

drought, famine and pestilence, mists and vapours, were all endowed with the same life in a language which could adapt itself with a boundless elasticity to all physical conditions whatsoever. The thunder became the dark speech of the cloud which brought sickness and death. The eye of light which glares down through the dense storm vapours, was the eye of the monstrous child sprung from the union of the earth and the sea. If drought scorched the crops, it was because the chariot of the sun approached too near to the earth. If the storm kindled the forests into flame, it was because the wind was hungry; and if the fire alone devoured that which came in its way, it was because the wind, though able to kindle fire, could not satisfy with food the cravings of its hunger.

It would therefore be a grave error to suppose that the form of thought which laid the foundations of the most complicated mythology found utterance in phrases applicable only to one particular set of phenomena, instead of embracing all alike in proportion to the impression made by them on their imaginations, their hopes, and their fears. That these phrases would furnish the germs of myths or legends teeming with human feeling, as soon as the meaning of the phrases was in part or wholly forgotten, was as inevitable as that in the infancy of our race men should attribute to all sensible objects the same kind of life which they were conscious of possessing themselves. To trace back the theft of the Golden Fleece or the fair-haired Helen to the theft of the light from the sky by the dark night, to refer the wrath of the great chieftain of Phthia to the grief of the sun for the loss of the morning, may appear like the reduction of a complicated tale to a form too simple to be consistent with facts. But the objection applies with neither more nor less force to the phenomena of speech, in which it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that "the final perfection of the noblest languages has been the result of a slow and gradual development, under the impulse of tendencies and through the instrumentality of processes, which are even yet active in every living tongue;