

THE PLEIADES IN LEGENDS, GREEK DRAMA AND ORIENTATION. BY J. C. HAMILTON, M.A., LL.B.

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Mr. Hamilton showed that the Seven Stars, by their gentle rays, impressed their image on the scroll of humanity in all ages. They were the clock stars of old astronomers, the guides of the mariner in his voyaging, and the husbandman in his seasons. The cluster was a familiar object in early British days. "Ye Old Seven Stars" is an inn in Manchester, whose license dates back to the reign of Edward III., in 1356, and the time of Chaucer. Guy Fawkes was here a visitor. Clubs of literary and social character took their names from the Pleiades.

The Seven Wise Men of Greece included Solon and Thales, the astronomer. Ptolemy Philadelphus had a Pleiad of Tragic Poets. Charlemagne formed a similar literary party, himself being one. Henry III. of France had his Great Pleiade, and Louis XIII. followed the example. In New England, there was a Pleiad of Yale poets, including Timothy Dwight and other ante-revolutionary men of learning. All poets have found them fit subjects for their muse. In "Locksley Hall," their rising is beautifully described. Wordsworth speaks of them, in his poem "Peter Bell:"

"The Pleiads that appear to kiss  
Each other in the vast abyss,  
With joy, I sail among them."

The cluster was affectionately regarded in Germany, Servia and Spain.

In the famous adventures of Don Quixote, that knight and Sancho Panza were made to pass the place where the "Little Nanny Goats," as they were called, were kept, and Sancho describes them inimitably. Thus the Spanish peasantry style these far-away, twinkling orbs.

Allusion was made to the customs in India, in reference to the measure of time and observing of feasts in honour of these stars. So, also, in China, where they are the Seven Sisters of Industry.

American legends as to them were discussed at length. They were also prominent in the religious ritual of the Aztecs and their successors in Mexico. In Peru, they were the gods of rain, and the year was counted, not by the sun but by them. The legends were very marked among the Blackfeet, Hydahs, Crees, Ojibways and Cherokees, of which interesting examples were given. While these are generally rudely drawn tales, inherited often from Asiatic ancestry, they have features in common; the persons represented are always seven, of whom one is lost or otherwise disappears.

The Blackfeet have a zodiac of 29 constellations.

Mr. Hamilton then discussed the beautiful references to these stars in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, and the Iphigenia and other dramas of Euripides.

In the building of temples and other public structures, reference was, by the Egyptians, Greeks and other ancient people, made to a particular star at its rising or setting. Such star was used as a clock, its light being made to fall into the temple an hour before sunrise, that time being fixed for the morning sacrifice. Among temples oriented to Alcyone, chief star of the Pleiades, were that of Minerva, at Athens, 1530 B.C.; the temple built in 1150 B.C., on the site afterwards occupied by the Parthenon; that of Bacchus, at Athens, and several others. The Jews avoided this custom as heathenish. The Temple of Solomon and the Tabernacle were so designed as to cause the worshippers to face west.