

earlier world as pioneers of navigation among the far-eastern islands. The aboriginal people of Madagascar, again, were apparently not African at all, but members of the still more ancient Melanesian race, which is scattered in little groups over so many parts of the Pacific and the Malay Archipelago. This race apparently spoke already, at an early date, the common Malayo-Polynesian tongue—that widespread speech which, as we now know, forms the basis of all the dialects in use from Madagascar itself, right across Java, New Zealand, and Melanesia, to the Sandwich Islands and the very shores of America. And, what is odder still, the Malagasy dialect of the present day approaches nearest to that of the Philippines and of Easter Island. In other words, at these immense distances relics of an ancient common language survive, which elsewhere has undergone specialization and simplification into the modern Malay of Java and its neighborhood. It is almost as though somewhere, among scattered villages in Portugal and Roumania, people were still speaking tolerably pure Ciceronian Latin, which elsewhere had glided by imperceptible degrees into French and Spanish, Italian and Provengal.

The lowest and oldest layer of the Malagasy population thus probably consists of black, woolly-haired Melanesians; above it come true yellow-brown Malayan immigrations, the last of which is apparently that of the dominant Hovas. These two have intermarried more or less with one another. But there is also a true negro admixture on the side nearest Africa; while the intrusive Arab has, of course, established himself along the coast line wherever he found an opening for his intrusive genius. Thus, even before Christianity and the European element came in to disturb our view, the ethnical facts of the island were tolerably mixed, and presented several problems on which I have not space to touch. But if this seems a good deal of ethnology for a single land, we must remember that Madagascar would cut up into four of England; and even in our own country the known elements of the population, Silurian, Cymric, Brigantian, Cornish, Anglian, Saxon, Norwegian, Danish, Norman, and so forth, are sufficiently numerous; while modern anthropologists would probably fight hard for an admixture of Palæolithic, Neolithic, Roman, Dacian, and Spanish elements, as well as for a trifling fraction of Jewish, Gypsy, Huguenot, and negro blood. It is a truism now to say that there is "no such thing as a pure race;" every individual, especially in civilized countries, is a meeting-place and battlefield for endless and conflicting ancestors. Our idiosyncrasy depends in the end upon the proportion of each which comes out victor in the formation of our character.