

THE MYSTERY OF THE PLEIADES.

To show, however, how widely spread these traditions as to the Pleiades are, I may attempt to give the information which Dr. Tylor invites as to the myth of the lost Pleiad being a heritage among savages. The stars are only apparently six, yet all the world over, among civilized and savage races in Europe, in India, China, Japan, America and Africa, this diminutive star group is not merely regarded as seven stars, but what is still more surprising, as "The Seven Stars," though the far brighter seven stars of the Great Bear might seem to deserve the title. There are various myths to account for the missing Pleiad, but one I think will suffice to show that the Australians did not borrow the idea from Europeans. I once asked a native of the Gold Coast, a negro Hercules in strength, who had therefore been christened (probably by some pious naval officer) Fivehorsepower, whether he knew anything of the stars. "No!" he replied, "I know nuffin about de stars." "But don't you know anything of 'the seven stars?'" "Oh yes, of course," he answered; "every nigger knows de seben stars." "Why do you call them seven?" I asked him; "can you count seven stars?" "No," he replied, "you count one, two, three, four, five, six; then todder one hide herself, no let you count her." There is also a savage tradition, which I can recollect, that the Pleiades are young women, six of whom are very beautiful, but the seventh is so plain that she conceals herself from sight. Some tribes of the Australians dance in honor of the Pleiades, because "they are very good to the black fellows." Was this borrowed through Europeans from "the sweet influences of the Pleiades" which Job celebrates? Ask a negro in the Southern States to look through a telescope, and he will invariably turn it towards the Pleiades, "for they are berry good to the darkies." The natives

of America, both North and South, regard the Pleiades as beneficent stars and dance in their honor. "Oh, what do we owe to thee!" is the grateful salutation of one tribe. Whence then did this arise? It was not merely because those stars announced spring, and were "stars of rain," or because they were "for signs and for seasons and days and years," but also because they were connected with the idea of Paradise and the abode of Deity. The problematical theory of Moedler, that Alcyone, the brightest of the Pleiades, is the central sun of the universe, is most interesting on account of the singular fact that such was actually the belief of early ages. I have within the past year found unexpected, and I think conclusive, proofs that the name *Alcyone* (or rather *Alkyone*), meaning a centre, pivot, or turning point, was not given without some reason to that star, for the ancients in very remote ages undoubtedly believed that it was the centre of the universe, and that Paradise, the primeval home of our race and the abode of Deity and of the spirits of the dead, was in the Pleiades, traces of which ideas we even find among savages. The *Alkyonic* Lake, the waters of which led to the world of spirits, must have meant simply "the waters of death" leading to Alkyone or Paradise, and reminds us of Ulysses's voyage to the abodes of the dead and to the Gardens of Alkynoos. With the Pleiades, too, sacred birds (birds of Paradise) were connected. In my journal of researches (1863) I expressed my conviction that *Manu* (a word meaning, in the Indian Archipelago, a fowl or bird) would be found to have been connected with the Pleiades. I have been recently gratified at finding that in far distant Samoa there is a sacred bird called not *Manualli* the royal bird, as some European writers have assumed, but *Manu-lili*, the bird of the Pleiades. What a singular link we have here between the folk lore of these savages and that of the Old World, for