



How the Sun was Made

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For a long time there was no sun, only a moon and stars. That was before there were men on the earth, only birds and beasts, all of which were many sizes larger than they are now.

One day, Dinewan, the emu, and Brälgah, the native companion, were on a large plain near the Murrumbidgee. There they were quarrelling and fighting. Brälgah, in her rage, rushed to the nest of Dinewan, seized from it one of the huge eggs in it, which she threw with all her force up to the sky. There it broke on a heap of firewood, which burst into a flame as the yellow yolk spilt all over it, which flame lit up the world below, to the astonishment of everything on it. They had only been used to the semi-darkness, and were dazzled by such brightness.

A good spirit who lived in the sky saw how bright and beautiful the earth looked when lit up by this blaze. He thought it would be a good thing to make a fire every day, which from that time he has done. All night he and his attendant spirits collect wood, and heap it up. When the heap is nearly big enough they send out the morning star to warn those on earth that the fire will soon be lit.

They, however, found this warning was not sufficient, for those who slept saw it not. Then they thought they must have some noise made at dawn of day to herald the coming of the sun and waken the sleepers. But they could not decide upon to whom should be given this office for a long time.

At last one evening they heard the laughter of Gougourgahgah, the laughing jackass, ringing through the air. "That is the noise we want," they said. Then they told Gougourgahgah that as the morning star faded and the day dawned he was every morning to laugh his loudest, that his laughter might awaken all sleepers before sunrise. If he would not agree to do this then no more would they light the sun-fire, but let the earth be ever in twilight again.

But Gougourgahgah saved the light for the world, and agreed to laugh his loudest at every dawn of day, which he has done ever since, making the air ring with his loud cackling "gou-gour-gah-gah, gou-gour-gah-gah, gou-gour-gah-gah."

When the spirits first light the fire it does not throw out much heat. But in the middle of the day when the whole heap of firewood is in a blaze, the heat is fierce. After that it begins to die gradually away until only the red coals are left at sunset, and they quickly die out, except a few the spirits cover up with clouds, and save to light the heap of wood they get ready for the next day.

Children are not allowed to imitate the laughter of Gougourgahgah, lest he should hear them and cease his morning cry. If children do laugh as he does, an extra tooth grows above their eye-tooth, so that they carry a mark of their mockery in punishment for it, for well do the good spirits know that if ever a time comes wherein the Gougourgahgahs cease laughing to herald the sun, then the time will have come when no more Daens are seen in the land, and darkness will reign once more.

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