

Legend of the Origin of Fire and of the Apotheosis of Two Heroes, by the Aborigines of Tasmania, as related by a Native of the Oyster Bay Tribe.

My father, my grandfather, all of them lived a long time ago, all over the country; they had no fire. Two black-fellows came, they slept at the foot of a hill,—a hill in my own country. On the summit of a hill they were seen by my fathers, my countrymen, on the top of the hill they were seen standing: they threw fire like a star,—it fell amongst the blackmen my countrymen. They were frightened,—they fled away, all of them; after a while they returned, they hastened and made a fire,—a fire with wood; no more was fire lost in our land. The two black-fellows are in the clouds; in the clear night you see them like two stars.* These are they who brought fire to my fathers.

The two blackmen staid awhile in the land of my fathers. Two women (*Lowanna*) were bathing; it was near a rocky shore, where mussels were plentiful. The women were sulky, they were sad; their husbands were faithless, they had gone with two girls. The women were lonely; they were swimming in the water, they were diving for crayfish. A sting-ray lay concealed in the hollow of a rock,—a large sting-ray! The sting-ray was large, he had a very long spear; from his hole he spied the women, he saw them dive: he pierced them with his spear,—he killed them, he carried them away. Awhile they were gone out of sight. The sting-ray returned, he came close in shore, he lay in still water, near the sandy beach; with him were the women, they were fast on his spear,—they were dead!

The two blackmen fought the sting-ray; they slew him with their spears; they killed him;—the women were dead! The two blackmen made a fire,—a fire of wood. On either side they laid a woman,—the fire was between: the women were dead!

The blackmen sought some ants, some large blue ants (*pugganyepietta*); they placed them on the bosoms (*parugga-poingta*) of the women. Severely, intensely were they bitten. The women revived,—they lived once more.

Soon there came a fog (*maynentayana*), a fog dark as night. The two blackmen went away, the women disappeared: they passed through the fog, the thick dark fog! Their place is in the clouds. Two stars you see in the clear cold night; the two blackmen are there,—the women are with them: they are stars above!

* Castor and Pollux.