

first discovered, first to be regarded with gratitude and awe; and that the theory that it derived its source from the flaming messenger of the sky was a result of long subsequent reasoning.

The sentiments out of which the worship of Fire arose are perhaps still experienced, almost in their original form, by the voyageur who paddles in the falling darkness towards his rendezvous in the wilderness. Night's rushing wings pursue and overtake the laboring paddles. The waters grow obscure and cheerless; the sky becomes gloomy and threatening; the shores are transformed into solemn and formless masses. In the group of human beings the voice of mirth is checked; the song dies away: the lonesome spirit which inhabits the night takes possession of every soul. The wind chills; perhaps the rain pelts upon the shelterless backs; perhaps the storm begins to gloom. But suddenly the last point is turned, the gleam of a camp-fire, still distant, but not known to be near, is perceived,—a ruddy, distant star gleaming invitingly and cheerfully across the waste. No one can describe, no one can give a name to the feeling of cheerfulness and hope, the suggestion of human comradeship and security, which the sight of that little spark is capable of awaking in the breasts of men under these circumstances. It is the formless and unexpressed germ of everything to which we give the name of gratitude. The social sense itself, in its charm and its association, attaches to that spot of distant light. Comfort and companionship, the consolation of mutual help, the blind sense of a great mysterious gift, enter through the senses into the mind. If we could remove from our minds all their garniture of modern enlightenment and religious instruction, and place ourselves under the like circumstances, in the position of the rude predecessors of thousands of years ago—would not these feelings, experienced under like circumstances, take a shape not to be

distinguished from unconscious worship of the mystic element? Then let us remember that before lucifer matches, before even steel and tinder were familiarly known, fire was a thousand times more of the nature of a rare and mysterious gift, difficult of production and precious for preservation, than it is easy for us now to conceive. The very means of its production at will may long have been a jealously preserved secret in families and tribes. The friction of the sticks, or striking of flint stones, may very naturally have been accompanied with invocations to the mysterious Being, which, it seemed, of its own will, had the power of making itself manifest, not at the command so much as at the appeal of man. So produced, so valuable to its possessors, the function of making fire, and of keeping the invaluable torch alight in the home or on the journey, would naturally invest the sage, whose charge it was, with the veneration and powers of priesthood. It seems an obvious relic of a time, when it was a difficult, rare, precarious, and infinitely precious possession, whose extinction was a tribal disaster, that we find in many of the priestly and national institutions of later ages. The fire that the colonist bore with him to his new plantation, the altars in ancient temples that were never suffered to go out, seem to have been customs that survived from those long-forgotten primitive conditions, when the valuable germ was anxiously preserved in sacred vessels, under the care of the wisest and most trusted old men of the family or tribe. To me, it seems most probable, therefore, that Fire was not worshipped because it resembled the sun, but rather that the sun, in time, became an object of worship, because of the conjecture of its unity of nature with the sacred hearth-fire of the tribe. Fire could transform their flesh into wholesome and agreeable nutriment. Fire, by its mysterious help, rescued the perishing form of the primitive being from the grasping