

**LEGENDS OF GODS AND GHOSTS
(HAWAIIAN MYTHOLOGY).
COLLECTED AND TRANSLATED
FROM THE HAWAIIAN**

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Legends of Gods and Ghosts (Hawaiian Mythology). Collected and Translated from the Hawaiian by W. D. Westervelt

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W. D. WESTERVELT

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BY

W. D. WESTERVELT

AUTHOR OF "LEGENDS OF OLD HONOLULU" AND
"MAUI, A DEMI-GOD OF POLYNESIA"



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PRONUNCIATION

Readers will have little difficulty in pronouncing names if they remember *two* rules:—

1. No syllable ends in a consonant, e.g., Ho-no-lu-lu, not Hon-o-lulu.
2. Give vowels the German sound rather than the English, e.g., "e" equals "a," and "i" equals "e," and "a" is sounded like "a" in "father."

INTRODUCTION

The legends of the Hawaiian Islands are as diverse as those of any country in the world. They are also entirely distinct in form and thought from the fairy-tales which excite the interest and wonder of the English and German children. The mythology of Hawaii follows the laws upon which all myths are constructed. The Islanders have developed some beautiful nature-myths. Certain phenomena have been observed and the imagination has fitted the story to the interesting object which has attracted attention.

Now the Rainbow Maiden of Manoa, a valley lying back of Honolulu, is the story of a princess whose continual death and resurrection were invented to harmonize with the formation of a series of exquisite rainbows which are born on the mountain-sides in the upper end of the valley and die when the mist clouds reach the plain into which the valley opens. Then there were the fish of the Hawaiian Islands which vie with the butterflies of South America in their multitudinous combinations of colors. These im-

aginative people wondered how the fish were painted, so for a story a battle between two chiefs was either invented or taken as a basis. The chiefs fought on the mountain-sides until finally one was driven into the sea and compelled to make the deep waters his continual abiding-place. Here he found a unique and pleasant occupation in calling the various kinds of fish to his submarine home and then painting them in varied hues according to the dictates of his fancy. Thus we have a pure nature-myth developed from the love of the beautiful, one of the highest emotions dwelling in the hearts of the Hawaiians of the long ago.

So, again, Maui, a wonder-working hero like the Hercules of Grecian mythology, heard the birds sing, and noted their beautiful forms as they flitted from tree to tree and mingled their bright plumage with the leaves of the fragrant blossoms.

No other one of those who lived in the long ago could see what Maui saw. They heard the mysterious music, but the songsters were invisible. Many were the fancies concerning these strange creatures whom they could hear but could not see. Maui finally pitied his friends and made the birds visible. Ever since, man has been able to both hear the music and see the beauty of his forest neighbors.

Such nature-myths as these are well worthy of preservation by the side of any European fairy-tale. In purity of thought, vividness of imagination, and delicacy of coloring the Hawaiian myths are to be given a high place in literature among the stories of nature vivified by the imagination.

Another side of Hawaiian folk-lore is just as worthy of comparison. Lovers of "Jack-the-Giant-Killer," and of the other wonder-workers dwelling in the mist-lands of other nations, would enjoy reading the marvelous record of Maui, the skilful demi-god of Hawaii, who went fishing with a magic hook, and pulled up from the depths of the ocean groups of islands. This story is told in a matter-of-fact way, as if it were a fishing-excursion only a little out of the ordinary course. Maui lived in a land where volcanic fires were always burning in the mountains. Nevertheless it was a little inconvenient to walk thirty or forty miles for a live coal after the cold winds of the night had put out the fire which had been carefully protected the day before. Thus, when he saw that some intelligent birds knew the art of making a fire, he captured the leader and forced him to tell the secret of rubbing certain sticks together until fire came.

(Maui also made snares, captured the sun and compelled it to journey regularly and slowly

across the heavens. Thus the day was regulated to meet the wants of mankind. He lifted the heavens after they had rested so long upon all the plants that their leaves were flat.

There was a ledge of rock in one of the rivers, so Maui uprooted a tree and pushed it through, making an easy passage for both water and man. He invented many helpful articles for the use of mankind, but meanwhile frequently filled the days of his friends with trouble on account of the mischievous pranks which he played on them.

Fairies and gnomes dwelt in the woodland, coming forth at night to build temples, massive walls, to fashion canoes, or whisper warnings. The birds and the fishes were capable and intelligent guardians over the households which had adopted them as protecting deities. Birds of brilliant plumage and sweet song were always faithful attendants on the chiefs, and able to converse with those over whom they kept watch. Sharks and other mighty fish of the deep waters were reliable messengers for those who rendered them sacrifices, often carrying their devotees from island to island and protecting them from many dangers.

Sometimes the gruesome and horrible creeps into Hawaiian folk-lore. A poison tree figures in the legends and finally becomes one of the