On the Animism of the Indians of British Guiana

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- From the SOCIETY.—Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, 1881, Nos. 1-5.
 —Dritter Jahresbericht des Vereins für Erdkunde zu Metz pro. 1880.
 —Boletim de Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa. 2^a Ser. Nos. 5, 6.
 From the CONDUCTOR.—The Scientific Roll. Part I. No. 4.
 From the EDITOR.—Journal of Mental Science, N.S., No. 82.
 —“Nature.” Nos. 609 to 626.
 —The Chrysanthemum. Vol. I, No. 6.
 —Revue Scientifique. Tom. XXVIII, Nos. 1 to 14, 16 to 19.
 —Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'homme. Tom. XII; liv. 6^e, 7^e.
 —Revue d'Anthropologie, 1881, No. 4.
 —Revista di Filosofia Scientifica, 1881, No. 1.
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It was announced that the following had been elected Members of the Institute:—

Dr. JOSEPH MAJER, of Cracow, as a Corresponding Member; and Miss LYDIA BECKER, Mrs. R. CRAWSHAY, Mrs. LLOYD, Miss ELEANOR E. SMITH, Miss WOLFE, Prof. H. ACLAND, M.A., M.D., LL.D., F.R.S., Jas. BACKHOUSE, Esq., W. BOWMAN, Esq., F.R.S., A. T. BRETT, Esq., M.D., Rev. H. CANHAM, B.C.L., J. G. GARSON, Esq., M.D., Hugh T. HALL, Esq., Captain HOZIER, W. J. KNOWLES, Esq., E. LLANFAIR LEWES, Esq., ALFRED LINGARD, Esq., M.B., G. D. LONGSTAFF, Esq., M.D., F.C.S., W. PARKIN, Esq., H. SEEBOHM, Esq., F.Z.S., M. STIRRUP, Esq., H. STOPES, Esq., F.G.S., R. THOMPSON, Esq., and Professor E. PERCEVAL WRIGHT, M.A., M.D., F.L.S., as Ordinary Members.

Dr. J. G. GARSON exhibited some improved forms of Anthropometric Instruments, upon which Professor FLOWER and Mr. G. M. ATKINSON made some remarks.

The following paper was then read by the author:—

On the ANIMISM of the INDIANS of BRITISH GUIANA.

By EVERARD F. IM THURN, Esq.

1. THE word “animism” was first brought into prominence by Mr. E. B. Tylor to express that belief in the existence of spirits which, under many different forms, is shared by all men, both savage and civil. Careful study of the particular form of animism which prevails among the Indians of British Guiana and comparison of this with the simpler, the similar, and the more developed forms of the same system of belief which occur among

the various Indians of the east of America seems to show that all these forms differ from each other, not in kind, but only in the various degrees of their development. The particular form which occurs in Guiana, though not of the most, is yet of a very primitive order; and it is therefore worthy of study as the germ, in a very early stage, from which the higher forms of animism have developed. Again, animism itself has been said to be the simplest form of religion, the germ from which all higher religion has sprung; and the mass of evidence in favour of this theory grows daily larger. It is at least certain that animism is among certain men in a primitive stage of savagery all that represents religion, and this is so among the Indians of Guiana, wherever the highly elaborated doctrines of civilised religion have not been forced into their unprepared minds. Moreover, animism is extremely interesting, not only in its relation to religion, but also because it explains, or at least throws light on the whole behaviour and habit of the primitive men who have no further religion; the whole social system of people so situated depends, when unaffected by European influence, upon their animism. For these reasons I propose to describe, as completely as may be, the animism of the Indians of British Guiana.

2. It need hardly be said that the man who above all others has made this study possible is Mr. Tylor. It is more necessary to add that, quite recently, and after I had gained my own personal experience of Indian habits of thought, I have derived considerable countenance from Mr. Rushton Dorman's book on "The Primitive Superstitions of the Aborigines of America." From that book I learned much. It is especially valuable in that it proclaims the true nature of that puzzling mass of supposed Red Skin religion which is really not of genuine American origin, but has been built up by the misunderstandings of prejudiced European missionaries and early travellers among the Indians. These observers constantly fancied traces of the doctrines of their own higher religion in the folk-lore of the Indians; and even, not unfrequently, they themselves first taught some doctrine or fact which, when afterwards reheard from Indian lips, transformed as it naturally must have been in the mind of the untutored savage, they failed to recognise as their own teaching, and thought they had discovered a doctrine or fact of genuine Indian origin. To give Mr. Dorman's own chief example of this source of error and confusion in the study of Indian animism, the far-famed "Great Spirit," or supreme god of the Indians, is almost certainly nothing more than a figure of European origin reflected and transformed almost beyond recognition in the mirror of the Indian mind. Yet while agreeing with the fun-

damental idea which underlies Mr. Dorman's book, it is impossible to agree with many of its details. Upon one of these points of disagreement I dwell especially, because it seems to me that it forms one of the greatest remaining obstacles to the proper study of the simple forms of animism held by savages. I allude to the constant unguarded use which, in describing animism, he, in common with other writers on the same subject, makes of terms which, having been, as it were, consecrated by their use in connection with the higher religions, have thus acquired inseparable meanings which make them most inappropriate to the description of animism. The point will be best explained by examples. Among these terms are "gods," "worship," "the resurrection of the body," "the Creator:" all of which, with many others, have, owing to their use in the language of the higher religions, acquired special meanings expressive of certain ideas which belong to these higher religions, but are entirely wanting in the lower, that is in animism, or at least in the lower forms of animism. Consequently their use to express other ideas which do occur in the lower religions is most confusing and a hindrance to study. The Indian in the lower stages of culture has an idea of the existence of beings other than those which we call animals, but has no idea of any beings with the attributes of gods. In other words, the beings which fill the Indian universe work, as will presently be shown, only according to natural laws, or rather, according to what seem to the Indian natural laws, and are not, as are gods, capable of supernatural action. When, therefore, Mr. Dorman uses the term *gods* of the beings who, because of their brute power, are simply feared by the Indians, totally erroneous ideas are suggested to the reader. The term *worship* is similarly misused. The Indian of low culture does not worship. For example, in Guiana no Indian worships, though in a few cases, presently to be described, he avoids certain merely dreaded beings, or, if avoidance is impossible, he strives to frighten and drive them away. Again, when Mr. Dorman says that "the belief in the *resurrection of the body* was universal among primitive people," he makes a statement almost certain to be misunderstood; for the term "resurrection of the body" has acquired for us certain definite doctrinal associations, none of which belong to the Indian belief to which Mr. Dorman alludes. That belief is simply that there is an occasional, not universal as he intimates, return of the spirit to its body after it has, at its own pleasure and for its own purposes, left the latter. To quote one more instance, the term *creator* is one which expresses an idea undreamed by the Indians. For example, Mr. Dorman says that the coyote plays the rôle of the creator in the following legend: "He filled himself with

the water of Clear Lake, after eating a great quantity of grasshoppers, and lay down to sleep, when he was thrust through with a spear, and all the water and grasshoppers ran out and down into the lake basin, and the insects became fish." Here there is obviously no idea of creation but only of natural metamorphosis brought about by the habit of all beings to adapt themselves to new circumstances, that is, the grasshoppers finding themselves in the water began to swim, and so became fishes. And in another significant passage the same writer uses the terms "ancestor" and "creator" as synonymous; which, though a common mistake, is not only an abuse of language, but shows that the writer has not fully realised the fact that the Indian has no idea of a beginning of things, of a creation, but only what is a very different matter of an eternal change of bodily forms.

3. It is as well to begin the study of animism by putting aside, as far as may be, all that knowledge of the physical and metaphysical condition of the universe which, having been accumulated during many centuries by our civilised ancestors, has been naturally inherited by us, and to attempt to realise the view which Indians themselves take of the world around them. Only when this has been done is it time to attempt to inquire how the simple and natural thoughts which are held by the Indians, could have gradually grown into the complex system of religious thought of civilised men. I shall therefore try to draw a picture of the world full of beings among which the Indian of British Guiana sees himself living.

Every Indian believes that he himself, and consequently every other man, consists of two parts, a body and a spirit. To one who has never given thought to such matters it may seem strange that a so-called savage should be able to form for himself any conception of a thing so immaterial as a spirit. Yet a little thought brings conviction that it is impossible that man, being rational and having once seen death, should fail to acquire such conception. When a man dies something goes, something is left. The survivors necessarily distinguish in thought between these two parts, and they call them respectively by some such names as spirit and body. A curious illustration of this is afforded by a saying of the Macusi Indians of Guiana, as they point out that at death the small human figure disappears from the pupil of a man's eye, that the spirit, the *emmarwarri*, as they call it, has gone from out of him. This alone is sufficient reason to the Indian for belief in the distinctness of body and spirit, as the two parts which separate at death.

But it is not only in death that the Indian sees the two

separate. It is a platitude among civilised people to remark on the similarity between "death and his brother sleep." But great as the similarity is to us it seems far greater to the Indian. To us the similarity lies merely in the fact that in both there is rest from the work of this life: but to the Indian it lies in the fact that in both the spirit departs from the body, only to continue its labours under hardly altered circumstances. The dreams which come in sleep to the Indian are to him as real as any of the events of his waking life. He regards his dream acts and his waking acts as differing only in one respect; that the former are done only by the spirit, the latter are done by the spirit in its body. When the Indian, just awake, tells the things which he did while asleep, his fellows reconcile such statements with the fact that the sleeper's body was in their sight and motionless during the time of supposed action, by the thought that the spirit of the sleeper left him and went out on its adventures. The complete reality of this belief in dream life and of the unbroken continuity of this with real life was forcibly exhibited in many incidents which came under my notice. For instance, one morning, when it was important to get away from a camp on the Essequibo River, at which I had been detained for some days by the illness of some of my Indian companions, I found that one of the invalids, a young Macusi Indian, though better in health, was so enraged against me that he refused to stir; for he declared that, with great want of consideration for his weak health, I had taken him out during the night and had made him drag the canoe up a series of difficult cataracts. Nothing would persuade him of the fact that this was but a dream; and it was long before he was sufficiently pacified to throw himself sullenly into the bottom of the canoe. At that time we were all suffering from a great scarcity of food; and, probably owing to the fact that hunger seems especially apt to cause such dreams, similar events very frequently occurred. Morning after morning, the Indians declared that some absent man, whom they named, had visited their hammocks during the night, and had beaten or otherwise maltreated them; and they always insisted upon much rubbing of the supposed bruised parts of their bodies. Another instance was amusing. In the middle of one night I was awakened by an Arawak named Sam, the captain or headman of my Indians, only to be told the bewildering words, "George speak me very bad, boss; you cut his bits." It was some time before I could sufficiently collect my senses to remember that "bits" or fourpenny pieces, are the units in which, among Creoles and semi-civilised Indians, calculations of money, and consequently of wages, is made; that "to cut bits" means to reduce the

number of bits or the wages given; and to understand that Sam, as captain, having dreamed that George, his subordinate, had spoken impudently to him, the former, with a fine sense of the dignity of his position, now insisted that the culprit should be punished in real life. One more incident of this same Sam may be told for the sake of its quaintness, though it did not happen within my personal experience but was told me by a friend in whose employ Sam was for a time. This friend told his men, as they sat round the camp fire one night, of the Zulu war, which was then in progress, and in so doing made frequent use of the expression "to punish the niggers." That night, after all in camp had fallen asleep, they were roused by loud cries for help. Sam, who was one of the most powerful Indians I ever saw, was found "punishing a nigger" who happened to be of the party; having with one hand firmly grasped the back of the breeches' band of the blackman, he had twisted this round so tightly that the poor victim was almost cut in two. When the two had been separated Sam sturdily maintained that he had received orders from his master for this outrageous conduct; and on enquiry it turned out that he had dreamed this. Many similar stories might be added; but enough has been said to exhibit the firm belief of the Indian in the separability of the spirit during sleep. It must be added that this belief extends, not only to the idea that the spirit of the dreamer leaves him and does various acts, but to the further idea that the spirits of others, of whom he dreams, are really, not merely subjectively, present; for the Indian who, as frequently happened, woke in the night uttering loud cries and assertions that he was being beaten by some enemy, was never convinced of the fallacy of his belief by the fact that neither was his enemy present, nor could he have escaped in so brief a time. To such representations the injured man invariably answered that it was not the body but the spirit of his enemy which did the harm.

Not only in death and in dreams, but in yet a third way, the Indian sees the spirit separate from the body. Visions are to him when awake what dreams are to him when asleep; and the creatures of his visions seem in no way different from those of his dreams. A distinction may here be drawn, though it is not recognised by the Indian, between natural visions—those, that is, which appear to a man in consequence of the abnormal condition in which his body accidentally happens to be at the moment—and artificial visions, which appear to a man in consequence of the abnormal condition into which he has brought himself, by such means as fasting and the use of stimulants or narcotics, for the express purpose of experiencing visions. Innumerable instances

of natural visions are recorded from all other parts of the world where men live in a similarly primitive state; and, judging by analogy, such must commonly occur to the Indians of Guiana. Few instances, however, came directly under my notice. The most striking was the following. One morning in 1878, when I was living in a Macusi village, a party of Indians of the same tribe with whom I had had some dealings, came from their neighbouring village with the extraordinary request that I would lend them guns and would go with them to attack the Arecuna Indians of a village some twenty miles distant. Though there is an unusually strong feeling of hostility between the Macusi and the Arecuna Indians, this request, remembering how peaceful the Indians now generally are, seemed to me very strange. It was explained that a certain man named Tori, one of the suppliants, had a day or two previously been sitting alone on the savannah outside his house, when, looking up from the arrow-head which he was fashioning, he found some Arecunas, whom he knew by sight, belonging to the village against which war was now to be waged, standing over him with up-lifted war-clubs, as if about to strike him down. Tori continued to explain, that his shouts bringing his own people out of their houses, the Arecunas vanished without doing any harm. The story was utterly incredible, but after much cross-examination it was evident that Tori himself believed it, and I can only suppose that it was a case in which a natural vision was believed as a reality.

Artificial visions are much more frequent in Indian life, especially in one particular connection. The *peaiman* or medicine man, the priest, doctor, sorcerer, and prophet of Indian society, prepares himself for his office by a long course of fasting and solitude, of stimulants and narcotics, in order to acquire both power to raise himself into an ecstatic condition in which he is able to send his spirit where he wills, and power to separate the spirits of other men and other beings from their bodies. Fully to explain the system of *peaism* here would take too long. All that need now be said is that it is based upon the belief that all illness and all other bodily evil is the work of hostile beings, who may or may not live in the bodily shape of men. These hostile beings may act in their bodily shapes; but attacks by disease being much more common than assaults by actual bodily enemies, the spirits are supposed to act much more often by themselves. Against attack by hostile spirits the ordinary Indian cannot protect himself. The *peaiman* is, therefore, appointed to the office of dealing with these spirits; and it is obvious that his body would be rather a clog and a hindrance than an assistance to his spirit. His chief problem is, therefore,

to separate, firstly, his own spirit; secondly, that of the patient who is suffering attack; and thirdly, those of the attacking beings, each from its body; so that the whole matter may be settled among the spirits. His chief method of doing this may be shown as follows:—

A Macusi peaiman offered to cure me of a slight attack of fever and headache. At night I was made to lie in my hammock in a completely closed and darkened house; and I was especially warned not to put foot to the ground, for malicious beings would be on the floor, and would do dreadful things if they caught me. For a moment all was still. Then suddenly the silence was broken by a burst of undecipherable and really terrible yells and roars and shouts, which filled the house, and shook the walls and roof, and sometimes rose rhythmically to a roar and sometimes sank to a low distant-sounding growl, but which never ceased for six whole hours. It was the peaiman roaring out his questions and commands to many hostile beings, any one of whom might be the one who had attacked me; and it was these beings, who were yelling and shouting, and growling their answers. When, now and then, the voice all but died away for a few moments, the peaiman had passed up and out through the roof, and was heard, far off, compelling unwilling beings to come to the house where I lay. As a matter of fact, the whole long terrific noise came from the throat of the peaiman, who had worked himself into a state of marvellous frenzy.

The effect of all this upon me was very strange. Before long I passed into a sort of doze and fitful sleep or stupor, probably akin to mesmeric trance. Incapable of voluntary motion, indeed unconscious of the existence of a body belonging to me, I seemed to float in the midst of a ceaselessly surging din; and my only thoughts were a hardly felt wonder as to the cause of the noise and a gentle, fruitless effort to remember if there had once been a time before noise began. It now seems to me that my spirit was really then as completely separated from my body as is possible under any other circumstances short of death.

That the peaiman himself believes in the separation and occasional departure of his own spirit from his body would not be easy to prove; but after much enquiry from these practitioners, I am fully persuaded that in this, as in so many similar cases, the man partly believes, partly feigns to believe, in his own practice. But—and this is the important point—that the other Indians believe in the departure of the spirit of the peaiman is certain; and that not the body is supposed thus to depart was made very plain in this way. Expressing scepticism as to whether the peaiman really went away through the roof, I on one occasion asked to be allowed to fasten one end of a thread to the

body of the peaiman, that, holding the other end in my hand, I might through the thread be satisfied of the occurrence. The answer—which was given quite naturally—was that the body remained; and that it was “something inside him” that went up.

All this shows that the Indian believes not only in the existence of a spirit within the human body, but also in the separability of those two parts.

The next point to be observed is how easily the spirit separates from the body even during life, how loose is the connection between the two. The being may pass its spirit from its own body into that of any animal or even into any inanimate object as a temporary body. This takes place especially in the case of *kenaimas*. The kenaima is the avenger of injury. In Indian society the mutual rights of individuals are guarded, and crime is kept in check, by the high sense of the imperative duty of retaliation. He against whom or against whose near relative wrong has been done, intentionally or unintentionally, by any other Indian becomes a kenaima who follows to kill or injure the wrong-doer. All injury which befalls an Indian is regarded by the sufferer as the work of a kenaima, as vengeance for some known or unknown injury committed by the sufferer. Now the kenaima, while following his intended victim, does not necessarily retain his own bodily shape, but assumes at his convenience the form of any animal or inanimate object. Very often the form assumed is that of the most dangerous animal known to the Indian, the jaguar, or, as it is locally called, the tiger. The expression kenaima-tiger is often heard from Indian lips, in such sayings as, “I can kill a tiger, but how can I kill a kenaima-tiger?” In that case the spirit of the kenaima puts itself into the body of another animal. Very often, also, it assumes some inanimate object as its body. For instance, the peaiman, in his capacity of doctor, extracts from the body of his patient a stick or stone, which is said to have been the cause of the disease, or, in other words, is the bodily form into which the spirit of the kenaima has passed in order to penetrate into the victim. It is true that apparently no individual Indian, unless, perhaps, a peaiman, believes that he himself can at will pass his spirit into another body—though, by the way, cases of this form of self-deception have been noted from other parts of the world. Apparently, however, the Indian of Guiana believes, not that this power of transmission does not exist within him, but only that he does not know how to exercise this power; and, fully recognising how loosely spirits are attached to bodies, he supposes that other men have the requisite knowledge which he has not.

4. So far we have examined Indian animism only as it is exhibited in a belief in the spirits of men. But the fact that I began by speaking of the spirits of men was only because man, whether he be Indian or other, naturally begins by thinking about himself; nor must the fact be understood to indicate that the Indian sees any sharp line of distinction, such as we see, between man and other animals, between one kind of animal and another, or between animals, men included, and inanimate objects. On the contrary, to the Indian, all objects, animate and inanimate, seem of exactly the same nature, except that they differ in the accident of bodily form. Every object in the whole world is a being consisting of a body and a spirit, and differ from every other object in no respect except that of bodily form, and in the greater or less degree of brute power and brute cunning consequent on the difference of bodily form and bodily habits.

Really to grasp this entirely natural conception of primitive man, the civilised student must make a great effort to forget for a time all that science, which is based on the distinguishing and the classification of differences, has taught of the differences between the objects which fill the world. It is very difficult to us to realise the Indian conception even of the identity in all but bodily form of men and other animals, and it is still more difficult to realise that the Indian conception is wider even than this, in that it admits of no difference, except again in bodily form, between animate and inanimate objects.

The very phrase "men and other animals" is too often loosely expressed as "men and animals," thus showing how far above other animals civilised men habitually think themselves. It is most important, therefore, to realise both how comparatively small really is the difference between men in a state of savagery and other animals, and how completely even such difference as does exist is ignored in the thoughts of savage men. On the one hand, the differences which really do exist, the mental potentialities, are just such as entirely escape the notice of uncivilised man. On the other hand, in skill, in cunning, in courage, in social morality, as based on fear and not on any knowledge of right, which are the chief things recognised and valued by the Indian mind, there really is no great difference between savage men and other animals. And it must be remembered, that almost every Indian knows the ways and cunning of the animals around him better than even the two or three civilised men most learned in such matters even guess them. To the ear of the savage, animals certainly seem to talk. Countless Indian stories, fully believed, introduce the sayings of animals. And though the individual

Indian knows that he no longer understands the language of the beasts and birds around him, he attaches but little weight to this, in that he is constantly meeting with other Indians, of some one or other of the many alien tribes which surround him, who speak languages at least as unintelligible to him as are those of birds or beasts; and in that, as he is fully persuaded, he constantly hears his own peaman still converse with these birds and beasts. Moreover, just as the Indian sees in the separation which takes place at death or in dreams proof of the existence of a spirit in man, so in this same death analysis of body and spirit, and in the animals which play their part in his dreams, he sees proof of the existence in each animal other than man of a spirit similar to his own.

The mental attitude which sees a spirit in each inanimate object is less easily realised. Belief in the spirits of plants is probably closely connected with the similar belief concerning animals; there is a vitality in plants which disappears at death, and this vegetative life is evidence of the presence of a spirit. There is not the same evidence of the presence of spirits in such objects as rocks and stones, in which neither animal nor vegetative life is manifested. It might be thought that this bodily motionlessness would prevent any conception of the possession of spirits by such objects. But to the Indian mind this absence of motion is less striking than it would otherwise be, owing to the fact that the comparison is made, not directly between animals, with their most free power of bodily motion, and rocks and stones, with no such power of motion, but indirectly through plants which are intermediate in this respect in that, their branches swaying, they have some small apparent power of bodily motion. Moreover, the Indians, always reasoning in the first place from what he knows of himself, remembers that, as, for example, in dreams, his own spirit moves most actively even when his body lies motionless; and he therefore sees no reason to doubt that the spirit within the motionless rock is active also. And the activity of this spirit of the rock is proved to his satisfaction in various practical ways. The Indian is occasionally hurt either by falling on a rock or by the rock falling on him; and in either case he attributes the blame to the rock. In fact, he attributes any calamity which may happen to him to the intention of the immediate instrument of its infliction; and he not unnaturally sees a spirit in this instrument. Then he carries this line of argument yet further. If his eye falls on a rock in any way abnormal or curious—and none such escapes his notice—and if, shortly after, any evil happens to him, he regards rock and evil as cause and effect: and here again he perceives a spirit in the rock. In very dry

seasons, when the rivers are low, the exposed rocks are seen to have a curious vitrified, black appearance, due to deposits of oxides of iron and manganese. Whenever I questioned the Indians about these rocks I was at once silenced by the assertion that any allusion to their appearance would vex them and excite their hostility. Again, the many rocks on which are so-called petroglyphs, or rock-drawings, are regarded with especial awe. It is unnecessary to multiply instances, further than by saying that every rock and, indeed, every material object, however different its body, is supposed to possess a spirit such as that of man.

But after all such arguments as those just given, by which it seems probable that savage man strengthens his belief in the presence of spirits in all objects, are not primitive.

The belief of the primitive man in this universal possession of spirits is probably of a much more simple and natural kind. It was acquired by the Indian, not by asking himself which of the objects existing around him were animate, but rather by his never doubting that, like himself—like, that is, the only object known to him by personal experience—all other objects had bodies and spirits. In fact, the primitive idea naturally is that all objects are animate; and then, as scepticism begins to grow, and primitive men begins to question whether stones have spirits and power of action, then the more orthodox and conservative probably strengthen their faith in the old belief by such arguments as those given above concerning the apparent action of stones.

One other class of beings possessed of spirits must yet be added to complete the list of those which, to the Indian, fill the world. At present we have observed only such spirits as are embodied in objects, animate or inanimate, which really exist. But the Indian knows also of various beings consisting of spirits placed in such animal bodies as civilised men know to be fabulous. Perhaps the nature of these beings is best made clear by saying that they correspond very closely to the dragons, unicorns, and griffins, and to the horned, hooved and tailed devils of our own folk-lore. Of this kind are, the “di-di,” or water-marna, a being with a body not well described, who lives under water; the “ornar,” a similar being, with a body said sometimes to be like that of a gigantic fish, sometimes like that of a huge crab, at other times to be of various other forms, but which also lives under water, especially in rapids and cataracts; and there are also various other not easily definable beings which are of this class. Their chief interest lies in the fact that in the Indian mind there is not the slightest distinction, except in bodily form, between these and all the other beings which have been

described. Our knowledge of the fact that the bodies of such beings do not really exist, inclines us to regard them as somewhat more supernatural. But this knowledge of ours is derived from science. The Indian, being without sufficient even of the rudiments of the scientific habit of thought, is as fully prepared to believe in the real, not supernatural, existence of a being as impossible as was ever fabled, as in that of animals most usual to him. In short, to the Indian, the only difference between these monstrous beings and all other beings is that, while he has seen the latter, he has not himself seen the former, but has only heard of them from others.

5. We have now reached a point at which it is as well to recall all that we have learned. The Indian believes that every object perceptible to his senses has a body and a spirit; he sees that the bodies of these differ very considerably in shape, and he has not the slightest reason to doubt the existence of bodies of quite infinitely various shapes. No idea of that which we call the supernatural is known to him. Thus his whole world swarms with beings. If by a mighty mental effort we could for a moment revert to a similar position, we should find ourselves everywhere surrounded by a host of beings, possibly hurtful, so many in number that to describe them as absolutely innumerable would fall ridiculously short of the truth. It is, therefore, not wonderful that the Indian fears to be without his fellow, fears even to move beyond the light from his camp fire, and, when obliged to do so, carries a fire-brand with him that he may have a chance of seeing the beings among whom he moves. Nor is it wonderful that occasionally the neighbourhood of their settlement seems to the Indians to become so oppressively full of gathering beings, that the peaiman, who has the power of fighting these beings, even when they are invisible, is employed to effect a general clearance of the air.

That is the simple form of animism which prevails among the Indians of Guiana; and it is almost certainly the same that has been held by every people while passing through a similar early stage of civilisation. It is the earliest recognisable rudiments from which, by subsequent modification and development, religion in all its higher forms has grown.

6. Animism, then, is recognition of the existence of spirits: and religion, to use the word in its widest sense, is the mental attitude which men hold toward these spirits. According as men take a more exalted view of the nature of spirits, their religion is of a higher order. Having already gained some knowledge of how far the Indians of Guiana recognise the existence of spirits, it now remains to examine their attitude toward these spirits. We shall find that the attitude is very

low; or, in other words, that religion among them is in one of its very earliest stages. It must, however, not be overlooked that religion may possibly have advanced, among the ancestors of some of the present Indian tribes, to a point higher than that at which it now stands; and that it has since reverted to an earlier form. It is quite possible, for example, that the old Caribs may have had a higher conception of spirits and of their own relation to the spirit-world than that which the Caribs of Guiana now have.

7. It will, perhaps, be easiest to proceed by examining how far certain of the chief modifications by which, among all more civilised societies, animism has developed in the direction of higher religion are discernible among the Indians of Guiana. These modifications are—(1) acknowledgment of the everlasting, as distinguished from the mere continued existence of the spirit after the destruction of the body; (2) a belief in a separate place of abode for the spirit when separate from the body; and closely connected with this, a belief in the reward or punishment of the spirit for the good or evil deeds which it did when in the body; (3) a belief, which has arisen but very gradually, in higher spirits, and eventually in a Highest Spirit; and (4) keeping pace with the growth of these beliefs, a habit of reverence for, and worship of spirits. All these additions to animism spring from germs which appear in early stages of civilisation, and grow as the people advance in other matters. We shall find that none of them have as yet made much progress among the Indians of Guiana.

It is as well here to state that the key to the whole matter, as regards these Indians, lies in the fact, to which allusion has already more than once been made, that these people look on the spirit-world as exactly parallel to the material world known to them. Spirits, like material beings, differ from each other only in—if the phrase is allowed—their varying degrees of brute force and brute cunning, and none are distinguished by the possession of anything like divine attributes. Indians, therefore, regard disembodied spirits not otherwise than they regard the beings still in the body whom they see around them.

8. There has been great confusion between, on the one hand, the simple animistic belief in the continued existence of the spirit after the separation of the body; and, on the other hand, the doctrine of the everlasting existence of the spirit which the higher religions have founded on that simple belief. The merely continued existence, for a period the duration of which the mind of the savage man makes no attempt to determine, is implied in simple animism. After death, as we have seen, the spirit appears in dreams to the survivor; and it is therefore believed

still to exist. Moreover, it would be a very unnatural thing if the primitive man had any idea of the annihilation of the spirit. That a thing the existence of which, he has once seen should cease to exist, or that a thing should come into existence which just before had no existence, are both events which would be quite opposed to his simple conception of natural law. There are naturally many traces among the Indians of Guiana of a belief in the continued existence of the spirit. It is sufficiently indicated by their habit of burying their dead, with the hammock and possibly other utensils which the deceased used during life in their houses: for this indicates a belief that the dead man will still use his home and hammock. That the houses in which such burial has been made are then deserted by the survivors is due to the natural objection of the living to dwell among the dead. It is instructive to notice that the Indians of the savannah, whose houses are of a much more substantial kind than those in the forest, have relinquished their ancestral habits and bring their dead outside their houses, that they may not have to abandon buildings, the erection of which has cost so much labour. Yet neither these nor any other recorded facts indicate that the Indians realise that the existence of the spirit is everlasting. That is a doctrine which belongs to a very much higher stage of religion. And where missionaries and others claim to have discovered traces of it among the Indians, they have merely mistaken the quite primitive conception of the continuance of the existence of the spirit for the doctrines elaborated by civilised minds, of its everlasting existence. In this one particular point, therefore, the Indians of Guiana are yet in the simplest observable stage of animism.

The spirit continuing to exist after the separation of the body, the question naturally arises as to what, according to Indian belief, becomes of such separated spirits. This question when worked out during many ages by the methods of the higher religions finds its answer in heaven and hell, or, in other words, of a place of abode for such spirits away from the world, and of the reward or punishment of spirits in that place. But the Indians, having not yet begun to ask themselves that question, think that disembodied spirits remain, as before, on earth, unpunished and unrewarded. Sometimes there seems to be some idea of the transmigration of the spirit into a new body, as when the spirit of a deceased ancestor is recognised in a new-born child or in some other animal. Sometimes, again, the spirit is merely supposed to remain disembodied on earth. Yet Indians have some idea of a place above the sky, "a heaven, floored upon a firmament" (Tylor "*Prim. Cult.*," ii, 69). In their folk-lore mention is often made of such a place. For

instance, the Caribs say that they arrived in Guiana through a hole in the sky, from a place above. This place is more often mentioned as that from which men come, than as that to which they go; but the spirits of their hero ancestors are sometimes said by the Indians to have gone to this place. The spirits of Indians in general are certainly not supposed to go there. This is just one of the cases in which our own deeply engrained and popular notion of a heaven above the sky makes it difficult for us to realise the Indian conception. The Indian idea seems to me to be that beyond the sky, just as beyond the sea, there is nothing akin to our heaven, but another country just such as that in which they live. The ordinary Indian knows that he cannot go beyond the sea; yet he occasionally sees other men come thence, and he hears from these of lands beyond those waters impassable to him. So he sees an apparently firm sky, separated by an ocean of air impassable to him, to which, though he cannot go, he sees birds go, and even as he thinks, sees the spirits of his peaimen go, and which he therefore thinks is a country, just such as that he knows, and attainable under certain conditions. His legends tell him that men have before now climbed down by bush ropes or by tall trees from sky-land; and he thinks it quite possible that he or his fellows may some day find another tree piercing the clouds, or a high hanging bush rope up which he may ascend to skyland. In other words, his notion of going to heaven is, not by apotheosis but by entirely natural means of travel. This is another point in which missionaries and other early observers have unwittingly introduced much confusion; for they have misinterpreted facts until they thought that Indians believed not only in a heaven such as that of the higher religions, but also in the allotment in heaven, or in hell, which is below the earth as heaven is above, of reward or punishment. The matter is admirably illustrated by a passage from Rochefort, "*Iles Antilles*," p. 430, (quoted by Tylor, "*Prim. Cult.*," ii, 79), in which he says of the Caribs of the West Indies, who were the ancestors of those now in Guiana, that they thought that their brave men would live after death in happy islands with once hostile Arawaks as their slaves, but that the cowards of their own tribe would, on the contrary, serve the Arawaks in the barren land beyond the mountains as slaves. Read by itself this passage certainly seems to indicate that the Indians believed in a heaven and hell, and in retribution. But let us see what further light can be thrown on it. At the time when Rochefort wrote, the Caribs and Arawaks lived in a constant state of mutual hostility, and were really in the habit of enslaving each other. Moreover, there is strong reason to believe that the Caribs had at that time

already taken possession of the West Indian Islands, from which they had driven the earlier inhabitants, the Arawaks, to the mountainous mainland opposite. From the islands the Caribs were in the habit of making raids into the inhospitable country of the Arawaks whom, if successful, they brought away as slaves, by whom, if unsuccessful, they were retained as slaves. When, therefore, the Carib said that if he were brave he would live in happy islands with Arawaks for slaves, but that if he were a coward he would live beyond the mountains a slave to some Arawak, he was only describing as his notion of future life exactly the state of things to which he was accustomed in this life; nor did he indicate any conception of heaven, hell, or retribution after death. It must be added that the Indian notion which I have described of skyland, and that other notion that by his conduct when in the body he may himself effect the happiness of his spirit, are probably primitive germs from which the higher religions have elaborated heaven, hell, and retribution.

The next point to be considered is as to whether Indians believe in any hierarchy of spirits, such as that which forms so important a feature in the higher religions. There is nothing to indicate that Indians believe in any spirits, except such as are or were once situated in material bodies, and differ in rank and power only as one man differs in these respects from any other. As religion grows, this early form of belief develops into a recognition of higher spirits and lower, until in the highest form of religion a belief in one Supreme Spirit is attained. But on this belief, at a very early stage in the transition which it thus makes, is engrafted the very important idea of spirits, many or few, which have always been spirits and never specially associated with any material body. Until the point at which this new idea is engrafted it cannot be said that there is any belief in a spiritual hierarchy. The Indians of Guiana have not yet attained this belief; they only know no spirits but those of men or other material bodies, and have no conception of any that are only or chiefly spirits, *i.e.*, they know no god.

The process by which the idea of a difference in the authoritative rank of spirits is attained seems to be by a generalisation of those spirits of equal power which form the earlier subject of belief—*e.g.*, the belief in a separate spirit in each body of water, river, spring, rain, sea, or whatever its nature, probably passes by generalisation into a belief in one more powerful water-spirit. It will presently be shown that the Indians of Guiana have made hardly any advance even in this direction. The process by which the first idea is gained of gods, of beings, that is, who have always been spirits, except when temporarily and for their

own purposes they have put themselves into bodies, and who in some, if not in all cases, have had some share in the creation of man and the visible world, is not so easily explained; but this is of little consequence here since all that is necessary is to show that the Indians have not yet attained any such notion.

The idea of a difference in the authoritative rank of spirits is not yet discernible in Guiana. It is, indeed, fully recognised that some spirits are more to be feared than others, in that some excel in physical power or cunning. For instance, the spirits of all rocks are supposed to be capable of harm; but again and again I have come across instances in which special rocks, such as the famous sculptured rocks, are more especially dreaded. But this is only because such rocks are more malignant. The matter may be made plain in this way. Not every river, but every bend and portion of a river, has a spirit; and though all these are regarded as possibly harmful, in that Indians have been drowned even in still water, yet the spirits of the falls, cataracts, or rapids are more especially dreaded, in that Indians have been much more frequently drowned in such places. But this idea of a difference in the degree of brute power or malignancy in various spirit-possessed objects is quite distinct from any belief in the possession by certain spirits of authority over other spirits and, consequently, indirectly of greater authority over men. The latter belief, which may be ticketed as a belief in a hierarchy of spirits, seems totally absent from the Indian mind.

It has been presumed that traces of a belief in such a hierarchy have been found among other peoples, in their recognition of a sun-spirit, a moon-spirit, a water-spirit, and so on. Such spirits are certainly recognised in Guiana. On one occasion during an eclipse of the sun the Arawaks, among whom I happened to be, rushed from their houses with loud shouts and yells, and with frantic gestures, to separate, as they explained, the sun and moon which were fighting. But, at least as far as the Indians of Guiana are concerned, I do not believe that they distinguish such beings as sun and moon, or such other natural phenomena as winds and storms, from men and other animals, from plants and other inanimate objects, or from any other beings whatsoever. All are of the same kind, each with a body and a spirit, and they differ from each other only in that some are physically more powerful than others; nor have any of them any sort of authority over any others.

But it is true that various words have been found in all, or nearly all the languages of Guiana, which have been supposed to be names of a Supreme Being, God, a Great Spirit, in the sense which those phrases bear in the language of the higher religions.

These names, as far as they are known to me, are—

Carib Tribes	True Caribs	Tamosi = "the ancient one."
		Tamosi Kabotanō = "the ancient one in sky-land."
	Ackawoi, Mackonamia (?) Macusi, Kutti (probably only corrupt for Dutch, <i>gott</i>).	
Arawak	Wa murreta kwonci = "our maker."	
	Wa cinaci = "our father."	
	If-lici wa cinaci = "our great father."	
Warrau.	Kononatu = "our maker."	
Waprana.	Tomingatoo (?)	

It will be seen that of these I am only able to explain the exact logical meaning of the two true Carib words, of the two Arawak words, and of the Warrau word. In these words only three ideas are expressed: and these are (1) one who lived long ago and who is now in sky-land; (2) the maker of the Indians; and (3) their father. Now none of these in any way involves the attributes of a god. They all point rather to a conception, which is certainly present in all Indian minds, that their remote ancestors, of whom they are accustomed to speak as their fathers, or by a very natural figure of speech, as their makers, came into their present homes from some other country, which is sometimes said to have been that entirely natural country which is separated from Guiana by the ocean of the air. When these same ancestors are said still to exist in that other place, this only means that those in particular have recrossed the sea of air back to the old country. Thus these supposed gods are probably but the traditional ancestors of each tribe. Moreover it must be remembered that these words expressing gods were first noted by missionaries, and were eagerly seized upon by them and used, as was natural, to express the God which they themselves preached.

To repeat what has perhaps been said wearisomely often already: there are, according to Indian belief, no spirits but such as either are or originally were embodied in material bodies; and no apotheosis has of these made gods or a god.

Once more, however:—in the idea of ancestral spirits still existing, there is a germ which might under certain circumstances develop into that leading conception of the higher religions, the conception of a fatherly and creating God.

One other subject claims mention in connection with Indian animism. In all systems of religion, belief in spirits and worship of spirits are two very distinct things, though the fact that in the higher religions the two are found almost invariably associated has induced civilised men to regard them as nearly

inseparable. But in a purely animistic system of religion, such as that with which we are now concerned, in which no hierarchy of spirits is recognised, there can be no worship, in that the latter implies reverence and adoration.

To understand the matter as it is exhibited in Guiana, it is necessary to recall the attitude of the Indians toward spiritual beings. There are, it is thought, no spirits except such as differ only according to their greater or less degree of physical power, and of these some are harmless, others are harmful; but while the harmful spirits are very active in their power of affecting men, the harmless are perfectly and entirely inactive in this respect. It is somewhat difficult to realise this Indian view. All that can be said of it is, that all the good that befalls him the Indian accepts either without enquiry as to its cause or as the result of his own exertions; and that all the evil that befalls him he regards as inflicted by malignant spirits. Accordingly the Indian performs no acts to attract the good-will of spirits; but he does constantly so act, and so avoid actions, as to avert the ill-will of other spirits. For example, he is, as has been told, careful not to look at, or even to mention certain rocks and other objects. In this connection, one universal and very common custom of the Indians of Guiana is very noticeable. Before attempting to shoot a cataract for the first time, on first sight of any new place, every time a sculptured rock or striking mountain or stone is seen, the Indians avert the ill-will of the spirits of such places by rubbing red-pepper (capsicums) each into his or her eyes. For instance, on reaching the rock in the Corentyn river, called from the sculpture on it, Temehri, the Indians—men, women, and children—from 20 to 30 in number—who accompanied me, immediately busily began this painful operation of pepper-rubbing. The extreme pain of the operation as performed thoroughly by the Indians, I can faintly realise from my own sufferings when I have occasionally rubbed my eyes with my fingers immediately after handling red pepper; and also from the fact that, though the older practitioners inflict this self-torture with the utmost stoicism, I have occasionally seen the otherwise rare sight of Indians—children and even young men—sobbing under the pain of the infliction. Yet I never passed a cataract, or any other of the objects above mentioned, in the company of Indians, without seeing this ceremony performed. Sometimes, when by a rare chance no member of the party had had the forethought to provide pepper, lime-juice was used instead; and once, when neither pepper nor limes were at hand, a piece of blue indigo-dyed cloth was carefully soaked, and the dye was then injected in the eyes of the whole party. The whole ceremony is an attempt to avoid attracting

the attention of harmful spirits. If it is absolutely necessary to pass a bad rock or a spiteful cataract, these objects are not mentioned during the passage, are not looked at more than is necessary, and artificial means, such as blinding the eyes with pepper-juice, are even used to avoid the dreaded sight; for just as, according to the old story, the ostrich which has covered its own eyes thinks itself hidden from its pursuers, so the Indian, having prevented himself from seeing a harmful being, thinks that the latter does not see him. This habit of avoidance of dreaded beings forms the only ceremonial observance practised by the Indians.

9. In conclusion, two things remain to be noted. First, that the animism of the Indians of Guiana is of a very pure kind, and unaffected by any of the modifications which change animism into higher religion. And, secondly, that this animism of Guiana, as probably in more or less degree that of the whole of America, is of a very much more primitive kind than has as yet been suspected by students of religious evolution.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. PFOUNDEN said that if the author could afford information as to the existence of human sacrifice and similar rites, it would be of value. He remarked that this interesting paper was a contribution to folk-lore of all the more importance coming as it did from one who had resided amongst the natives. It furnished another link in the long chain of evidence of the primitive condition of the peoples on both sides of the North Pacific, and to the comparative student of folk-lore it was most useful.

Mr. JAMES HEYWOOD deemed it probable that the Indians of British Guiana had a higher object of worship than the spirit of the sun or the spirit of the moon. Dutch missionaries may have taught some of those Indians the Dutch name for the Deity, but the worship of the Great Spirit is wide-spread among American Indians. The speaker was acquainted with religious opinions of the Six Nations' Indians, in the Tuscarora Reserve, County of Brant, Canada West, and their epithet for exalted, or immensely extended, was "great:" thus they termed Queen Victoria the "great mother," and the ocean was the "great water." With the North American Indians generally the Deity is the "Great Spirit," whom they worship. Similar opinions, according to the works of various North American writers, prevail in different parts of the United States of North America, among the Indians. It seems reasonable to suppose that religious views of a like kind may have existed from very remote antiquity among the Indians of the northern part of South America.

Dr. HACK TUKE remarked that there were two facts stated in the paper which more especially interested him: one was the extraordinary fear which the Indians of Guiana entertained for

invisible agencies. He thought we often overlooked the real mental suffering which savages endured from this dread of spirits. We were too apt to associate fear of this kind exclusively with the fanaticism and superstition of religions of more civilised nations. With the people of Guiana, therefore, this belief must exercise a very considerable influence upon their minds, and was calculated to overthrow their balance in some instances. The other point was the vivid reality of their dreams. This was a most curious fact; and he had little doubt that the same confusion—the same inability to distinguish between dreams and the actual occurrences of life happened with certain of the insane. It was not at all uncommon for lunatics to assert, in the most positive terms, that various things had befallen them in the night, that they had been assaulted, &c., and the foundation of these delusions was, he thought, often laid in vivid dreams, which to them were as real as they appeared to be with the Indians of Guiana. There was no reference in the paper to the insane in Guiana, and he should like to ask the author whether he had met with any, or with idiots. If so, were they regarded as possessed by evil spirits, or looked upon as the special favourites of heaven? There was one more point on which he should like to be informed. Was there no crime of witchcraft recognised in Guiana? Were not witches punished for their supposed malignant influences? So far as he had been able to gather from this paper, which was one of the most interesting he had ever listened to, the fears of the people were directed towards invisible powers only, and not to persons supposed to be in league with them.

Mr. R. W. FELKIN observed that the author had mentioned that the Indians are in the habit of taking with them a lighted firebrand when leaving a camp at night, for the purpose of frightening away the spirits. He should like to ask him if there were any other practical object in so doing, such as lighting up the path, or as a mark that they belong to the camp. He asked this question because in his journey in Central Africa he had often seen this done by the natives. On enquiring why, he was told it was to frighten away the devil, but he found on further enquiring, that the custom arose from a rule, that a firebrand must be taken by anyone leaving the camp at night to show the watchman on his return that he belonged to the camp, and was neither an enemy nor a thief.

Professor FLOWER, Mr. A. L. LEWIS, Mr. G. M. ATKINSON, M. BERTIN, and Mr. J. PARK HARRISON also joined in the discussion.

Mr. IM THURN, in answer to various questions addressed to him, stated that his study of animism had been but a part of the Indian social history, regarded as a whole, and that he had had some difficulty in confining the remarks just made by him strictly to animism. He was now asked whether he had found any traces of stone circles, of human sacrifice, of rock inscription, of magic, and so on. No doubt all these and many other matters were more or less directly connected with the religion of the Indians; but time

failing, he must refer his questioners to a series of papers dealing with all these matters which he had already placed in the hands of a printer. There was just one point on which he would like to make further remark. And that was that several of those who had spoken after his paper had referred to the terrible evil of the state of superstition in which the Indians were described as living. He wished to point out that there was also good in this superstition: that the fear in which the Indians lived of unwittingly offending the countless beings visible and invisible among which they felt themselves to be, kept them very strictly within their own rights and from offending against the rights of others.

On the DISCOVERY of CHERT IMPLEMENTS in STRATIFIED GRAVEL in the NILE VALLEY near THEBES. By Major-General PITT RIVERS, F.R.S., President Anthropol. Inst.

[WITH PLATES XXVII TO XXXVI.]

(A Paper read before the Institute on June 14, 1881.)

HAVING paid a hurried visit to Egypt in March of the present year (1881), my attention was naturally turned to the question relating to the occurrence of flint or chert implements in the Nile valley. The subject, as Anthropologists are aware, has been much discussed of late, and its importance arises from its special bearing on the antiquity of man. Our own journal has contributed its quota to the controversy, and the papers by Sir John Lubbock, Mr. Jukes Browne, Captain Burton, and others are well known to members of the Institute.

I will not ask the Institute to follow me in reviewing the history of this discussion, the materials for which are to be found in the papers I have alluded to, and many others by men of equal ability, a list of whose names would alone suffice to prove the great attention and research that have been brought to bear upon the subject.

Perhaps the present state of the question may be best summarised by quoting the opinion of Sir John Lubbock, one of the latest contributors to the archæology of the stone age in Egypt.

After carefully examining the various sites in which implements have been found on the surface in the Nile valley, and making a large collection of them, he came to the conclusion that their forms mostly resembled those of palæolithic implements found in Europe, and that they were probably pre-Egyptian. This, however, being an argument based upon resemblance of form only, cannot be considered conclusive, and Captain Burton, who followed Sir John in an examination of the sites