next morning. We might point to a similar device in a modern novel, where the presence of a ghost is suspected, as proof of the similar workings of the Australian mind and of the mind of Mrs. Riddell. We shall later turn to ancient Greece, and show how the serpent-dances, the habit of smearing the body with clay, and other odd

rites of the mysteries, were common to Hellenic religion, and to the religion of African, Australian, and American tribes.

Now, with regard to all these strange usages, what is the method of folklore? The method is, when an apparently irrational and anomalous custom is found in any country, to look for a country where a similar practice is found, and where the practice is no longer irrational and anomalous, but in harmony with the manners and ideas of the people among whom it prevails. That Greeks should dance about in their mysteries with harmless serpents in their hands looks quite unintelligible. When a wild tribe of Red Indians does the same thing, as a trial of courage, with real rattlesnakes, we understand the Red Man's motives, and may conjecture that similar motives once existed among the ancestors of the Greeks. Our method, then, is to compare the seemingly meaningless customs or manners of civilised races with the similar customs and manners which exist among the uncivilised and still retain their meaning. It is not necessary for comparison of this sort that the uncivilised and the civilised race should be of the same stock, nor need we prove that they were ever in contact with each other. Similar conditions of mind produce similar practices, apart from identity of race, or borrowing of ideas and manners.

Let us return to the example of the flint arrowheads. Everywhere neolithic arrow-heads are pretty much alike. The cause of the resemblance is no more than this, that men, with the same needs, the same materials, and the same rude instruments, everywhere produced the same kind of arrow-head. No hypothesis of interchange of ideas nor of community of race is needed to explain the resemblance of form in the missiles. Very early pottery in any region is, for the same causes, like very early pottery in any other region. The same sort of similarity was explained by the same resemblances in human nature, when we touched on the identity of magical practices and of superstitious beliefs. This method is fairly well established and orthodox when we deal with usages and superstitious beliefs; but may we apply the same method when we deal with myths?

Here a difficulty occurs. Mythologists, as a rule, are averse to the method of folklore. They think it scientific to compare only the myths of races which speak languages of the same family, and of

racés which have, in historic times, been actually in proved contact with each other. Thus, most mythologists hold it correct to compare Greek, Slavonic, Celtic, and Indian stories, because Greeks, Slavs, Celts, and Hindoos all speak languages of the same family. Again, they hold it correct to compare Chaldfan and Greek myths, because the Greeks and the Chaldfans were brought into contact through the Phœnicians, and by other intermediaries, such as the Hittites. But the same mythologists will vow that it is unscientific to compare a Maori or a Hottentot or an Eskimo myth with an Aryan story, because Maoris and Eskimo and Hottentots do not speak languages akin to that of Greece, nor can we show that the ancestors of Greeks, Maoris, Hottentots, and Eskimo were ever in contact with each other in historical times.

Now the peculiarity of the method of folklore is that it will venture to compare (with due caution and due examination of evidence) the myths of the most widely severed races. Holding that myth is a product of the early human fancy, working on the most rudimentary knowledge of the outer world, the student of folklore thinks that differences of race do not much affect the early mythopœic faculty. He will not be surprised if Greeks and Australian blacks are in the same tale.

In each case, he holds, all the circumstances of the case must be examined and considered. For instance, when the Australians tell a myth about the Pleiades very like the Greek myth of the Pleiades, we must ask a number of questions. Is the Australian version authentic? Can the people who told it have heard it from a European? If these questions are answered so as to make it apparent that the Australian Pleiad myth is of genuine native origin, we need not fly to the conclusion that the Australians are a lost and forlorn branch of the Aryan race. Two other hypotheses present themselves. First, the human species is of unknown antiquity. In the moderate allowance of 250,000 years, there is time for stories to have wandered all round the world, as the Aggry beads of Ashanti have probably crossed the continent from Egypt, as the Asiatic jade (if Asiatic it be) has arrived in Swiss lake-dwellings, as an African trade-cowry is said to have been found in a Cornish barrow, as an Indian Ocean shell has been discovered in a prehistoric bone-cave in Poland. This slow filtration of tales is not absolutely out of the question. Two