

Nevertheless, even the Australian savage manifests such vague traces of the rudiments of religious belief as are implied by a faith in some supernatural power. The aborigines occasionally refer to an imaginary evil-being, whom those I am describing call Jahnac, to whom they give credit for all sickness and misfortunes that may befall them, and whose principal occupation, they say, is to roam about the earth at night, watching to harm such stragglers as may unfortunately happen to fall in his way. Some of the valiant ones, indeed, will even boast of personal encounters and interviews with him; but what Jahnac is like, or what his powers are, none can distinctly tell. Even to those who boast of having encountered him Jahnac remains a mystery. Still they appear to have an indistinct idea of something that has the power of injuring them. Anything and everything accordingly, which frightens them, is Jahnac; but, however much they may dislike leaving their fires at night for fear of coming in contact with him, Jahnac is not worshipped by them, nor do they seek in any way to propitiate him, or manifest respect for him otherwise than what is implied by abject fear.

But although entertaining such vague and grovelling ideas of any spiritual power, and, properly speaking, destitute of all conception of a Supreme Being—these savages, nevertheless, labor under many strange delusions, tantamount, in some cases, to what might be called a religious belief. It generally follows that where the mind is not pre-occupied by any higher form of religious belief, it becomes the dupe of designing cunning and craftiness. This is strikingly exemplified in the Australian savage.

In the description of the different Tribes given in a former paper, it was mentioned that the Cockatoo-men, or a portion of that tribe, had acquired a strange and mysterious influence over their neighbors. I shall now endeavor to relate in what manner this influence is exercised, and the light in which its possessors are regarded, by those who do not belong to the exclusive circle.

The Cockatoo-men are believed to control the elements, and to direct the heavenly bodies; through Jahnac, their ally, they are supposed to have the power of inflicting disease and death upon whomsoever they will. The voice of the Cockatoo-man is heard in the thunder, and lightning is the bursting forth of his wrath, or the manifestation of his displeasure and approaching vengeance. No sooner does the vivid flash dart along the horizon, and the distant murmur of thunder fall upon the ear, than the native crouches within his wigwam, and cries:—"The Cockatoo-man speaks—he is sulky!" Should the husband, the wife, or the child, feel the pains of sickness,