

# E Y E O F T Y L O R



G E R A L D M A J E R

A savage might have felt the soul of the flame had departed, or that it refused to enter. In certain weathers the bowstring gone lax, or the wood absorbing the damp – whatever the case, the thing missing fire was painful for Marett to contemplate as Tylor worked the bow and drill like a man scratching an itch on the back of a large invisible creature composed of air. And there was something airy, too, in his concentration of effort this afternoon, though at the same time Marett detected an involuntary movement of the eyes, a glance at the spinning stick half command, half entreaty, that almost could have been a prayer, and as Tylor in an unwonted turn of distraction looked away from the task, preparing to explain that occasional failures would occur, the notion – irresistible, in its way, to consider praying for or to a fire – seemed to have abruptly ignited in the air between Marett’s gaze and the eye of Tylor, and a flame like a great licking tongue, as Marett later described it to himself, ran up the drill-stick and was devouring Tylor’s rich bushy beard. Anna, rushing to her husband’s aid, for an instant appeared to be administering some five or ten slaps to his face, Tylor meanwhile fluttering his hands as if a gigantic moth or jungle bird had alighted there. Across the sunlight from the case-

ments floated a small obscurity of smoke. A smell like smoldering bone provoked a coughing spell among several members of the audience, that spell soon becoming a general spasm which to Tylor's ears must have sounded almost like the laughter it was. The man gently pushed Anna away, stepped back from the table, smoothed his damaged beard, still of Mosaic bushiness and proportion, and, his face reddened as though the blood beneath the skin had also taken flame, unloosed a minor sort of roar. Comical, admonitory. The lips and teeth positively glistened with it. One noticed that for a big man, his was a diminutive mouth. Odd, the way time had seemed to pause an instant, and move on, Tylor however unmistakably lagging. A share in the hilarity, a call to order – fair enough, the man tacking, getting back on course, and Anna returning to her chair all attention, and the lecture on primitive man soberly resumed. Yet Marett felt the thing bumping and veering as it continued on, and Anna, it seemed, with a mortified regard as if she had in some manner been first cause.

Among the satirically minded, Marett had heard the opinion expressed that it was perhaps the case that Edward Burnet Tylor, father of British anthropology, on occasion found not only his stick without fire but also his assiduous pencil with a deficit of lead. Thinking of Anna, her kind and warming eyes, her gentle voice, even in middle age something wonderfully childlike in those inquisitive tones, and just as wonderful the ferocity of her faith in her husband and her protection of all who were devoted to him, Marett hoped she would never hear of such opinions, although given her sensitivity to everything touching upon Tylor there was no doubt she divined their possibility. They had no children, and whatever the reason – maybe with Tylor's having delivered that behemoth of a book, *Primitive Culture*, he, and she, had been exhausted – the idle were likely to find matter for speculation. The years since the big book had at any rate been a tending to a sort of progeny, a generation of new ideas, of invigorating debates, and, as was Marett's case, a line of assistants and erstwhile disciples who came to be like so many sons of the towering but kindly intellectual patriarch. Those were agreeable evenings at the Tylors' modest house near the river, the fire roaring and the fare simple but, prepared under Anna's management, remarkably hearty, heartening. In a place that sometimes seemed haunted and nearly

overwhelmed by a forbidding repository of artifacts, the masks and spears and woolly fetishes Tylor had gathered into his private collection, she made one feel welcome. He was quite grateful, and unlike Tylor, a generous-minded but bluff sort of former Quaker whose father had been a manufacturer of brazen commodities (steam valves, spittoons, embossed Last Suppers), Anna clearly appreciated the quality of his gratitude. At times, reminded of his mother at home in Jersey, herself the tireless support of his father's literary aspirations along with his political ambitions, Marrett felt something like a very light touch, the flavor of a rare and discreet sympathy, as if she knew his heart and even his mind. Granted, it was the practice of years, anticipating, disarming, and ingratiating in the service of her husband's eminence. And it made one wonder what sorts of doubts floated among the Borneo faces and the Peruvian darts, what nearer ghosts might trouble the Tylors, those consummate unbelievers. Such perhaps were precisely the speculations that, installed comfortably before Tylor's fire and under the watchful eye of his wife, one must fail to entertain. Still, it was a nourishing kind of lulling to sleep, and one soon enough awakened on the walk through the cool night air, the blazing fire and the looming artifacts and good Mrs. Tylor's eye, animated with a peculiar scrutiny that seemed at the same time to speak her real feeling, whatever that might turn out to be, retreating into a comfortable and comforting distance like a dream. All in the service of the cause, he supposed, most likely a dream that was as ritually repeated over the years as any of the survivals recounted in Tylor's book: the vision of one's becoming the favored son, the truest believer.

Delving deep into history and folklore and rude religion and pondering what he might contribute one day to the study of that vaguely compassed but infinitely lively matter aptly named *culture*, suggestive of various blossoms and ferments as well as the fresh *flow*, as Arnold had once so felicitously expressed it, of one's most elevated conceptions, Marrett regularly found in the mystery of Anna's feeling a sort of repose, and, he imagined sometimes, a sort of blessing. Anna's small voice, Anna's watching eye – almost hungry, it was – and Anna's gentle, tentative proffer of affection: he supposed in future he would remember and treasure it all. His

unlikely muse, his hidden goddess. Even with her powers and manipulations, her jealousies and her warning clairvoyances devoted to the service of Edward, Anna a protective charm, a fair sorceress, one would never wish to damage her. In such case, the chain of events could readily be imagined – if Anna failed or was in some way broken, Tylor, bear of a man though he seemed to be, soon would flag for want of her support, and the lovely thing they were about, that culture matter that was indeed become nearly cultlike over the years, the department at Oxford small, the least germ or seed, but with everyone tremendously devoted, and the collections and the catalogues and the archives growing, the papers and the monographs attesting to the value of a new science of man, wonderful, devious, and clever creature that he was, that all of them were – well, the house of Tylor fallen, the matter of culture might soon enough go to rot, and the antiquarians and the mentalists and the biologists take over the territory (how they would battle one another!), and all of it dissolve, as though a stick of green wood suddenly took fire and with a happy roar consumed everything around it, including itself.

As he realized that he, too, was partaking of the general hilarity around flaming beards, Marett straightened in his chair. On the face of it, quite disrespectful, and he hoped Tylor and especially the perspicacious Anna had missed it. More likely, though, his behavior had been noted by someone, who would then report to Anna, who would then, he feared, intimate to Edward. It was a thing to which he had been long accustomed, ever since early childhood his height remarkable, a Jack towering above most of his peers. And at Oxford, the old public school deference along with the resentment of his figure had endured, his friends the same mixture of protection seekers and rivals. That Tylor had shown him favor and had made Marett his assistant in the laborious corrections and revisions for *Primitive Culture*'s third edition made him yet more remarkable. The uncomfortable cynosure was aggravated by the fact that at Oxford he was a heathen of sorts, a Channel Islander with a hint of the Gallic in his discourse – too fast, he sometimes was, and while it might have seemed like a fresh breeze relieving the torpid atmosphere of an overheated lecture room, he had gathered that for others there was

in it an alarming tendency toward the loose and incautious or naively making bold.

Yet with the laughter Maret had been enlivened by an air of something usually missed, something itself like air, rarefied, absorbent, rife with unseen motions. What pleasure, that spontaneous effusion, as if in sympathy with the licking flame there must be mirthful, mocking tongues. It was wonderful that Tylor had persisted through the years with a demonstration that proved nothing except his own fascination with fire. But it was now become custom, albeit of recent vintage, and the professor if not the undergraduates expected it. That fascination had come to fascinate him. A provoking turn, Tylor's excursus on fire in the *Researches*, the question of how in the world rude mankind ever had come to that marvelous discovery left to hang as the man instead spent his powers belaboring writers who had reported certain tribes which, never having gotten round to husbanding it, were altogether lacking in that spectacular appliance. Yet given evidence of peoples without any idea of spoons or even of cooking pots, use being made of various fingers and hands and of sticks and broad leaves, why should one assume that all of humanity must from the earliest beginnings had the use of fire? It was a question Tylor seemed to find as impossible to contemplate as those cases in which it appeared there were rude men who, far from a lively apprehension of spirits of every sort inhabiting the world, appeared to believe in nothing at all. Or perhaps everything altogether, the sum equaling naught.

The first time Anna essayed to kiss him, he had been pondering such matters while gazing into Tylor's fire. The lone servant dismissed, Edward retired early, and his helpmate devoting the last of her evening to seeing off the equally devoted Maret: *Robert* – she spoke his Christian name in a voice dividing caress and command. Their separate shadows merged for an instant as he rose, behind him the fire collapsing into ash though on his face he felt the glow of it still. Before him was a woman of the middle age with small shapely hands and remarkable shining eyes and a nunlike purity about her like a garment – moving among Tylor's chamber of masks and fetishes and assorted tropical horrors, she often seemed to Maret a kind of glad impervious saint sojourning through carnival-like purgatories – all of it dazzling him a little, and a

flamelike spot across his field of vision blinking at him, optic echo of his fire gazing, or perhaps a trace of the moment when Anna's face had been brought close to his own, around her body a scent of garden lilacs and fresh soap and the flavor of what must have been her sweat, Marett absorbing the awkward step she made towards him, her proximate breath, her dear heat.

*Anna* – having met her request, he now dared address her with the word, to his mind so harmonious, so resonant of far-off things, and seeming of such fearful significance that offering his hand for their customary gentle farewell and beholding her again drawing nearer, Marett made directly for hat and coat and door, at that safer distance saluting her briskly, a sort of wave or waving off as he made for the cold air and the night – he really had stayed terribly long, nearly eleven, it was – and his awkward gesture leading him to feel like a man embarking on a boat across the Channel, a holiday reveler bidding adieu to a temporary sweet-heart, or perhaps an unsteady man heedlessly exiling himself, his saddened dear ones signaling their last as he departed on a voyage to parts unknown.

Taylor might after all be correct in his insistence that for every man worthy the name there must be fire at command – else, there would be no man at all because there would be no mind. The moving flames were the primordial glass in which thought had first discovered itself. Thought was motion, the capacity for movement up and away from the given. And the capacity, too, for movement down and into the given. The episode with Anna, fading away swiftly in retrospect as if it had been merely a trick of the fire and its avid fluidities, or an errant animism sent abroad by the infernal ecstasies of one of Tylor's fire-tongued South Seas masks, called nonetheless for sustained reflection, and as he kept summoning it back – how could a prim mouth in an instant become a vivid flower of light, interior petals hopefully opening? – Marett felt his moorings giving way. If thought, like a flame, kept rising above its object, it might altogether fly off from it, and nothing would remain. Equally, thought burning its way deep into the matter, its substance would be all consumed. And if all that was given were consumed, what would one then be able to give, or even to take?

Similarly abstruse musings troubled him for several days, until

he found himself believing his thought indeed was aflame. Sleep was akin to another waking amongst revolving allegories peopled with images of an unpleasantly grasping character that blindly milled the dark. Anna's proffer of affection was surely deserving of his utmost respect. His own interests perhaps made reciprocation a necessity, but Marett believed there was a wider current hastening them along even as their own movements lent it force. As much as Edward had made a habit of mucking about primitive mind-stuff, there must remain a small current of sweetness and light. Anna would kiss Marett like she was his mother, or like she was his sister, or like she was his wife, or like she was something quite beyond though including all of that – would it be so very wrong of her, or of him, as they felt their level rising? As if they were turning and being turned within a great fluid wheel where the general thoughts and dreams of men were circling and circling again like the seasons of the year or like the day and the night or like some closer rhythm of breath and heartbeat. Tylor's book had made it possible to contemplate such broadening courses of mind, but one wondered whether good Edward was himself alive to what he had compassed. It didn't seem to have occurred to him that observing the myriad colors of rude belief with a skeptic eye might after a while become infected with its object, and in the course of tracking savage vagaries, one's mental spyglass insensibly find itself warming. At a certain temperature, it might become like a vitascope where those same colors would begin to spin faster in their processions and their reels, their phases and their faces, and the lines between them to run and to blur, some new vision appearing there, almost a thing one could *touch* as well as see, amidst those heartfelt animations one's world coming to appear in a very different light.

The second time she essayed to kiss him, the fire had burned very low. Tylor had gone to his slumbers, the lone servant been dismissed. Holding Anna, for a long moment, Marett felt he was her rock, her pillar. Vast waters rushed at their feet. It was like standing on a beach in the fog, visibility almost zero, the air nothing but hovering mist, the shapes of things lost, even the lighthouse beam and mournful horn fading to distant opacities.

Making his escape from that atmosphere of dubious signals, gaining the footpath and then the road, the lighted way, the stars, it seemed to Marett he had attained a perfect clarity.

Where he was going, all would be lost. In fire, in smoke. And that place of course precisely where he must not, would not travel.

He imagined Anna without him still watching the coals.

A last lean of flame trembling.

Tylor coughing upstairs.

It was a white dress, plain and high necked, that she hung carefully in the wardrobe. Later, as she slept deeply, like a woman in a trance, he moved quietly about the room. When he came to the small door, he noiselessly opened it. He brushed his hand across the fabric as though he might find Anna's body once again, more real to him there. The linen a good weave, of French provenance, and surprisingly opulent. It smelled of her, of lilacs, of water, and, slightly, of her perspiration. Marett thought of fogs clearing off during late mornings. Tiny blooms under ancient trees. An air of open sky over the sea.

Edward must have long ago landed at Calais and was by now comfortably installed on the train with his books and papers. He hadn't known how he would manage the trip without Anna or Marett, but Anna pleading a family obligation and Marett entitled to a term vacation, he had been satisfied with the company of Pearson, Marett's likely successor. It must be nothing to what Anna felt, but the vision of Tylor in the compartment, trees and embankments and towns passing, birds and fluttering leaves and flashes of flowing water here and there, and all of it speaking in some fashion, perhaps offering omens and prognostications to which the man was confidently deaf and blind, brought home to Marett a certain pang, mixed with an apprehension of the doom of his own prospects. With beard and buttoned-up vest and stout walking shoes because he preferred walking to the expense of carriages, the fellow might be a missionary of sorts, carrying the good news from Oxford to the Continent.

Marett had embarked on a rather different mission. Of his actual destination, he wasn't sure. Nor of his likely return.

According to a West African belief reported by one of Tylor's sources, one could use words like fences or like enclosing walls, to keep the demons away. Not a counter-spell, words you bought from another sorcerer, but words that were your own home remedy. You covered your door or your wall with them, hundreds,

thousands, as many as you could fit. It didn't matter what size they were, what color, or what they said. In whatever form, their intricate mass baffled the enemy because, a creature itself born of them, the demon spirit became fascinated. It believed it had found its mother, its father, a nest thick with brothers and sisters of its clan. Or a crowd of old friends or forgotten enemies or both. And so it would read every single word, down to the last letter, expecting to find the one that resembled itself. With each character it lingered over, however, it would lose more of its power. Once flown swift on evil wing, the devil spirit soon only fluttered mothlike over the script. And then, even as it insistently hovered in search of the word that would be its mirror, the demon altogether faded away, reduced to stroke or loop or scratch and finally to nothing at all.

Marett had thought it a striking case, but Tylor swiftly decided the topic required no further illustration; it was a redundancy, and the third edition would be better without it. As the man had become quite heated, Marett debated no further. The beard today was near wild in its Mosaic splendor, as if Tylor had taken a comb to it and stroked it in the wrong direction. The usual good humor of the eyes seemed blurred by a reddish truculence, the kindly face gazed challenge as though the demon in the labyrinth were become a question of tremendous moment.

Impossible thing.

Yes, Professor.

Then let's hear no more of it.

I am grateful for your attention, Professor.

Surely it was nothing Anna had said or done – she was far too wise. Because she was so vitally necessary to Tylor, however, the subtlest change in her demeanor would be noticed. If over the years he had become her idol, there must be a way in which she also had become his.

An unwonted flush, a fresh brightness, a loosening of the hair from its braid (in firelight, a remarkable thing).

How might Tylor the hunter of savage souls track such a home spirit?

As he reached to gather up the notes on the worktable, Marett detected a strong odor of smoke. The man positively reeked. Banished by Anna, had he been sleeping next to the fire? It was as if

the beard were still burning, smoldering in its luxuriant follicular depths. Marett pondered late-night inquiries and confessions, a fine blaze set to rights with the poker going at it, Anna's face bright and sincere, Edward hotly pacing among the shadows.

Back in his rooms, after he had cooled a bit from what he soon adjudged had been his overheated imaginations, he reflected that perhaps all was less, or more, complicated than it seemed. As if before one of the heathen idols he held in his collection, Tylor worshipped Anna. And had been expecting Marett to do the same. The heat of it was spiritually palpable, as seductive as it was contagious. For the sake of the cause, the man would cuckold himself, pull his own beard. Marett had lately been reading McLennan's *Primitive Marriage*, a book alongside which, he allowed himself to admit, Tylor's opus appeared lacking, McLennan's account of gradations in the origins of the institution meticulously argued, the progression of his inferences a model of rigor, and the stage of evolution comprehending fraternal polyandry, in particular, an entirely convincing picture of rude promiscuities growing toward a better order.

The brothers sharing the same woman, seeding the same womb. From such toils the kingdom of fathers and sons was born. As though the offensive demon indeed had found its kind, its lodging.

*Impossible thing.* The more bewitching by virtue of that possibility.

Of course, beyond all sharing, Tylor's must be the power all round – *Primitive Culture* was a great verbal rampart, a fortress of looping sentences to which Marett had devoted his best hours, preparing bricks to repair it and make it yet more impregnable.

In that fortress, he now understood, Anna had long been captive.

The rebuff over the word-demon still smarted. There were however consolations. It was becoming yet clearer to him to what extent Tylor, in the vanity of his authorship, hadn't the slightest notion of just how wrong he had gone. Through the months of labor over the new edition, Marett had pleased him immensely with his ready knowledge of languages and his exacting care over word and phrase. And Marett had slowly become aware of another species of vanity – his own youthful impatience, a sense of priv-

ilege in having come to it fresh, a belief in the greater power of his innocent eye. In those long evenings in Tylor's study where the lamps burned bright, he had made it his goal to absorb the method of the book, although it soon became dismayingly clear that it was utterly lacking in one. The comparisons that made up its evidence were simply assertions of similarity from one example to another, each example having been selected in light of such resemblance. Somewhere must be all the others that might have contradicted or made for an uncomfortable fit, a heap of notes and quotations that might have comprised a volume of greater bulk than *Primitive Culture* itself. Terrible, pleasurable thought that later haunted him through vague, busy dreams: Tylor had done no more than erect a monument to the power of suggestion, the book recording the associative reflexes of his own mind. Even as *Primitive Culture* was proposed as a monument to clear-headedness, the merest grain of skepticism absorbed from a Hume or a Mill would have made it impossible to sustain.

At any rate, his labors on the book were finished, and for a moment, he felt madly, wildly happy. *PC* had loomed over him like a mountain blocking his road, but now he was certain Tylor had built on sand. *Impossible thing*. With the vision of the burning words still in his mind, he prayed that Tylor never would see how close he had been to the heart and soul of the business, missing it by virtue of his quite remarkable powers of *copia*, Tylor himself unable to escape the power of the images he conjured. The secret was in the vividness and flame and flicker of those savage side-shows, the naked upsurge of motion with which Tylor had dabbled and dallied and been captivated, but which he could never admit to himself that he too *felt*.

Apocryphal men who believed in nothing at all, and in whom Tylor refused to believe – yet Tylor must be one of their number, too. In a skeptic eye, through which Marett on a few occasions had gazed it might well appear that Tylor's doctrines were an insensible evolution of fresh gods composted from the vivid ashes of the old, and the whole of *Primitive Culture* an exuberant hornpipe danced to the tune of a cultish materialism to which the likes of Tyndall and Huxley, and Oxford itself, had lent a naively approving ear. Perhaps, however, such song sounded the lack of a real soul, paled as it was to intellectual phantom, and Tylor's hunger

for fire, perhaps of several kinds, was index of a heart hungry for belief even as his goal had been to dissolve every dream and vision down to a primitive matter whose only property was that it *moved* through its ghostly paces and thus might be hunted and trailed and tracked by an avid eye.

With his own avid eye, Marett sometimes envisioned the faraway place where many years hence Anna and he would meet a final time. Paris, Venice, but most likely Rome, about which they had conversed with such a concurrence of opinion and feeling that it seemed the city to which, if it were not that it was an unthinkably mad thing, they would indeed have run away together. She would have remained as she was now even as he had grown older. They would be near a fountain, no gushing Trevi but instead a much humbler edifice, almost secretive, under the plane trees of a gated piazza. It would again be the linen dress she would wear, the high-necked one with the buttons that glowed pearl-like in the light, making him think of her eyes, and all the flowering of her noble face scarcely shaken by the turns of the years and the tides of circumstance.

The fountain would flow gently, about its motions a sense of an intimacy with the night and the lonely streets near the river that ascended from the temple of Vesta. Its generous single bowl would brim over with a water darkly silver. In the farthest depths of the pool, or on the filmy ripples of its surface, a creature would gaze back at them. Of their own making, a doubling of the two of them. Or perhaps a soul shadow scarcely remembering what it imaged, offering itself as a solitary eye swimming on a skin of reflected stars.

Sometimes he supposed it would be the fixed eye of Tylor, haunting his betrayers, as much a phantom as they must be, and sometimes he supposed it would be his own weeping over the loss of that of which neither he nor anyone could take hold, something on the order of flowing water, Anna its handmaiden.

Or herself its potentate, its queen. Tylor, and now Marett, her captive. Perhaps like the moving flames, all was shift and change, one and the other in the ascendant by turns. All that could be given and all that could be received was that which partook of the great wheeling dream, which Marett at times conceived in contrary fashion as a matter very small, like motes whirling in a

sunbeam, minuscule vortices of air and light; or like a slide on a microscope stage exposing to the eye the tremulous animations of monads and vacuoles, an utterly primary motion. There his faith, and his faith in her, had lain. With misgiving but also, he believed, a growing understanding of where one could go wrong, he wondered whether Tylor's seeming heat of possession were not a long-established crucible test for the elect and favored. With the greatest innocence Anna inspired and assuaged and incited, prelude to Tylor with justice as great breaking the tablets of the law. Once caught in such toils, affectionate feelings for a generous mother would be joined to fearful ones toward a jealous father, and the latest disciple might be expected to remain faithful forever. One must protect from the wrath that might be aroused against Anna as well as oneself so that ultimately – and really, one had been inveigled into it rather brilliantly – one also must protect Tylor and the house that Tylor built.

Deep in the night at the Marylebone hotel, a candle flickering on the sill, Anna had done something unaccountable with her tongue. She had indulged Maret's talkative turn after wine and love, never a word spoken of Edward, of course, but many words about books, and his own book, one day, and Maret soon telling her about the demon imprisoned among the letters, after which he found her tongue, which appeared a queer living thing in her face, so wet and pink and mobile, very suddenly and very conveniently entangled with his, and the rest of the night not any words able to seduce him except once, when he seemed to breathe like a swimmer in deep, buoyant waters, her own name spoken by him on the air.

*Anna:* even those syllables must lose their hold on meaning, become chant and spell as they rose into what they were feeling, also a kind of falling.

The next morning on the train, Maret felt still the odd clarity of that instant, something given to flowing all carelessly, the stream of his speech and certain wheels and engines of his ideation, having been deliciously stopped. How neat he had believed it might be, his seeing beyond to some flowing heart beyond Tylor's acquisitive spirit catalogues. The man had done the clearing up, making tidy, taking a broom to the detritus of old conceptions and firming up Kant's system with his redact of the great divide of subject and object. And now Maret could assume the task of

applying a fresh flow of thought, a new invigoration, whilst leaving the structure intact.

Anna's tongue: Marett thought of first waters, of floods before the Flood; he pictured Tylor's cartoon word-wheels of savage animisms steeped in rolling, watery courses, souls in circulation like so many shiny peddler's coins. It was true that he wanted to divert their courses, to set them spinning at some greater velocity, perhaps to make the entire apparatus exceed itself, to ascend without any issue in some expiring and juvenescent plume.

But to turn all into pure feeling would be too ready a counter to Tylor's mentalism. One would be parroting Carlyle or Dickens or Eliot or Lewes. The immediate would be embraced as the one needful thing, the dialectic have its way, the antithesis of Tylor's system serve to confirm it. All wanted to speak of one or the other thing, of pure reason or of pure intuition, head and heart. A skeptic eye must be a cold eye, a warm eye a believing one. Every party it seemed must proclaim its allegiance to all that was moving and moved.

Sitting alone in his rooms, the day's lectures finished and a quiet settling over the quads, Marett had, he knew, been considering nothing but Anna even as he attempted to obey the rule he had set himself forbidding the least thought of her. He gazed at the windows opposite. At several trees. At a course of stone with a texture luxuriantly aged, wrought with some interior sea of tiny fossils and plankton and glowing like time itself in its slow burning.

And ten years later, Marett remembered a long night he had sat alone in Tylor's study gazing on his master's fire, already something in the man growing old, so that he must retire early, Anna going upstairs to him, and Marett, too, exhausted by the book with its multiple editions and revisions, a worrying thing like a troublesome, exacting child. The fire was spitting and crackling, hissing and whistling as if breathless with its ignition, the wood protesting its change of state, and as it heated and then flared to a clearer burn, Marett gazed in an exhausted rapture at the hovering, careless tongue of it. It was soon licking too far, too high, as if it might in a moment turn to consume everything around it: the study, the book, the devilish Marett and the virtuous Tylors. His contemplation now mixed with fear, a foretaste of panic, servants and water buckets and his host rushing downstairs, but in an instant he

would preserve in his memory (though never tell a soul), he disregarded all prudence and let the sensation of the fire wash over him, take temporary possession as if among all the faculties he must discover the one that Tylor had dismissed: that of ecstasy, of being overcome. It was fear. It was awe. And seduction – the flames a teasing and a caress, and with it a strange heightening of one's sense of time and space, the luminous matter at once containing itself within bounds and forever pouring itself out, fragment of the solar furnace, of the earth's core, and, as in a Charles Hinton romance of a fourth dimension beyond one's ken, seeming to partake of some passionate twisting or furrowing of the aether. Amidst all of their babbling about savage minds – him no less than Tylor, Frazer, Lang and the rest – here was that to which they should attend. That solar emanation the most communicative, infectious phenomenon in terrestrial existence. It captured the eye, but more fundamentally, before any idea or image one might make of it, it was consuming, and consumed. One would like to think the fire motionful and enlivening like one's moving and enlivened mind, but it was a body, and that body was a thing that burned. The flame made the skin warm to itself, to its own sensitive surface; and, like a glowing liquescent magnet, it made the limbs dispose themselves toward it or away from it; and it carried all the body with it and the mind with it, too.

Now to his thought, it was a dance. Always there was form, some bounded shape as if from the start the mind must have it. Always also and perhaps above all, there was motion. It was no wonder the term *animism* came to mind, since in such motion the mind itself was coming to life. The spirits, the souls, the gods were the mirror in which those motions were first beheld.

Yet this notion was itself no more than another epiphenomenon, another stirring of matter – and to Marett, finally, only one thing mattered: in the burn of the Marylebone candlelight, the sticks like hopeful, hopeless flowers drawing their bright tongues into the shapes of their extinction, Anna as much dying of love as he was. And like a machine pounding its beat, there was no place to stop, all was already stopped, all was already still moving, and across the dark in the room Anna was dancing somewhere toward him, dancing somewhere away from him, or with the smell around her of lilacs and sweat, Anna was dancing utterly alone.