*Primitive Marriage* (1866), theories of the origin of exogamy have been rife and multifarious. All, without exception, are purely conjectural. One set of disputants hold that man (whatever his original condition may have been) was, when he first passed an Act of Exogamy, a member of a *tribe.* Howitt’s term for this tribe was “ the undivided commune.” It had, according to him, its inspired medicine-man, believed to be in communication with some superior being. It had its pro- bouleutic council of elders or “ headmen ” and its general assembly. Such was man’s political condition.@@1 It is not dis­tinguishable from that of many modern Australian tribes. Other tribes, said by some to be the most primitive, the Arunta and their neighbours, pay no attention to the dictates of a superior being, and the Arunta of Spencer and Gillen seem to know no such entity, though as Atnatu, Tukura, Altjira, and “ the Great Ulthaana of the heavens,” he exists in a dwindled form among the Kaitish, Loritja and outlying portions of the Arunta tribe. In religion Howitt’s early men were already in advance of Mr Spencer’s Arunta. Socially, man, at this date, according to Howitt, at first left the relations of the sexes wholly unregulated; the nearest kinsfolk by blood coupled at will, though perfectly aware that they were, at least on the maternal side, actual brothers and sisters, parents and children.

Upholders of the first theory, that man lived promiscuously in a tribal state with legislative assemblies and then suddenly reformed promiscuity away, must necessarily differ in their opinion as to the origins of totems and exogamy from the friends of the second theory, who believe that man never was “pro- miscuous,” and given to sexual union with near kin. Why man, on the first theory—familiar as he was with unions of the nearest kin —suddenly abolished them is explained in four or five different ways. Perhaps the most notable view is Mr Frazer’s; he easily confutes, in thirty-five pages, the other hypotheses.@@2 Man saw, or thought he saw, injurious consequences to the wedded near-related couples, and therefore he prohibited, first, unions between mothers and sons, and brothers and sisters.@@3 But, in his fourth volume, Mr Frazer sees conclusive objections to this view@@4 and prefers another. Some peoples, far above the estate of savagery, believe that human incest blights and sterilizes the crops, women and animals. “ If any such belief were entertained by the founders of exogamy, they would clearly have been perfectly sufficient motives for instituting the system, for they would perfectly explain the horror with which incest has been regarded and the extreme severity with which it has been punished.”@@6 That is to say, people had a horror and hatred of incest because they supposed that it blighted the crops and other things. Mr Frazer had previously written (iv. 108) “ It is important to bear steadily in mind that the dislike of certain marriages must always have existed in the minds of the peopIe, or at least of their leaders, before that dislike, so to say, received legal sanction by being embodied in an exogamous rule.”

Again (iv. 112) “ There had, for some reason unknown to us, been long growing up a strong aversion to consanguineous unions ”—before any legislative bar was raised against them. This is insisted on. The prohibition “ must have answered to certain general sentiments of what was right and proper ” (iv. 121). But here the theorist has to explain the origin of the strong aversion, the general sentiment that unions of near kin are wrong and improper. But Mr Frazer does not seem to explain the point that most needs explanation. That “ strong aversion,” that “ general sentiment,” cannot have arisen from a growing belief that unions of close kin spoiled the crops or the natural resources of the country. That superstition could only arise as a consequence of the horror and aversion with which “ incest ” was regarded. Now no idea corresponding to “ incest ” could arise before unions of near kin were deemed abominable. When once such unions were thought hateful to gods and men, and an upsetting of the cosmic balance, then, but not till then, they might be regarded as injurious to the crops. All such beliefs are sanctions of ideas already in strong

force. The idea that such or such a thing is wrong begets the prohibition, followed by the sanction—the belief that the practice of the thing is injurious in a supernormal way: where that belief exists. We do not know it in Australia, for example.

A belief that close sexual unions were maleficent cosmic influences could not possibly arise previous to, and could not then cause, “the dislike of certain marriages”; “the strong aversion to consanguineous unions ”—which existed already. This latest guess of Mr Frazer at the origin of the idea of “ incest ”7—of the abomination of certain unions—is untenable. What he has to explain is the origin of the dislike, the aversion, the horror. Once that has arisen, as he himself observes, the prohibition follows, and then comes the supernormal sanction. Thus no theory of exogamous rules as the result of legislation to prevent the unions of persons closely akin, can'produce, or has produced, any reason for the aversion to such unions arising among people to whom, on the -theory, they were familiar. Mr Frazer has confuted the guesses of MacLennan, Morgan, Durkheim and others; but his own idea is untenable.

*The* *Supposed Method of Reform.*—On Mr Frazer’s theory the reformers first placed half of the mothers of the tribe, with their children, in division A; and the rest of the mothers, with their children, in division B. The members of each division (phratry) must marry out of it into the other, and thus no man could marry his sister or mother. (The father could marry his daughter, but in tribes with no exogamous explicit rule against the union, he never does.) Later the two divisions were bisected each into a couple of pairs (classes) preventing marriage between father and daughter; and another resegmentation prohibited the unions of more distant relations. These systems, from the simplest division into two phratries, to the more complex with two “ sub-classes ” in each phratry, and the most elaborate of all with four sub-classes in each phratry, exist in various tribes. Environment and climate have nothing to do with the matter. The Urabunna and the Arunta live in the same climate and environment, and inter­marry. The Urabunna have the most primitive, the Arunta have the most advanced of these organizations. While the rules are intended to prevent consanguineous marriages, the names of the “ sub-classes ” (when translatable, the names of animals) cannot perhaps be explained. They have a totemic appearance.

*Totems in Relation to Exogamy.—*So far, in this theory nothing has been said of totems, though it is an all but universal rule that people of tJ1e same totem may not intermarry, even if the lovers belong to tribes separated by the breadth of the continent. In fact, according to the hypothesis which has been set forth, totems, though now exogamous, played no *original* part in the evolution of exogamy. They came in by accident, not by design, and dropped into their place in a system carefully devised.

Originally, on this theory, a totem came to a child, not as is usual now, by inheritance, but by pure accident; the mother supposing that any object which caught her attention at the moment when she first felt the life of her child, or any article of food which she had recently eaten, became incarnate in her, so that the emu (say) which she saw, or had eaten of, was her child. He or she was an Emu man or woman, by totem was an Emu.

Certain localities, later, were somehow associated each with one given object—cat, kangaroo, grub, or anything else, and now “ local totems ” (if the phrase may be used) took the place of “ conceptional totems,” as among the Arunta. The child inevitably was of the *local* totem and its supposed place of conception.

Finally all tribes except the Arunta “ nation ” made the totem hereditary, either from mother or father; and as the mother or father, an Emu, was in division A, so was the child, and he or she must marry out of that division into the other, B.@@β

The objections taken to this theory are now to be stated:

*@@@l N.T.S.Ε.A.* pp. 89, 90.

@@@, Ibid. i. 165.

*@@@, Totemism,* iv. 75-120.

@@@4 Ibid. iv. 155, 156.

@@@β Ibid. iv. 158.

@@@β Frazer, *Totemism,* i. 157-167.