

DWELLERS ON THE THRESHOLD

OR

Magic and Magicians

WITH SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF HUMAN ERROR
AND IMPOSTURE.

BY

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TO YINSHAN
ALUMINUM
WORKS

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PREFACE.

U of M Bindery I HAVE endeavoured in the following pages to furnish the reader with a careful outline of the History of Magic, and to present some condensed but comprehensive biographies of the most notable "Magicians." The subject is as curious as it is important, and is closely related to many valuable scientific questions. I have here, however, hovered only on its outskirts, and contented myself with indicating some of its more singular aspects—in the hope that on a future occasion I may be able to examine it with greater fulness and on a more extended scale. Though the popular features of magic are principally treated of in these desultory chapters, I have ventured to give a somewhat detailed account of the philosophical system of Paracelsus, and to quote more or less freely from the writings of the earlier magicians and theosophists. The reader will sometimes be amused with their extravagance, and sometimes

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astonished at their audacity. He will observe much to condemn, to ridicule, to pity; but he will also discover, if he be not enthralled by too strong a prejudice, gleams of lofty thought, and flashes of poetical imagination.

The so-called magicians were, indeed, the pioneers of science, and the world owes more to their labours than it is usually willing to acknowledge. Their mystical language may be attributed to the difficulty they found in comprehending the full importance of their own discoveries. They acted—to use the words of quaint George Withers—

As men in ecstasies have done,
Striving their cloudy visions to declare,—

and wrapt their fancies in strange hyperboles and incongruous allegories. For, in the true infancy of science, “philosophers,” as the elder D’Israeli says, “were as imaginative a race as poets: marvels and portents, undemonstrable and undefinable, with occult fancies, perpetually beginning and never ending, were delightful as the shifting cantos of Ariosto. Then science entranced the eye by its thaumaturgy; when they looked through an optic tube they believed they were looking into futurity, or starting at some shadow darkening the glassy

globe, beheld the absent person; while the mechanical inventions of art were toys and tricks, with sometimes an automaton, which frightened them with life."

Recognising therefore "a soul of wisdom" in these semi-poetical follies, I have ventured to regard the mediæval philosophers as Dwellers on the Threshold of Science; admitted, indeed, to a glimpse of its wonders—confused and perturbed with that delightful vision—but unable to pass into the temple. In a time of darkness and ignorance they were never faint of heart; they suffered neither persecution to daunt, nor poverty to overwhelm them; but pressed forward with resolute courage to gaze at wisdom from afar if unhappily forbidden to enter her holy of holies. It ill becomes us then, in an age of fuller knowledge and greater opportunities, to cast indiscriminate ridicule upon the labours of those who so painfully toiled in what they believed to be the path of truth. They were not only the pioneers of science, but too often its martyrs.

To the memory of the more famous of these I have dedicated the following pages. To their biographies I have prefixed a general view of the History of Magic; and I have

added a copious collection of illustrations of mediæval superstitions—a sketch of the History of Witchcraft—and an examination of various other interesting phases of human folly. It is hardly necessary to say that I have consulted a host of authorities — authorities little known to the general reader—but especial reference is due to the labours of Naudé, Lenglet du Fresnoy, Deumier, Garinet, Salverte, Sprengel, Ennemoser, Mr. Morley, Alfred Maury, and Emile Charles.

W. H. D. A.

DENMARK HILL,
March, 1864.

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DWELLERS ON THE THRESHOLD

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

THE CHALDEANS — ASSYRIANS — PERSIANS —
EGYPTIANS—GREECE—ROME—THE PRIMITIVE
CHRISTIANS—MEDIÆVAL EUROPE.

And to their starry world they now are gone,
Spirits or gods that used to share this earth
With man as with their friend ; and to the lover
Yonder they move : from yon invisible sky
Shake influence down, and even at this day
'Tis Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
And Venus who brings everything that's fair.

SCHILLER (*translated by COLERIDGE*).

MAGIC* sprang naturally out of that ignorant wonder with which the early races of mankind surveyed the features of the earth, the changes of the sky, the alternations of the

* This chapter is mainly founded on Salverte's "Philosophy of Magic," Maury's "La Magie et l'Astrologie," Colquhoun's and Ennemoser's "Histories of Magic," Garinet's "Histoire de la Magie," Lenglet du Fresnoy, Naudé, Godwin, Scott, &c.

seasons, and the visible life of the universe. Shut out from that revelation which the All-wise had made to the Hebrews, or knowing of it only by uncertain rumour and dim tradition, they began to explain, according to their own fancies, the causes of that motion and external being which they everywhere beheld. Sensible of the existence of Something superior to themselves,—of Something which survived them, and which they could not control, — they assumed that the operations of Nature resulted from the will of this mysterious Power, or the will of other powers subjected to one supreme Divinity. Thus, the thunder and the lightning, the sirocco, the hail-storm, the rolling river, the seething sea, the echoing wind, all seemed to them endowed with a species of inner life, animated by supernatural beings, by gods, spirits, genii—by immortal and invisible existences—to be dreaded, to be bribed, to be worshipped, perhaps to be controlled. Hence arose an order of men gifted with bold and adventurous intellects, who professed to have learned the secret spells by which the maleficent deities might be propitiated, and the good divinities commanded. Hence arose the whole apparatus of the ancient mythology ; its priests, its sacrifices, its sibyls, its Pythonesses, its oracles.

Hence arose the Chaldean science of the stars, those bright spheres being supposed to exercise a direct and powerful influence upon the fortunes of humanity. And the shepherd who mused in the solitary plains at night, while the earth was still grey with the mysteries of its recent birth, may well be forgiven if, gazing upon the brilliant orbs of the cloudless skies above him, he conceived them to be intimately associated with his own destiny. In all time the soul of man has aspired to a communion with the stars, with those mystic sentinels which, from their azure watch-towers, keep so serene and passionless a ward over the pendent earth. Who ever gazed upon them without an indefinable aspiration for something better and purer than his daily life afforded? Who ever contemplated the sidereal heaven without a longing, like that of the dove, to flee away and be at rest?

Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turned to earth without repining,
Nor wished for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray?

This awe of the supernatural or unintelligible, which suggested star-worship, and peopled earth, air, fire, and water with controlling spirits, has existed in all ages, though modified by the spread of increasing know-

ledge. It lies at the bottom of every development of magic, of divination, necromancy, witchcraft, astrology. Man fears most what he understands least. As step by step the labours of science have rendered clearer the phenomena of Nature, and explained the laws and *modus* of its operations, magic has receded in importance and diminished in extent; but even now we ascribe many things to the direct agency of Providence which a fuller and clearer knowledge will probably reveal as the effects of the laws that Providence at the beginning did ordain.

Magic would necessarily create magicians. A belief in the supernatural would differently affect two classes of students; the enthusiasts, who shared in the belief, and endeavoured with honest zeal to conquer the mysteries of the other world; the charlatans, who may have partially held the same faith, but made use of it for purposes of greed and earthly power. Between these two classes the reader must be careful to distinguish. A wide gulf yawns between such men as Raymond Lulli and Albertus Magnus, and such quacks as Seni, the confidant of Wallenstein, and Kelly, the knavish coadjutor of Dr. Dee. Among the early magicians—to adopt the popular nomenclature—were

many wise, earnest, and laborious students, animated by a noble love of truth, by an eager yearning after knowledge. Roger Bacon, Paracelsus, Agrippa, Van Helmont, these are names not to be mentioned lightly. Wandering in the darkness, with but a feeble and uncertain light to guide their steps, it is no marvel that they strayed into many a wilderness, and were misled by many an *ignis fatuus*. But they learned much, if they believed too readily. They were not admitted within the *penetralia* of the temple of science, but at least they were Dwellers on its Threshold. They caught a glimpse of the glories which a later and more incredulous generation were more fully to enjoy, and heard some strains of that divine music which fills and rejoices the ears and souls of men.

Thus to Paracelsus we owe the discovery of laudanum, zinc, and many of the properties of mercury. Roger Bacon invented gunpowder, and hinted at telescopes and magic-lanterns. Raymond Lulli gave us carbonate of ammonia, spirits of wine, and nitric acid. To Basil Valentine we are indebted for antimony, sulphuric ether, nitric ether, and many of the combinations of potash. Valentine also discovered sulphuric acid. Geber improved the methods of prepar-

ing the carbonates of potash and soda, and explained the properties of borax. Aqua regia is associated with the name of Isaac Hollandus ; sulphates of soda and ammonia and muriatic acid with that of Glauber. Agricola discovered bismuth ; Van Helmont carbonic acid gas. And so, by slow degrees, the science of chemistry (χημεία) grew up out of the mists and shadows of alchymy, and magic was made to contribute to the formation of a scientific philosophy.

Magic, or astrology, appears to have been born among the wide mysterious plains of Assyria, and star-worship was the religion of the pastoral tribes who, stooping from the mountains of Kurdistan into the solitudes of Babylon, founded the sacerdotal race of the *Chasdim* or *Chaldeans*. These men soon acquired distinctive functions and peculiar immunities, and under the name of Magi exercised a vast and enduring influence. They studied the heavens with constant watchfulness, and made extensive investigations of the qualities and properties of plants and minerals. They were astronomers, prophets, priests, physicians. Their temples were astronomical observatories as well as sacred places ; and " the legendary tower of Babel, in the Book of

Genesis, is probably but the mythical equivalent of a real edifice consecrated to the pious contemplation of the seven planets, or perhaps as the *Bab* (court or palace) of *Bel*, to the brilliant star of good fortune alone." Availing themselves of the popular worship of the stars, they devised a system of astrology—the apotelesmatic science—by which they professed to decide upon the character of coming events and the fortunes of individuals, with especial reference to the planetary aspects.

In their system of mythology the places of rank and precedence were necessarily occupied by the sun and moon, which, to the un instructed eye, have an evident superiority over the stars. To calculate their daily positions, they mapped out the face of the known heavens into constellations, and girdled the earth with the zodiac, which, with its twelve signs, represented the aggregate and distinctive "residency" of the sun throughout the year. Each sign or month was ruled by a god, who superintended his own house, and had also to keep watch over the corresponding month. Each month was divided into three parts, and each part administered by a deity—thirty-six in all—named counsellors, and forming a sort of celestial parliament. Half attended to sub-

lunary, half to heavenly affairs. The seven planets were named *interpreters*, because their diurnal march was supposed to indicate the procession of events and the course of human destiny. Saturn, or old Bel, the most distant, was regarded as the most powerful, and worshipped as the chief interpreter or revealer. Young Bel (or Jupiter), Merodach (or Mars), Nebo (or Mercury), were reputed of the masculine gender; Sin (or the Moon), and Mylitta, Baalthis (or Venus), were invested with feminine attributes. These male and female deities completely controlled the fates of men, the changes of the weather, and even the characters or properties of metals—gold being identified with the sun, silver with the moon, iron with Mars, lead with Saturn, tin with Jupiter. In this belief may be traced the first faint origin of the science of alchymy.

The Chaldean priesthood was divided into three orders: the *aschapim*, or singers, who were the exorcisers of evil spirits—the magicians, the sagest and loftiest—and thirdly, the astrologers, or star-gazers. Cicero speaks of them as the earliest soothsayers, who ascribed a certain miraculous power to herbs, and proposed to work miracles by their agency. They also made use of charms or talismans, inscribed

with various images and symbols, and gained so great a fame in the "dark foretime of the world," that the common name of Chaldeans was ascribed to the astrologers of all nations.

In Persia, the religion of Magic assumed a yet more definite development. The Chaldeans had attributed the origin of all things to a great central everlasting fire. The foundation of the Persian system, usually ascribed to Zoroaster,* was the existence of two antagonistic principles—the Principle of Good, or *Ormuzd*, and the Principle of Evil, or *Ahriman*. Magic in Persia embraced everything associated with science or religion. The Persian priests were named the Maguise, or Magi, but they did not monopolize the entire credit of intercourse with the gods. Zoroaster, or Zerduster, who was King of Bactria, made some reservations for the better exaltation of the regal power, and taught that the kings were illuminated by a celestial fire which proceeded directly from Ormuzd. Hence, the holy fire was always carried before the prince as a symbol of his illustrious rank; and Plato says, "the Kings of Persia studied magic, which is a worship of their gods."

* According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Zoroaster borrowed most of his doctrines from the Chaldeans.— See lib. xxvi. c. vi.

The Magi appear to have been acquainted with the narcotic properties of opium, hemp, and other substances; and by long fasts, and the administration of these opiates, induced a state of trance or ecstasy, favourable to the conception of visions, and the simulation of accesses of inspiration. They were accustomed to propitiate the spirits with loud songs and chants, either of triumph or woe, entreaty or indignation.

While they represented Ormuzd as in constant strife with his antagonistic principle, Ahriman, they carried the same opposition of character into their conceptions of the subordinate deities. Ormuzd was associated with the Amschaspands, or immortal saints, ideal personifications of the solar forms; over the phenomena of nature presided the Izeds; and the Ferouers were genii who represented the living forces,—“hypostases of life and intelligence, originating in the imaginary existence of the spirits of the departed.”* The satellites of Ahriman were the Devs (hence our word *devil*?) or Dewes, by whom all the evil of nature was supposed to be originated. Thus, to secure the aid and patronage of the Amschaspands, and to ward off the fatal influence of the Devs,

* Maury, “La Magie et l’Astrologie.”

was the great object of the religious observances of the Persians. When the Greeks became acquainted with their *cultus*, they misunderstood its import; treated the prayers of the priest as the invocations of the enchanter; transformed religion into "magic," and magi into "magicians."

In Egypt, magic received its greatest development, and was, in fact, exalted into an art. That mysterious country was the parent land of the sciences, which, in their early stages, were mainly used for magical purposes. Religion in Egypt became intimately connected with medicine; the first hospitals were in the temples, and the sick were made the means of revealing the wishes of the gods. "The Egyptians declare," says Diodorus,* "that Isis has rendered them great services in the healing science, through the curative methods which she made known to them; that now, having become immortal, she takes a peculiar pleasure in the religious services of men, and occupies herself particularly with their health; and that she assists them in dreams, manifesting thereby her great benevolence. This is proved, not by fable, as among the Greeks, but by authentic facts. In reality, all nations of the earth bear witness to the power of this goddess in regard

Diodorus, lib. i.

to the cure of diseases by her influence. In dreams she reveals to those who are suffering the fittest remedies for their ailments, and by exactly obeying her orders, invalids have recovered—contrary to the expectation of the world,—who have been given up by all the physicians.”

Sprenzel is of opinion that the most ancient race in Egypt was a tribe of priests, or magicians; that its government was sacerdotal, and endeavoured to unite the people in striving after a common purpose. When, in course of time, several other tribes had arisen, the older caste of priests still remained the most honoured, and from it the kings were chosen. Religion and medicine went hand in hand. Star-worship led, not unnaturally, to a belief in the astral influence as a curative or a cause of disease. To impose upon the common people, the priesthood professed to lead lives of peculiar sanctity. They despised the outer senses, as sources of evil and temptation. They kept themselves apart from the *profanum vulgus*, “and,” says Iamblicus, “occupied themselves only with the knowledge of God, of themselves, and of wisdom; they desired no vain honours in their sacred practice, and never yielded to the influence of the imagination.”*

* De Mysteriis Ægyptiorum, ed. by Vale, p. 173.

Therefore they formed a world within a world, fenced round by a singular awe and wonder, apparently abstracted from the things of earth, and devoted to the constant contemplation of divine mysteries. They admitted few strangers into their order, and wrapt up their doctrines in a hieroglyphical language, which was only intelligible to the initiated. To these various precautions was added the solemnity of a terrible oath, whose breach was invariably punished with death. The initiated were reminded of the prolonged and awful tortures of Prometheus, guilty of having communicated to mortals the sacred fire. Tradition also relates that, as a punishment for having revealed to men certain sacred mysteries, the gods slew Orpheus with thunderbolts; a fable probably derived from the peculiar death of one of the priests of the Orphic mysteries; which were afterwards transplanted from Egypt into Greece.

The most celebrated temples in Egypt were those of *Isis*, at Memphis and Busiris; the temples of Serapis, at Canopus, Alexandria and Thebes; the temples of Osiris, of Apis, and Phtha. *Isis*, the wife of Osiris, is said to derive her name from the Coptic word *isi*, or plenty, and would seem to typify earth; but she is usually represented as the goddess of the

moon, *κεραόφωρος*, [the Horn-bearing,—also, *μελανόστολος*, the Black-robed, in allusion to her supremacy over Night. Under the name Isis, the word *wisdom* was sometimes understood; and she may also be regarded as a symbol of the eternal Will, her shrines bearing the enigmatic inscription:—“I am the all that was, that is, that will be: no mortal can raise my garment.” She was believed to be the inventor of the medical art, and to delight in restoring the sick to health. In commemoration of her victory over Typhon, annual festivals were celebrated with extraordinary pomp. The fable of Typhon may refer to the cessation of some destructive pestilence, or to the desolating effects of the arid simoon, which counteracts the beneficial influence of the Nile and the Sun (worshipped under the symbols of Isis and Osiris).

Horus was the son of Isis, and learned from his mother the art of healing. Horus is synonymous with light,—the king or spirit of the Sun, worshipped by the Greeks as Hyperion or Apollo. Hawks were sacred to him, because able to gaze on the Sun with an unflinching eye.

Serapis was another Egyptian divinity, and originally meant, according to Sprengel, Nilo-

meter, Nile Measure, because the rise of the Nile was traced to the Egyptian horizon. He was called by the Greeks, Osiris, Jupiter Ammon, Pluto, Bacchus, and Æsculapius.

Apis was another divinity, worshipped under the shape of a spotted ox. By most authorities he is considered identical with Serapis, and St. Augustine says,* that he was a king of Argos, who went to Serapis in Egypt, and after the latter's death was regarded as the greatest Egyptian god.

Phtha was the eternal spirit, the creator of all things; and his symbol was the everlasting fire of the temples, burning both day and night. At Memphis he had a magnificent temple. A temple was also dedicated to Butus, or Salina,—the symbol of the full moon—in a town of the same name, near Sebenyth, in Lower Egypt; and it was famous for its oracle, which attracted inquirers from all parts, according to the testimony of Herodotus.

Finally, Thout, Thot, or Taaut, was worshipped as a god, whom the Greeks call Hermes, the inventor of all arts and sciences. His name has been derived from *Thouodh*, a column, because he inscribed his knowledge on columns. Both Pythagoras and Plato are said to have learned

* De Civitate Dei, lib. xviii.

much from these inscriptions. Others derive the word from the Coptic, where it signifies *Head*—the symbol of understanding ; “but all historians are unanimous that Thout was a friend and associate of Osiris ; that he taught the Egyptians all useful arts and sciences, and that he deserves a prominent place among the physicians who have received divine honours.”*

The Egyptian priests devoted their ardent study to astrological science. They supposed the different stars to exercise a powerful influence on the several parts of the human body. “Their funeral rituals are quoted in illustration of this practice. From their testimony it appears that the divinities shared among them the entire body of the dead. To Ra, or the sun, was assigned the head, to Anubis the nose and the lips, to Hathor the eyes, to Selk the teeth, and so on. To ascertain the nativity, the astrologer had only to combine the theory of the influences thus exerted by these star-related gods with the appearance of the heavens at the moment of birth. It was an element of the Egyptian as well as of the Persian astrological doctrine that a particular star was interested in the natal hour of every human being, and the prevalence of this belief,

* Ennemoser, “History of Magic.”

even in the Christian community, is shown by the legend of the Magi, who had seen the birth-star of Jesus in the East, and had followed its guidance till they arrived at his home in Bethlehem. In Egypt, as in Assyria, the chemical properties of bodies were referred to divine or sidereal influences. The shores of the Nile were the classical country of chemistry, or rather of alchymy, and the false and the true science equally derive their name from *Chemi*, the Black Land.”*

Through the agency of Orpheus, Musæus, Pythagoras, and others who had travelled in Egypt, and been initiated by the priests into their mysteries, magic was introduced into Greece, where it assumed a vast variety of shapes.

Magic, in GREECE, lost much of its religious, and assumed more of a poetical character. The lively imagination of the Greeks was not content with ascribing the operations of Nature to the power of unseen divinities, but made all Nature divine; planted a deity in every river, an immortal being in every grove, every fountain, every murmurous rill. Instead of elevating man to the gods, it brought down the gods to man, and placed their celestial

* Westminster Review, No. xlix.

hall among the clouds that gathered on the summit of the fabled Olympus. The free spirit of the Greeks revolted from the theocracy of Egypt, from its mysterious omnipotent priesthood, but their quick, keen intellect penetrated as eagerly as the graver wisdom of the Chaldeans into the science of the starry influences, and the relations existing between the Human and the Divine. But that conception of a dark, secret, and overruling Fate which is so prominent in the mythological poetry of Greece, destroyed all the unity of its magic; for this Fate could not be propitiated or controlled. Its operations could not be guessed at. It governed the Olympian divinities; was the Fate of Apollo and Jupiter, as of king and peasant; brooded with a heavy shadow over the dark current of the world's fortunes. Thus, then, the Greek mythology arose before the Greek *γοητεία*; and demonology and sorcery were imported from the East long after the Greek *cultus* or worship, had assumed a definite existence. This will account for the anomalies in the Greek sorcery apparent to the least observant student. It was grafted on a different moral and intellectual system, and never possessed the completeness or unity of an indigenous growth.

“The magic of the Greeks was purely human:” it did not admit the existence of any intermediate demons. The naiad and the oread were symbolical personifications of Nature, and not like the Amschaspand and the Ized, immortal existences having an influence over man and Nature. Nor is there apparent in the Greek cultus what makes the very life and mainspring of the Chaldean religion, the continual hostility between the opposing Principles of Good and Evil. According to Plutarch, the first mention of good and evil demons (*δαίμονες*) is due to Empedocles, though the philosophers may probably have derived the idea from the East at an earlier period, without revealing it to the people. The *δαίμονες* of Hesiod are simply the souls of the departed; and the *ἄγγελοι* of Homer are but the messengers of the gods. In Plato the idea appears but very indistinctly.

Gradually, however, the magic of the East made itself a place in the fears and affections of the West, and became incorporated with the traditions and legends of Colchis. The myth of Medea suggests a definite magic practice, or art of sorcery, and hence so-called magical herbs were afterwards associated with memories of Medea and Colchis, as in the

“Colchis venenorum ferax,” and “malæ herbæ Medææ,” of Horace. In Thessalysorcery reached a high development; Horace refers to the Thessalian sorceresses, who sought by their enchantments to draw down the Moon, reminding one of the American savages who clanged their brazen instruments on the occasion of an eclipse:

Quæ sidera excantata voce
Thessala, lunamque cœlo deripit.

HOR., *Epis.* v. 45.

The Greek sorcery chiefly manifested itself in the ceremonies of the Orpheotelestæ, the invocation of the dead (*νεκτομαντεία*), the cave of Trophonius, the oracles of the gods, and especially the worship of Hecate. This mysterious moon-goddess was the patron-divinity of the sorcerers. From her, as from one of the Powers of the nether-world, proceeded phantoms that taught witchcraft, hovered among the tombs, and haunted crossways and places cursed by the blood of the murdered or the suicide. “The Mormo, the Cercops, the Empusa, were among the goblin-crew that did her bidding. Accompanied by the souls of the dead, the terrible goddess, with her ever-changing form wandered over the earth, while the howling and whining of dogs announced her approach. She presided over the rites of purification and

expiation; reptiles and loathly animals and all repulsive mixtures were associated with her service. The vervain and the root of the rue were hers, myrrh and storax flavoured the lizard-mash set in her honour under the crescent moon, when constrained by some barbarous spell or archaic word of power, she revealed herself in dream to her expectant adorers."

In the course of time sorcery largely extended itself in Greece, and assumed many fresh and novel forms, as the lively imagination of the Greeks began to be occupied with it. Magic amulets, magic words, magic garlands; the evil eye (*βασκανία*); charms against sickness;—dreams and delusions such as these, in which all the beautiful simplicity of the Chaldean and Egyptian magic was lost, crept into corrupted and enslaved Hellas, after the destruction of her republic, and the consequent deterioration of her philosophy. The *Oracles*, however, were of greater antiquity, and had an eminently Greek character and meaning. The earliest were probably those of *Æsculapius*, the Healer, the Dream-sender (*ὄνειρόπομπον*), whose most celebrated and most ancient temple was situated at Epidaurus, in Peloponnesus. Its oracles were mainly confined to directions respecting the health of its votaries.

Of wider renown were the Oracles of Apollo, and of these the most famous was situated at Delphi, which took its name from a town of Bœotia, lying on the south side of the sacred hill of Parnassus. It is said to have been founded in the following manner:—Some herdsmen, whose flocks were browsing in the neighbourhood, noticed that the goats, on approaching too near a chasm from which a peculiar vapour arose, became, as it were, intoxicated, and this, too, happened to a shepherd whose curiosity led him to examine it. The belief soon became common that exhalations so singular must have a divine origin. The priesthood seized upon the popular belief, and built a temple in honour of Apollo, the god of prophecy, erecting a tripod over the aperture of the vapour-gulf, whereon was seated the interpreter of the meaning of the god. For this office young maidens were chosen,—the female temperament being more sensitive and excitable than that of the male. She was called Pythia, from Apollo Pythius,—the god being so named in memory of his victory over the serpent Pytho, a fable concealing, perhaps, the record of some great pestilence in which the healing art had been specially beneficial to mankind.

The prophecies of the Delphic Pythia ob-

tained a very wide celebrity. It was generally admitted that they arose from the subterraneous vapours, which Iamblicus describes as "the spirit of Divine fire, filling them with Divine glory." The gases arising from the chasm may possibly have induced a convulsive and frenzied condition of the unfortunate priestess, who, in her madness, poured forth inexplicable ravings, for the priests to interpret as they pleased. Most of the stories related concerning the Delphic oracles are probably ingenious inventions. The Lydian king, Cræsus, is said to have inquired of the Pythia in reference to his war with Persia ; but first, in order to test her veracity, he directed his ambassadors to inquire, on the hundredth day after their departure, how their royal master was then engaged. His instructions were duly carried out, and Herodotus tells us that the Oracle replied :—

So, I number the sands, and measure the spans of the ocean ;
Hear the dumb when they speak,—interpret the thoughts of
the silent !

And now I distinguish an odour, an odour up-springing of
lamb's flesh,

All boiling and seething in brass, and mixed with the feet of
the tortoise ;

Brass, brass is beneath it, and with brass is it all covered
over.

The king from thenceforth believed in the

inspiration of the Pythia, for his occupation, when the Oracle was speaking, had been the boiling of a lamb and a tortoise in a brazen cauldron.

The answer to his question upon the probable result of a war with Persia was ambiguous :—

Χροίσος Ἄλυν διαβας, μεγάλην ἀρχὴν διαλυσεῖ.

—“If Crœsus crosses the Halys, he shall destroy a great empire.” The king accepted it as an omen of his triumph over the Persians, but the empire destroyed proved, in the event, to be his own.

Having inquired whether his son, who was dumb, would ever be able to speak, Crœsus received the following reply :—

Lydian, foolish of heart, although a sovereign mighty,
 Yearn not to hear the voice of a son in thy palace :
 Omen of ill it shall be, for his mouth he shall only open
 On the day which of all days shall prove for thee and for
 him most unhappy !

On the day that Sardis was captured, a Persian rushed upon Crœsus to slay him in ignorance of his lofty rank. His son, observing his father's danger, cried out, in the agony of the moment, “Man, do not kill Crœsus !” This was his first speech, and the “chain of silence” being thus broken, he thenceforward was able to converse with his fellows.*

* Herodotus, lib. i. § 85.

Another celebrated Oracle was that of Amphiarus, one of the heroes of the Theban war, and deified by the gratitude of his countrymen. He was venerated at Oropus, in Bœotia, as a seer. This oracle was chiefly consulted by the sick, who lay upon the skin of a sacrificial ram, and during sleep had the remedies of their diseases revealed to them.

The renowned Oracle of the Pelasgic Zeus was situated among the oak-groves of Dodona, at the foot of Mount Tomarus. The responses were made by three aged women named Peliades: as the word Pelias means *dove* in the Attic dialect, the fable thus arose that the doves prophesied in the groves of Dòdona. The prophetic priestesses were three in number, with the title of Προμήνα, the diviner of the future; Τιμαρέτη, the friend of virtue; and Νικανδρία, the virgin-ruler of men. These names evidently suggest the idea that man may approach the Divine through wisdom, virtue, and chastity.*

A line or two must be spared for the great magicians. Of these Empedocles, the Pythagorean, very nearly approaches the modern idea of the enchanter, or necromancer. He was a great physician, like all the early magicians,

* Ennemoser, i. 377.

and effected many marvellous cures. Diogenes Laertius thus characterizes his achievements:—

Thou shalt medicines learn that avert every species of evil,
And lighten old age, and these I will disclose to thee only.
Storms shalt thou soothe that disport o'er the sea of the
 ripening harvest,
That sweep over earth in their ire, and ravage with fury un-
sated,
The power shall be thine to arouse the languishing winds
 into motion,
And to spread the bright hue of the heaven over its face so
 long clouded,
Cheering the heart of man, slaking the dry earth in summer,
Loading the fruit-trees through gently murmuring winds of
 Erato,
And from the region of shadow thou shalt gather the vigour
 of manhood.

Apollonius of Tyana was a yet greater magician, which means, perhaps, that he was also a greater impostor. He was however, in many respects, a man in advance of his age. He has thus described his manner of living, which, he says, differed widely from that of the people. "I take very little food, and this, like a secret remedy, maintains my senses fresh and unimpaired, and freeing them from rust and shadow, enables me to see the present and the future, as it were in a clear mirror. The sage need not wait for the vapours of the earth, and corruption of the air, to foresee pestilential

epidemics ; he must know them later than God, but earlier than the people. The gods see the future ; man beholds the present ; sages appreciate that which is about to happen. This mode of life makes the senses so acute that one may accomplish the greatest and most marvellous achievements." Apollonius, however, severely condemned the lower kinds of sorcery, and professed the higher magic, as Pythagoras may be supposed to have acquired it in Egypt. He had learned much in his travels in the East, and relied for his "miracles" upon the intimate connexion between the will and the imagination.

Many strange stories are related of him. Thus, he is said to have raised a young girl from the dead, which means, that in a case of suspended animation, his superior medical skill enabled him to discern the signs of vitality, and employ the necessary remedy. At the very moment that the Emperor Domitian was stabbed at home by the conspirators whom his cruelties had provoked, Apollonius stopped short in an oration he was delivering at Ephesus, and exclaimed, "Strike the tyrant! Strike him!" He afterwards declared that he had seen the incident of the assassination with his own eye, but the sceptical will rather believe

that he was acquainted with the conspiracy, and with the time fixed for its outbreak.*

As ROME borrowed her art and literature from Greece so she borrowed her Magic, but the Occult science did not penetrate thither until nearly two hundred years before the Christian era. Previously there had existed an Etruscan sorcery, comprising divination, the worship of the dead, the evocation of their *lemures* or phantoms, and the mysterious rites of the *Mana-Genita*, a nocturnal goddess of terrible character. Numa was the great prophet of the old Roman magic. How far it then partook of a religious and medical character, we are unable to determine. The Etruscans were recognised by the Romans as their teachers in the divine arts of healing and of vaticination — which were probably closely connected — and the interpretation of signs and omens was especially confided to them.

One of the oldest forms of Magic in ancient Rome was the Sibylline Books; but of these we shall speak in a succeeding chapter.

The influence of the Etruscan augurs passed away when the polished philosophy of Greece commended itself to the Roman mind, and the Chaldean soothsayers reigned in their stead.

* Philostratus, "Vita Apollon." lib. i. etc.

“These new prophets unfortunately soon became fashionable. Patrician families retained them in their service. If a son was born or a daughter married, the mathematician was summoned to draw their horoscope. On the birth of Octavius, the learned Pythagorean Nigidius Figulus predicted the splendid destiny of the future master of the world. Tiberius, his imperial successor, took lessons in astrology from the renowned Thrasyllus, and thus, himself an expert in the art of the Chaldeans, foretold the brief tenure of power enjoyed by the consul Servius Galba. Of this able master and his dexterous pupil a curious anecdote is found in Tacitus. The slave who conducted him into the presence of the future lord of the world, over steep and scarcely accessible rocks, was instructed, if Tiberius entertained any suspicion of his having trifled with or deceived him, to fling him into the sea that rolled below his rock-built residence. During the visit in which he announced to Tiberius his coming greatness, he was asked, in return, if he was acquainted with his own horoscope. The Sidrophel of Rhodes, after observing the position of the stars, and simulating surprise and terror, declared that some mysterious and almost fatal misfortune menaced himself. His adroitness

saved him. Tiberius embraced him, regarded him as an oracle, and numbered him among his most intimate friends.”*

The Oracles were often consulted by the Roman Emperors, who were much addicted to magical practices, though they prohibited them to the public. Nero was warned by the Delphic Pythia to beware of the three-and-seventieth year. He therefore considered himself safe until the age of seventy-three, and did not dream of the seventy-three years old Galba who deprived him of the Imperial crown.† Other emperors, feeling the insecurity of their power, and longing to decipher the secrets of the future, endeavoured to read their fortune in the stars. Magic did not decay after the promulgation of the Gospel of Christ, but was adopted and extended both by Jews and Christians. Among the Jews a certain belief in magic had always existed. They had had their Pythonesses, and their evocation of the spirits of the dead. Hosea had censured their addiction to Rhabdomancy, or divination by wands.‡ The Principle of Evil had received a direct personification, and the realms of darkness

* “Westminster Review,” xlix. New Series.

† The anecdote is related in the sixth book of the “Annals of Tacitus.”

‡ Hosea, c. iv., v. 12.

been peopled with a host of potentates—Ashtaroths and Belials, Lucifers and Beelzebubs.

The Primitive Church forbade the practice of *Pagan* magic, but inculcated a magic of its own. Origen and Tertullian taught that the bodies of the maniac and the epileptic were possessed by demons or evil spirits, to be exorcised with human words inspired by Divine power. The efficacy of exorcism was formally recognised by the Church itself in A.D. 367, when, by a decree of the Council of Laodicea, it was ordained that only those should practise it who were appointed by the Bishops. Other developments of theurgy might be seen in the importance attached to the relics of saints as curative agencies, and the belief in visions and ecstatic trances as inspired by the Divine knowledge. Eclipses, tempests, meteors were considered to presage war, pestilence, or revolution. On the eve of any great political convulsion the phantoms of the dead appeared to the terrified people. A charm was supposed to rest in holy water; the recital of the Lord's Prayer healed wounds; a random reference to the pages of Holy Writ foretold the events of the future.

And while such was the magic of the people, the Christian philosophers embraced

the visionary conceptions of the Platonists, and credited the existence of a world of intermediate beings, who might by enchantment be subordinated to the will of man. From Plato's *Timæus* they derived the idea of the macrocosm and microcosm; they adopted the Pythagorean theory of demons; asserted the sympathy of the human body with the earth, and with the miraculous powers of pictures and statues; and attributed great virtue to certain words in the evocation of spirits. This Neo-Platonism was afterwards revived by Paracelsus and the founders of the Rosicrucian brotherhood.

In the Middle Ages magic asserted its supremacy over the whole of Christian Europe, but it had entirely lost the religious character communicated to it by the Chaldeans. It had degenerated into the "Black Art." It dealt only with the night side of Nature, with the Evil One and his demons, with the loathsome practices of witchcraft, and the impositions of the necromancer. The scholar rose above this inferior theurgy, but he, too, no longer sought communion with the "heavenly powers;" his labours were devoted to the philosopher's stone and the *elixir vitæ*, the sources of boundless wealth and immortal life. The philosophical

aspect of the higher magic gave way to a purely chymical science; and the alchymy of Arabia occupied the minds of the persevering and ingenious. So thick a darkness brooded over Christendom that any gleam of intellectual light imperilled the safety of its possessor, and was denounced by the vulgar as magic. The pure soul that revolted from the corruptions encrusted upon the simple faith of Christ and the Apostles, was stigmatized by the church as a magician. So, too, the student who had secured some glimpses of the world of science was persecuted as a sorcerer. The belief in the enchanter's pretensions was universal, but he held a hazardous position, and was almost as likely to be burnt at the stake as to be made the companion of kings and princes. Nevertheless, the superstition flourished. The tricks of science with which Baptista Porta and others repeated the illusions of the priestly conjurors of the ancient temple, were regarded with awe by the vulgar as phenomenal and supernatural. The magicians themselves began to take a delight in their enchantments, and prepared to impose still further upon the credulity of the vulgar. They studied the delusions suggested by optical science; made use of ventriloquism, of narcotic

drugs, and stupifying fumes. All that could impose upon the imagination and subdue the will was called into requisition by the sorcerer to terrify or beguile his dupes. Thus, then, magic gradually passed out of the sphere it had originally occupied—became the enemy instead of the servant and assistant of the priesthood; and except in that abortive re-vivification of Neo-Platonism which we call Rosicrucianism, was suffered by the scholar and the philosopher to become an instrument of imposture in the hands of the charlatan. At the present day, little survives but its shadow. There are still professors of astrology who find their dupes,—there may be a believer here and there in Rosicrucianism, and a student or two of alchemy; but the world is now too busy and too much in earnest to give its attention to the fables which so enthralled our credulous and less active forefathers. Mesmerism, indeed, is somewhat in vogue, for its dreamy assertion and vague speculation have a singular attraction for susceptible temperaments. Mesmer, however, was but a sorry imitator of Paracelsus and Robert Flood; and Mesmerism itself is but a revival of the old doctrine of animal magnetism, which will constantly spring into fresh activity as long as there exist

irregular physiological phenomena to baffle the detective and discriminative power of science.

In the old magic, then, there was a soul of wisdom ; it rested upon a foundation of truth. It was the expression of the ardent longing of the spirit for a something beyond and above this earth ; it aimed at establishing a communion between man and the invisible. And if it lost its original purity as it descended through the ages from the mystic seers of Chaldea to the benighted wizards and necromancers of the feudal times, it still remained an exposition of the faith of humanity in the immortal, and attested the aspiration of the human soul for that knowledge of the past and that prescience of the future which make up celestial wisdom. Our ancestors guessed at truth, but those very guesses were evidences of an active and quickening intellect. The tentative processes which alone are possible to the pioneer were not without their fruitful and enduring results, and astronomy sprung out of astrology as chemistry was the natural birth of alchemy. It is not useless, then, to glance at some of the steps by which men approached the Threshold ; or to examine the gradual progress of humanity towards a fuller and clearer

knowledge. "In the first stirrings of the ardent speculation of the world's grey forefathers," says an able writer, "we see the necessary troubling of the waters of the mind." The storm of thought, which of old agitated the great sea of life, threw up on the shore what prove to be shells of truth, now that the winds have died away, and we can examine them in quiet and leisurely security.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAGICIANS OF POPULAR TRADITION.

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- § 1. VIRGIL, THE ENCHANTER — § 2. FRIAR
ROGER BACON—§ 3. DR. FAUSTUS.

With many a grausome shape unutterable,
Linn'd were the cavernous sepulchral walls.
Life-like they stalked, the populace of hell,
Through the pale pomp of Acherontian halls,
Distinct as when the Trojan's living breath
Vex'd the wide silence in the wastes of death.

BULWER LYTTON (*King Arthur*).

THE word "magician" usually reveals to the startled fancy of hearer or reader a conception of awful import; a shadowy, weird, and solemn personage, clothed in long-trailing robes, with white beard streaming like a meteor, a brow furrowed with thought, and a mystic wand that controls the most powerful of the demons of the unseen world. At his bidding fire leaps from the bosom of the earth, the waters glow with many colours, the lightning descends from heaven, the spirits of the dead abandon their

far-off realms, and the Book of the Future opens wide its portentous leaves. He lives in an atmosphere of wonder, and deals familiarly with the most inscrutable mysteries. The stars are his bosom friends; Lucifer and his démon-cohorts his very humble servants. Such is the popular conception of the magician, and as such we find him typified in three imaginary—or almost imaginary—personages, in three widely perverted traditional necromancers of the “good old school”—Virgil, Faustus, and Friar Bacon. It is well to contrast them with the *actual* magician as we shall seek to show him in various characters—with Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus and Dr. Dee; and we shall then understand why the good that was in these wiser, though still very credulous enthusiasts, has too often been forgotten, and their really valuable labours lost sight of in the cloud of fable and legend that envelopes the traditional type.

§ 1. VIRGIL, THE ENCHANTER.

At a very early period the Roman poets appear to have acquired a posthumous reputation as men endowed with supernatural powers. Necromancy hovered about the tomb of Ovid;

for ages, in some parts of Italy, Horace—the elegant, cynical, philosophic Horace—was regarded as a potent wizard; and the popular fancy ran riot in the legendary miracles which it attributed to the pacific and benevolent poet of the *Æneid*.

When the popular myth of Virgil the Enchanter first grew into repute is uncertain, but probably the earliest faint conception arose about the beginning of the tenth century, and each succeeding generation embroidered upon it some fantastic impossibility. Soon, in the South of Italy—for the necromancer's fame was of southern origin—there floated dim, mysterious legends of the enchantments which he had wrought. Thus he fashioned a brazen fly, and planted it on the gate of fair Parthenope to free the city from the inroads of the insects of Beelzebub. On a Neapolitan hill he built a statue of brass, and placed in its mouth a trumpet; and lo! when the north wind blew, there came from that trumpet so terrible a roar that it drove back into the sea the noxious blasts of Vulcan's forges, which, even to this day, seethe and hiss near the city of Puossola. At one of the gates of Naples he raised two statues of stone, and gifted them respectively with the power of blighting or blessing the

strangers who, on entering the city, passed by one or the other of them. He constructed three public baths for the removal of every disease which afflicts the human frame, but the physicians, in a wholesome dread of losing their patients and their fees, caused them to be destroyed. Other wonders he wrought, which in time assumed a connected form, and were woven into a life of the enchanter, first printed in French about 1490-1520. A still fuller history appeared in English, the well-known "Life of Virgilius," about 1508, printed by Hans Doesborcke at Antwerp. It sets forth with tolerable clearness the popular type of the mediæval magician, and will be our guide in the following biographical sketch.

Virgil was the son of a wealthy senator of Rome, wealthy and powerful enough to carry on war with the Roman Emperor. As his birth was heralded by extraordinary portents, it is no marvel that even in childhood he showed himself endowed with extraordinary mental powers, and his father having the sagacity to discern in him an embryo necromancer, sent him, while still very young, to study at the University of Toledo, where the "art of magick" was taught with extraordinary success.

There he studied diligently, for "he was of great understanding," and speedily acquired a profound insight into the great Shemaia of the Chaldean lore. But this insight was due, not so much to nocturnal vigils over abstruse books, as to the help he received from a very valuable familiar. And this was the curious fashion in which he was introduced to the said familiar:—

"Upon a tyme the scholers at Tolenten hadde lycence to goo to playe and sporte them in the fyldes after the usuance of the olde tyme; and there was also Virgilius therby also walkynge among the hylles all about. It fortunèd he spyed a great hole in the syde of a great hyll, wherein he went so depe that he culde not see no more lyght, and than he went a lytell ferther therein, and then he sawe soon lyght agayne, and than wente he fourth streyghte. And within a lytell wyle after he harde a voice that called, 'Virgilius, Virgilius,' and he loked aboute, and he colde nat see nobodye. Than Virgilius spake, and asked, 'Who calleth me?' Than harde he the voyce agayne, but he sawe nobodye. Than sayd he, 'Virgilius, see ye not that lytell bourde lyinge byside you there, marked with that worde?' Than answered

Virgilius, 'I see that borde well enough.' The voyce sayd, 'Doo away that bourde, and lette me out theratte.'

"Than answered Virgilius to the voyce that was under the lytell bourde, and sayd, 'Who art thou that talkest me so?' Than answered the devyll, 'I am a devyll conjured out of the body of a certeyne man, and banysshed here tyll the daye of jugement, without that I be delyvered by the handes of men. Thus, Virgilius, I pray thee delyver me out of this payn, and I shall show unto thee many bokes of nygromancy, and how thou shalt cum by it lytly, and shalt knowe the practyse therein, that no man in the science of nygromancy shall [sur]pass thee; and, moreover, I shall showe and informe thee so that thou shalt have all thy desyre, whereby methinke it is a great gyfte for so lytell a doynge, for ye may also thus all your poor frendys helpen, and make ryghte your ennemyes unmyghty.'

"Thorough that great promise was Virgilius tempted: he badde the fynd showe the bokes to hym, that he myght have and occupy them at his wyll. And so the fynd showed hym, and then Virgilius pulled open a bourde, and there was a lytell hole, and thereat wrange the

devyll out lyke a yeel, and cam and stode before Virgilius lyke a bigge man.

“Thereof Virgilius was astonied, and merveyled greatly thereof, that so great a man myght com out at so lytell a hole!

“Then sayd Virgilius, ‘Shulde ye well passe into the hole that ye cam out of?’ ‘Yes, I shall well,’ sayd the devyll. ‘I holde the beste pledge that I have, ye shall not do it.’ ‘Well,’ sayd the devyll, ‘thereto I consente.’ And then the devyll wrange hymselfe into the lytell hole agen, and as he was therein, Virgilius kyvered the hole agen with the bourde close, and so was the devyll begyled, and myght not there come out agen, but there abydeth shutte styll therein. Than called the devyll dredefully [drearily] to Virgilius, and sayd, ‘What have ye done?’ Virgilius answered, ‘Abyde there styll to your day apoynted.’ And fro thensforth abydeth he there.”*

Virgil’s father died soon after this event, and his estates being seized by his former colleagues, his widow sunk into extreme poverty. Virgil accordingly gathered together the wealth

* The chroniclers always chuckle over any instance of the devil being cheated by those whom he seeks to cheat, and appear to have considered him a very silly devil indeed!

he had amassed by the exercise of his magical skill, and set out for Rome, to replace his mother in a position proper to her rank. At Toledo, however, he was a famous student ; at Rome he was a despised scholar ; and when he besought the Emperor to execute justice and restore to him his estate, that potentate—ignorant of the magician's power—simply replied, "Methinketh that the land is well divided to them that have it, for they may help you in their need; what needeth you for to care for the disheriting of one schoolmaster? Bid him take heed, and look to his schools, for he hath no right to any land here about the city of Rome."

Four years passed, and only such replies as this were vouchsafed to Virgil's frequent appeals for justice. Growing at length a-weary of the delay, he resolved to exercise his wondrous powers in his own behalf. When the harvest-time came, he accordingly shrouded the whole of his rightful inheritance with a vapour so dense that the new proprietors were unable to approach it, and under its cover his men gathered in the entire crop with perfect security. This done, the mist disappeared. Then a great indignation possessed the souls of his enemies, and they assembled their swordsmen,

and marched against him to take off his head. Such was their power that the Emperor for fear fled out of Rome, "for they were twelve senators that had all the world under them; and if Virgilius had had right, he had been one of the twelve, but they had disinherited him and his mother." When they drew near, Virgil once more baffled their designs by encircling his patrimony with a rampart of cloud and shadow.

The Emperor, with surprising inconsistency, now coalesced with the senators against Virgil—whose magical powers he probably feared far more than the rude force of the senatorial magnates—and made war against him. But who can prevail against the arts of necromancy? Emperor and senators were beaten, and from that moment Virgil, with marvellous generosity, became the faithful friend and powerful supporter of his sovereign.

Having had thus much experience of politics and war, the great enchanter next fell under the spells of Love. A beautiful Roman lady was the object of his passion, but did not at first return it. For him, as for less powerful individuals, the course of his true love did *not* run smooth; and, wonderful enchanter as he was, he could not guard against the ridicule

in which the fascinating beauty involved her lover. "When the lady knew his mind," says his biographer, "she thought in herself to deceive him, and said, 'If he would come at midnight to the castle-wall, she would let down a basket with strong cords, and draw him up at her window.'" Now, the lady's mansion looked out upon the public place, or *piazza*, and when Virgil went at night, and got into the basket, it was pulled halfway up the tower, and there left suspended. Morning broke; the public place filled with the citizens, and the enchanter was exposed to their scoffs and gibes. Nor was he released from his unpleasant position, except at the personal interference of the Emperor.

No revenge so keen as that which springs from slighted love! Virgil was resolved upon the humiliation of the scornful beauty, and began by extinguishing every fire in Rome, except his own. The citizens went from their cheerless hearths to complain to the Emperor, and the Emperor endeavoured to mollify the offended magician. But Virgil would only remove his interdict upon condition that the proud lady should be exposed, naked, in the most open part of the city, and that every Roman should repair to her, and kindle his

torch upon her person—in a fashion which is too indecent to admit of any explanation. This severe punishment was endured by the Roman lady for three days.

Soon after this incident Virgil married, but who was the object of his choice the chronicler does not relate. He next built a stately palace for the Emperor, with four corners, which corresponded to the four quarters of Rome, and so constructed that if the Emperor stood in one of these corners he overheard all that transpired in the corresponding quarter. Being asked how Rome might be made prosperous and powerful, and rule over many lands, Virgil undertook to effect the mighty work. He placed sculptured images of stone upon the Capitol, which he called *Salvatio Romæ*, the “salvation of Rome.” And he made in the compass all the gods that we call “mammets and idols” that were under the subjection of Rome; and each god held in his hand a bell, and in the centre reigned supreme the “one god of Rome.” And these gods announced the outbreak of any war against the Imperial City by turning their backs upon the god of Rome, who thereupon rung his alarum until the Roman senators heard the warning sounds, and repairing to the Capitol, discerned in what

quarter the war would burst forth, and so went against the hostile land, and fought, and conquered.*

* We have told how the *Salvatio Romæ* was made; the reader will wish to know how it was destroyed:—

“This foresaid token knew the men of Carthage, who were sore aggrieved for the great harm that the Romans had done them. And they took private council in what manner they might destroy that work. Thus thought they in their mind to send three men out, and gave them great multitude of gold and silver; and these three men took their leave of the lords, and went towards the city of Rome, and when they were come to Rome, they reported themselves soothsayers and true dreamers. Upon a time went these three men to a hill that was within the city, and there they buried a great pot of money very deep in the earth, and when that was done and covered again, they went to the bridge of Tiber, and let fall in a certain place a great barrel with golden pence. And when this was done, those three men went to the senators of Rome, and said, ‘Worshipful lords, we have this night dreamed, that within the foot of a hill here within Rome is a great pot with money; ye, lords, grant it to us, and we shall do the cost to seek thereafter.’ And the lords consented; and they took labourers, and delved the money out of the earth. And when it was done, they went another time to the lords, and said, ‘Worshipful lords, we have also dreamed that in a certain place of Tiber lieth a barrel full of golden pence; if that you will grant it to us, we shall go seek it.’ And the lords of Rome, thinking no deceit, granted to those soothsayers, and bade them do what they should to do their best. And then the soothsayers were glad; and they hired ships and men, and went towards the place where it was, and when they were come there, they sought in every place there about, and at the last found the barrel full of golden pence, whereof they were right glad. And then they gave to the lords costly gifts. And then, to come to their purpose, they came to the lords again, and said to them, ‘Worshipful lords, we have

It may not generally be known that Virgil, besides being the saviour of Rome, was the founder of Naples. This feat had its origin, like so many other great actions, in the power of love.

Virgil's imagination had been fired by the reports that reached him of the surpassing loveliness of the Sultan's daughter. Now the Sultan lived at Babylon (that is, at Cairo—the Babylon of the mediæval romancers), and the distance might have daunted a less ardent lover and less potent magician. But Virgil's necromantic skill was equal to a bridge in the air—where other glowing spirits have often raised fair castles!—and passing over it, he

dreamed again that under the foundation of the Capitolium, there where the *Salvatio Romæ* standeth, be twelve barrels full of gold; and pleaseth you, lords, that you would grant us licence, it shall be to your great advantage.' And the lords, stirred with covetousness, granted them, because two times afore they told true; whereof they were glad, and got labourers, and began to dig under the foundation of the *Salvatio Romæ*; and when they thought they had digged enough, they departed from Rome, and the next day following fell that house down, and all the work that Virgilius had made. And so the lords knew that they were deceived, and were sorrowful, and after that, had no fortune as they had aforesaid." Most of these Virgilian legends were suggested by the traditions of Rome's ancient glory, and the memorials of antiquity which were enshrined within its walls; and some, it is probable, originated in the popular ballads and street songs that had been handed down from generation to generation."

found his way into the Sultan's palace,—into the Princess's chamber,—and speedily overcoming her natural modesty, bore her back with him to his Italian bower of pleasure. There having enjoyed their fill of love and pleasure, he restored her to her bed in her father's palace. Meanwhile, her absence had been noted, but she was soon discovered on her return, and the Sultan repairing to her chamber, interrogated her respecting her disappearance. He found that she knew not who it was that had carried her off, nor whither she had been carried.

When Virgil restored the lady on the following night, she took back with her, by her father's instructions, some of the fruit plucked from the enchanter's garden; and from its quality the Sultan guessed that she had been carried to a southern land "on the side of France." These nocturnal journeys being several times repeated, and the Sultan's curiosity growing ungovernable, he persuaded his daughter to give her lover a sleeping-draught. The deceived magician was then captured in the Babylonian palace, and flung into prison; and it was decreed that both he and his mistress should be punished for their love by death at the stake.

Necromancers, however, are not so easily outwitted. As soon as Virgil was apprized of the fate intended for him, he made, by the force of his spells, the Sultan and all his lords believe that the great river of Babylon—the mighty Nilus—was overflowing in the midst of them, and that they swam and lay and sprang like geese; and so they took up Virgilius and the Princess, tore them from their prison, and placed them upon the aerial bridge. And when they were thus out of danger, he delivered the Sultan from the river, and all the lords; and lo, when they recovered their humanity, they beheld the enchanter bearing the beautiful Princess across the Mediterranean; and they marvelled much, and felt that they could not hope to prevail against his supernatural power.

And in this manner did Virgilius convey the Sultan's daughter over the sea to Rome. And he was highly enamoured of her beauty. "Then he thought in his mind how he might marry her"—apparently forgetting that he was already married—"and thought in his mind to found in the midst of the sea a fair town with great lands belonging to it; and so he did by his cunning, and called it Naples: and the foundation of it was of eggs. And in that town of Naples he made a tower with

four corners, and on the top he set an apple upon an iron yard, and no man could pull away that apple without he brake it; and through that iron set he a bottle, and on that bottle set he an egg; and he hanged the apple by the stalk upon a chain, and so hangeth it still. And when the egg stirreth, so should the town of Naples quake; and when the egg brake, then should the town sink. When he had made an end, he let call it Naples.”*

After accomplishing so much for his Babylonian beauty, Virgil did not marry her, but endowing her with the town of Naples and its lands, gave her in marriage to a certain grandee of Spain. Having thus disposed of her and her children, the enchanter returned to Rome, collected all his treasures, and removed them to the city he had founded, where he resided for some years, and established a school which speedily became of illustrious renown. Here he lost his wife, by whom he had had no issue; built baths and bridges, and wrought the most extraordinary miracles. So passed an uncounted number of years, and Virgil at length abandoned Naples for ever, and retired to Rome.

* Traditions of the foundation of Naples upon eggs, and the connexion of its fortunes with an egg, still exist amongst the Neapolitan *lazzaroni*, and seem to have found a memorial in the *Castello d'Ovo* (*Chateau d'Œuf*.)

Outside the walls of the Imperial City he built a goodly town, that had but one gate, and was so fenced round with water as to bar any one from approaching it. And the entry of its one gate was made "with twenty-four iron flails, and on each side was there twelve men smiting with the flails, never ceasing, the one after the other; and no man might come in without the flails stood still, but he was slain: And these flails were made with such a gin [contrivance] that Virgilius stopped them when he list to enter in thereat, but no man else could find the way. And in this castle put Virgilius part of his treasure privily; and, when this was done, he imagined in his mind by what means he might make himself young again, because he thought to live longer many years, to do many wonders and marvellous things. And upon a time went Virgilius to the Emperor, and asked him of licence (of absence) by the space of three weeks. But the Emperor in no wise would grant it unto him, for he would have Virgilius at all times by him.

"Then heard he that Virgilius went to his house, and took with him one of his men that he above all men trusted, and knew well that he would best keep his counsel; and they de-

parted to his castle that was without the town, and when they were afore the castle, there saw the man men stand with iron flails in their hands sore smiting. Then Virgilius said to his man, 'Enter you first into the castle.' Then answered the man and said, 'If I should enter, the flails would slay me.' Then showed Virgilius to the man of each side the entering in, and all the vices that thereto belonged; and when he had shown him all the ways, he made cease the flails, and went into the castle. And when they were both in, Virgilius turned the vices again, and so went the iron flails as they did afore. Then said Virgilius, 'My dear beloved friend, and he that I above all men trust, and know most of my secrets;' and then let he the man into the cellar, where he had made a fair lamp at all seasons burning.

"And then said Virgilius to the man, 'See you the barrel that standeth here?' And he said, 'Ye must put me there: first, ye must slay me, and hew me small to pieces, and cut my head in four pieces, and salt the head under in the bottom, and then the pieces thereafter, and my heart in the middle, and then set the barrel under the lamp, that night and day therein it may drop and leak; and ye shall, nine days long, once in the day fill the lamp,

and fail not; and when this is all done, then shall I be renewed and made young again, and live long time and many winters more, if that it fortune me not to be taken of above and die.' And when the man heard his master Virgilius speak thus, he was sore abashed, and said, 'That will I never while I live, for in no manner will I slay you.' Then said Virgilius, 'Ye at this time must do it, for it shall be no grief unto you.' And at last Virgilius entreated his man so much that he consented to him; and then the servant took Virgilius and slew him, and when he was thus slain, he hewed him in pieces, and salted him in the barrel, and cut his head in four pieces as his master bade him, and then put the heart in the middle, and salted them well; and when all this was done, he hung the lamp right over the barrel, that it might at all times drop in thereto.* And when he had done all this, he went out of the castle and turned the vices, and then went the copper men smiting with their flails as strongly upon the iron anvils as they did before, that there durst no man enter; and he came every day to the castle and filled the lamp, as Virgilius had bade him.

* This is an evident reproduction of the old Greek myth of Medea and her father Æson.

“And as the Emperor missed Virgilius by the space of seven days, he marvelled greatly where he should be become ; but Virgilius was killed, and laid in his cellar by the servant that he loved so well. And then the Emperor thought in his mind to ask Virgilius’ servant where Virgilius his master was ; and so he did, for he knew well that Virgilius loved him above all men in the world. Then answered the servant to the Emperor, and said, ‘Worshipful lord, and it please your grace, I wot not where he is, for it is seven days past that I saw him last ; and then went he forth I cannot tell whither, for he would not let me go with him.’ Then was the Emperor angry with that answer, and said, ‘Thou liest, false thief that thou art ; but without thou show me shortly where he is, I shall put thee to death.’ With those words was the man abashed, and said, ‘Worshipful lord, seven days ago I went with him without the town to the castle, and there he went in, and there I left him, for he would not let me in with him.’ Then said the Emperor, ‘Go with me to the same castle ;’ and so he did ; and when they came afore the castle and would have entered, they might not, because the flails smote so fast. Then said the Emperor, ‘Make appease these flails, that we

may come in.' Then answered the man, 'I know not the way.' Then said the Emperor, 'Then shalt thou die.' And then, through the fear of death, he turned the vices and made the flails stand still; and then the Emperor entered into the castle with all his folk, and sought all about in every corner after Virgilius, and at the last they sought so long that they came into the cellar where they saw the lamp hang over the barrel where Virgilius lay indeed. Then asked the Emperor of the man who had made him so hardy to put his master Virgilius so to death; and the man answered no word to the Emperor. And then the Emperor, with great anger, drew out his sword, and slew he there Virgilius' man. And when all this was done, then saw the Emperor and all his folk a naked child, three times running about the barrel, saying the words, 'Cursed be the time that ye came ever here!' And with those words vanished the child away, and was never seen again; and thus abode Virgilius in the barrel, dead."

And such, with some condensation, is the "Life of Virgilius," as it was read and marvelled at by our forefathers in the "good old times" of the sixteenth century.

§ 2. ROGER BACON.

“The knowledge displayed by Roger Bacon and by Albertus Magnus, even in the mixed mathematics, under every disadvantage, from the imperfection of instruments and the want of recorded experience, is sufficient to inspire us with regret that their contemporaries were more inclined to astonishment than to emulation. These inquiries, indeed, were subject to the ordeal of fire, the great purifier of books and men; for if the metaphysician stood a chance of being burned as a heretic, the natural philosopher was in not less jeopardy as a magician.”—HALLAM.*

It is dangerous for a man to be wiser than his contemporaries: in the 15th century he was burnt; in the 19th he is ridiculed. The hero in advance of his age is always liable to be misunderstood by it, and if he persevere in his holy enterprise, must look for his reward to the tardy justice of posterity. Roger Bacon was a philosopher of bold and brilliant genius, and a man of extraordinary erudition; but his contemporaries, unable to comprehend the breadth of his views, or to sympathize with the freedom of his inquiries, stigmatized him as a necromancer — a dealer in the Black Art — and burthened his memory with grotesque extravagances which have not, even yet, died utterly away. His discoveries in optics and his researches in chemistry excited the marvel of

* “Middle Ages,” vol. iii. c. ix. p. 2.

the unlettered noble as well as the ignorant hind, and suggested the numerous traditions that still cling about the fame of Friar Bacon. He was supposed to have gained his knowledge by making an agreement with Lucifer, which he cunningly contrived to evade. In that agreement it was conditioned that if he died in or out of a church the Devil was to have his own after death. To ordinary minds it might seem difficult to escape a clause so clinching; but Bacon's was not an ordinary mind, and when he felt the premonitory symptoms of death, he ordered a cell to be hollowed out in the wall of the church, and there he died, and therein he was buried—neither *in* nor *out of* the church, and so, no property of Satan!

Friar Bacon's history, as it is now told, is a combination of the legends of the thirteenth and the inventions of the sixteenth century—mainly of the latter. One of the most ancient relates to his fabrication of a head of brass, which uttered the words *Time Is*; and which, according to Sir Francis Palgrave, was nothing more than the extremity of a speaking-tube that communicated from one room to another.*

* The marvel of the Brazen Head has been attributed by some to Albertus Magnus, and by others to Grostête,

The more modern are those which connect him with a certain Friar Bungay; but without attempting to divide them according to their age, we shall rapidly summarize some of the more remarkable, in further illustration of the popular type of the mediæval magician.

He was the son of a wealthy Somersetshire farmer; displayed a remarkable aptitude for learning in his childhood; was coerced by his father to take up his own agricultural pursuits, and to avoid them, retired to a monastery, from whence in due time he repaired to the academic shades of Oxford. In those days knowledge was so rare an accomplishment that a scholar's fame was not confined to his immediate circle, but travelled over all Christendom; and his reputation as a magician reaching the king's court, he was summoned thither to display his wonderful accomplishments.

"Friar Bacon," says the ancient history, "kindly thanked the king by the messenger, and said that he was at the king's service, and would suddenly attend him; 'but, sir,' saith he

Bishop of Lincoln, but by most writers to Roger Bacon. So Butler sings:—

" My head's not made of brass,
As Friar Bacon's noddle was."

to the gentleman, 'I pray make you haste, or else I shall be two hours before you at the court.' 'For all your learning,' answered the gentleman, 'I can hardly believe this, for scholars, old men, and travellers may lie by authority.' 'To strengthen your belief,' said Friar Bacon, 'I would presently show you the last wench that you kissed withal, but I will not at this time.' 'One is as true as the other,' said the gentleman, 'and I would laugh to see either.' 'You shall see them both within these four hours,' quoth the friar, 'and therefore make what haste you can.' 'I will prevent that by my speed,' said the gentleman, and with that he rid his way; but he rode out of his way as it should seem, for he had but five miles to ride, and yet was he better than three hours a riding them, so that Friar Bacon by his art was with the king before he came.

"The king kindly welcomed him, and said that he long time had desired to see him, for he had as yet not heard of his like. Friar Bacon answered him that fame had belied him, and given him that report that his poor studies had never deserved, for he believed that Art had many sons more excellent than himself was. The king commended him for his

modesty, and told him that nothing could become a wise man less than boasting; but yet withal he requested him to be no niggard of his knowledge, but to show his queen and him some of his skill. 'I were worthy neither of art nor knowledge,' quoth Friar Bacon, 'should I deny your Majesty this small request; I pray you seat yourselves, and you shall see presently what my poor skill can perform.'

"The king, queen, and nobles sat them all down. They having so done, the friar waved his wand, and presently was heard such excellent music that they were all amazed, for they all said they had never heard the like. 'This is,' said the friar, 'to delight the sense of hearing: I will delight all your other senses ere I depart hence.' So, waving his wand again, there was louder music heard, and presently five dancers entered, the first like a court laundress, the second like a footman, the third like a usurer, the fourth like a prodigal, the fifth like a fool. These did divers excellent changes, so that they gave content to all the beholders, and having done their dance, they all vanished away in their order as they came in. Thus feasted he two of their senses.

“Then waved he his wand again, and there was another kind of music heard, and whilst it was playing there was suddenly before them a table richly covered with all sorts of delicacies. Then desired he the king and queen to taste of some certain rare fruits that were on the table, which they and the nobles there present did, and were very highly pleased with the taste; they being satisfied, all vanished away on the sudden. Then waved he his wand again, and suddenly there was such a smell, as if all the rich perfumes in the whole world had been then prepared in the best manner that art could set them out.

“Whilst he feasted thus their smelling, he waved his wand again, and there came divers nations in sundry habits, as Russians, Polanders, Indians, Armenians, all bringing sundry kinds of furs, such as their countries yielded, all which they presented to the king and queen. These furs were so soft to the touch that they highly pleased all those that handled them. Then, after some odd, fantastic dances after their country manner, they vanished quite away.

“Then asked Friar Bacon the king’s majesty if that he desired any more of his skill. The king answered that he was fully satisfied for

that time, and that he only now thought of something that he might bestow on him that might partly satisfy the kindness he had received. Friar Bacon said that he desired nothing so much as his majesty's love; and, if that he might be assured of that, he would think himself happy in it. 'For that,' said the king, 'be thou ever sure of it; in token of which receive this jewel,' and withal gave him a costly jewel from his neck. The friar did with great reverence thank his majesty, and said, 'As your majesty's vassal you shall ever find me ready to do you service; your time of need shall find it both beneficial and delightful. But amongst all these gentlemen I may not see the man that your grace did send for me by; sure he hath lost his way, or else met with some sport that detains him so long; I promised to be here before him, and all this noble assembly can witness I am as good as my word. I hear him coming.'

"With that entered the gentleman, all be-dirted, for he had rid through ditches, quagmires, plashes, and waters, so that he was in a most piteous case. He, seeing the friar there, looked full angry, and bid a plague on all his devils, for they had led him out of his way, and almost drowned him. 'Be not angry,

sir,' said Friar Bacon; 'here is an old friend of yours that hath more cause, for she hath tarried these three hours for you.' With that he pulled up the hangings, and behind them stood a kitchen-maid with a basting-ladle in her hand. 'Now am I as good as my word with you, for I promised to help you to your sweetheart. How do you like this? 'So ill,' answered the gentleman, 'that I will be revenged of you.' 'Threaten not,' said Friar Bacon, 'lest I do you more shame, and do you take heed how you give scholars the lie again; but because I know not how well you are stored with money at this time, I will bear your wench's charges home.' And with that she vanished away."

Allowing for the exaggeration of the chronicler, there is nothing described in this narration which our modern conjurers would not undertake to reproduce. It is evident, indeed, that the spectacles with which the mediæval philosophers amused and astonished their patrons were simply the result of a superior acquaintance with the properties of natural science, and that their more wonderful characteristics were solely the inventions of imaginations excited by what they could not

comprehend. A dexterous use of concave mirrors,—of the magic-lantern, which Roger Bacon invented,—of chemical combinations producing a continual change of colours—and the assistance of a few trained confederates, will explain the marvels wrought by the so-called magician of the feudal ages, who was, in reality, a philosophical experimentalist—the pioneer of modern science, gathering gold, but gold encrusted with earth and rubbish—the Dweller on the Threshold of a grander and purer philosophy, dimly groping amongst mysteries that dazzled his imagination and bewildered his judgment. These men did not understand the full value of the discoveries they themselves had made, but played with them in artless simplicity, as a child with the rare shells he picks up on the sea shore. Their eager thirst after knowledge,—their perseverance in the face of obloquy and loss of fortune and peril of life,—their sublime faith in the existence of wonders as yet undreamt of,—should move our admiration and command our reverence. They kept alight the torch of learning in the darkness of a deep and protracted night, and handed it down to those happier spirits who, with ampler means and greater opportunities, have penetrated into that enchanted world at

whose golden gates their predecessors waited, watched, and suffered!

It is noticeable that most of the popular legends of the mediæval magician represent him as gifted with great benevolence, as the friend of the unhappy and oppressed, the enemy of the tyrannical and extortionate,—in fact, as the Robin Hood of the Black Art. Thus, a gentleman whom misfortune had reduced to extreme poverty, agreed with the Evil One to deliver himself up on condition that all his debts were paid. There was no Bankruptcy Court in those dark days! As soon as the compact was ratified, the gentleman repented of it, and showed a wonderful reluctance to discharge the claims of his creditors. When their urgency became so great that he could no longer evade it, he was on the point of committing suicide in his passionate despair, had not Bacon arrested his hand and saved him in spite of himself. He then directed him to keep his appointed rendezvous, and on the devil's pressing his claim, to propose a reference to the first person who passed. On the following morning he carried out Bacon's injunctions; blessed himself, and repaired to the wood where the Evil One was waiting to

receive him. "Now, deceiver," cried the Evil One, "are you come? Now shalt thou see that I can and will prove that thou hast paid all thy debts, and that thy soul consequently belongeth to me." "Thou art a knave," said the gentleman, "and gavest me money to cheat me of my soul, for else why wilt thou be thine own judge? Let me have some other to decide between us." "Content," said the devil; "take whom thou wilt." "Then I will have," was the answer, "the next man that cometh this way." The devil signified his assent.

This colloquy was no sooner ended than Friar Bacon came by, and was at once appealed to by the gentleman to act as referee. He agreed, on condition that he was accepted by both parties. The Evil One expressed his willingness to abide by his decision, and began to state his case.

"Know, friar," said he, "that I, seeing this prodigal like to starve for want of food, lent him money, not only to buy him victuals, but also to redeem his lands and pay his debts, conditionally that so soon as his debts were paid, he should give himself freely to me; to this, here is his hand,"—producing the bond—"now my time is expired, for all his

debts are paid, which he cannot deny." "This case is plain," says Bacon, "if so be that his debts are paid." "His silence confirms it," said the devil; "therefore give him a just sentence." "I will," said Friar Bacon, "but first tell me"—speaking to the gentleman—"didst thou never yet give the devil any of his money back, nor requite him in any ways?" "Never had he anything of me as yet," answered the gentleman. "Then never let him have anything of thee, and thou art free! Deceiver of mankind," said he, speaking to the devil, "it was thy bargain never to meddle with him so long as he was indebted to any: now, how canst thou demand of him anything when he is indebted for all that he hath to thee? When he payeth thee thy money, then take him as thy due: till then, thou hast nothing to do with him, and so I charge thee to begone."

At this the devil vanished with exceeding horror and great shame that he had been so easily outwitted; while Friar Bacon comforted the gentleman, and sent him home with a tranquil conscience, bidding him never to pay back the devil's money, if he valued the safety of his soul.

In the course of his career the mythical

Bacon met with a mythical Bungay, who was only inferior to himself as a thaumaturgist, and the two resolved upon carrying out the Friar's great conception of securing the immunity of England from foreign invasion by fencing it with a brazen wall. But first they resolved to fashion a brazen head; and this accomplished, to make it speak. To effect the latter exploit they took counsel with a spirit, and in obedience to his (her, or its) directions exposed it for a month to a fumigation with certain herbs. It was needful that the head should be carefully watched that the two friars might be warned of the moment when it began to speak, and Miles, Friar Bacon's servant, was appointed its custodian. The eventful epoch arrived. Suddenly from the cavernous jaws of the Brazen Head fell the two words,—“Time Is!” Miles heard and wondered, but deemed it unnecessary to disturb his master for a speech so concise and unimportant. Half an hour passed, and the Head again spoke. “Time Was!” Miles could not determine upon arousing Friar Bacon to listen to a fact so evident, and another half hour glided away. Then the Head cried,—“Time is Past!” and, as if exhausted with its exertions, fell to the ground with a horrible crash. It was all over with

Friar Bacon's ambitious labour. *Montes parturiunt, et nascitur ridiculus mus!*

It is unnecessary to dwell any longer on the fabulous achievements of the traditional hero: what the *real* Friar Bacon did may easily be summarized. He was born at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, about 1214, of a respectable family; was educated at Oxford; and completed his youthful studies at Paris, then the most famous university in the world. There he received the diploma of Doctor of Divinity. His clear and penetrating intellect had already rejected the absurdities, while appreciating the merits, of Aristotle, and he anticipated the principles of the inductive philosophy of his great namesake, the author of the "Novum Organon;" by insisting on the value of experiment as the only safe basis for theory.

Returning to England about 1240, with his reputation already established, the University of Oxford confirmed his Doctor's degree, and he took the vows of a Franciscan in a convent of that order at Oxford, instigated, it is said, by Robert Grosstête, Bishop of Lincoln. The monk's cowl was then the safest covering for the head of the philosopher. He immediately addressed himself to the study of the abstruse sciences, and acquired so extensive a knowledge

of optics and natural philosophy that the ignorant accused him of having sold himself to the devil, while such were the boldness of his speculations and the freedom of his opinions, that the monks in alarm prohibited his lectures and forbade the transmission of his writings beyond the walls of his convent. Ah, let us be tender to the memory and indulgent to the follies of these early pioneers of science—these Dwellers on the Threshold! How hard a matter it was for them to catch a ray of light through the dense darkness that surrounded them! And how much more difficult to collect the scattered rays in a pure and lustrous stream to shed abroad upon a benighted world!

The fame of Bacon as a discoverer and a philosopher could not, however, be shut up within the convent walls. Clement VI., elected to the Papal chair in 1265, had previously been legate in England, and heard of the pretended magician's researches, but the jealousy of the Franciscans had prevented him from becoming acquainted with their results. Now that he was the supreme head of the Church, he could venture to show his sympathy with the learned monk, and the result was the production of Bacon's famous "Opus Majus," a work of extraordinary ability, of great learning,

and the most liberal views. Let the reader remember that the following passages were written in the middle of the thirteenth century, and he will appreciate their truly philosophical spirit :—

“Men presume to teach before they have learnt, and fall into so many errors that the idle think themselves happy in comparison. Hence, both in science and common life we see a thousand falsehoods for one truth.”

“There are four great obstacles in the way of attaining knowledge—authority, habit, appearances as they present themselves to the common eye, and concealment of ignorance combined with an ostentation of learning.”

“We must not limit ourselves to what we hear and read, but strictly analyse the opinions of our ancestors, that we may add what is deficient, and correct what is erroneous, but always with modesty and consideration.”

“We must, with all our heart, prefer *reason* to *custom*, and the opinions of the wise and good to the fancies of the vulgar. We must put aside the threefold argument—namely, a thing has been so laid down, has been customary, has been common, and is therefore to be accepted always. Indeed, from these premises just the opposite conclusion may gene-

rally be drawn. And though the whole world adhere to these causes of error, let us willingly listen to opinions which contradict established usage."

"There are two modes of acquiring knowledge, by argument and experiment. Argument winds up and makes us wind up a question, but it does not satisfy or remove doubt, so that the mind shall rest quiet in the sight of truth, unless it shall discern the latter by the path of experience. Now, because many can agree upon things worthy of being known, but are without experience, they neglect the things, neither shunning the hurtful nor pursuing the good. For if a man who has never seen fire, has proved by sufficient arguments that fire burns, and injures, and destroys, yet the mind of his listener will not be satisfied, nor would he avoid fire until, by placing in it his hand or some combustible material, he had experimentally proved what argument had already taught; but, contented with the experiment of combustion, the mind is confirmed, and rests in the lustre of truth, for which argument does not suffice, but experiment."

The following passage indicates that if Bacon did not really discover gunpowder, as is popularly supposed, he was acquainted with a ful-

minating compound that somewhat resembled it:—

“Some things,” he writes, “disturb the ear so much that if they were made to happen suddenly, by night, and with sufficient ingenuity, no city or army could endure them—no roar of thunder could compare with them. Some things strike terror to the eyes, so that the flashes of the clouds are incomparably less terrible—things resembling those with which Gideon, it is thought, affrighted the camp of the Midianites. And an example we take from a childish amusement which exists in many parts of the world, namely, that with an instrument no larger than the human thumb, and by the violence of the salt called saltpetre, so fearful a noise is occasioned by the rupture of a thing so slight as a piece of parchment, that it is thought to surpass thunder, and the flash the most vivid lightning.”*

* Bacon elsewhere intimates that the compound referred to is a compound of “nitre or saltpetre, or other ingredients;” and in another place he veils the secret in a mysterious anagram, as if aware of the disastrous consequences to mankind of an invention so deadly. “The substance is prepared,” he says, “from the *luru mope can ubre*, of saltpetre, and of sulphur.” The riddle was not explained until long after gunpowder had been used in warfare; not, indeed, until Dr. John Campbell, in the “*Biographia Britannica*,” demonstrated the meaning of the apparently meaningless syllables to be *pulvere carbonum*, or powder of charcoal. The whole passage, there-

In like manner he appears to have discovered the principle of the telescope :—

“We can so shape transparent substances, and so arrange them with respect to our sight and objects, that the rays of light can be broken and refracted as we please, and objects may be seen, according to our wish, either far off or near at hand. Thus, from a surprising distance we may peruse the smallest letters; and number the grains of dust and sand, on account of the greatness of the angle under which we see them, and we may so contrive as hardly to see bodies, when near to us, on account of the smallness of the angle under which they are seen, for vision of this sort is not a consequence of distance, except as that affects the magnitude of the angle.”

Bacon met with many friends, and it was to their generosity that he owed the means of prosecuting his researches. He tells us that in twenty years they enabled him to expend no less than two thousand pounds, equivalent to ten times that amount according to the present value of money. But he had also a host of enemies ; the ignorant, who were

fore, rightly states the three ingredients of gunpowder— powder of charcoal, of saltpetre, and of sulphur.

jealous of his knowledge ; the monks, whose profligacy he denounced ; and the priests, who saw that the experimental philosophy he advocated would tend to shake the pretensions and expose the errors of the "infallible church." These endeavoured to excite against him the indignation of the people by stigmatizing him as a necromancer and sorcerer, and the vengeance of the Court of Rome by proclaiming him a heretic. In the former case they had no great success, for the purity of his life and the wealth of his benevolence endeared him to the common people ; in the latter, their machinations procured his imprisonment, his seclusion from all his friends, and his subjection to the cruellest privations.* During the brief pontificate of Clement VII. he enjoyed an interval of repose, signalized, as we have shown, by the composition of his "Opus Majus ;" but on the accession of Nicholas III. he was again consigned to prison, where he remained ten years. The old man was released in his seventy-fourth year, after addressing an eloquent appeal to the Pope, and for six years longer resided in the classic shades of Oxford. He is commonly

* In the excellent life of Roger Bacon in the "Biographia Britannica," by Dr. John Campbell.

reputed to have died in the year 1294, at the age of eighty.

During his lifetime Bacon's admirers distinguished him by an epithet which posterity has confirmed—the *Wonderful Doctor*. He was far in advance of his age, not merely in erudition, but in depth of thought and breadth of view. Voltaire speaks of him as "the pure gold, encrusted with all the refuse of his generation" (*de l'or encrouté de toutes les ordures de son siècle*), but, indeed, this refuse is not thick enough to hide the brilliancy of the precious metal beneath it. He deserves the fame, even more truly than the great Verulam, of being the founder and apostle of the Experimental Philosophy. Hallam has justly remarked that Roger Bacon's "Opus Majus" is, in spirit, the very prototype of Francis Bacon's "Novum Organon;" but there is this vast difference between the two philosophers, that the earlier experimentalist contented himself with the illustration, the latter sought the establishment, of laws or principles.

Friar Bacon was a remarkable instance of universality. He was a Greek and Hebrew scholar, learned in mathematics, wrote a perspicuous and elegant Latin style, and read all

that was known in his time of theology and ethics, logic and metaphysics. An excellent chemist, he was also a profound mechanic, and perfected also as many curious machines as the Marquis of Worcester meditated in his "Century of Inventions." In a little work entitled "The Discovery of the Miracles of Art and Nature, and of the Nullity of Magic," there occurs a chapter on "Admirable Artificial Instruments," which strikingly illustrates his ingenuity. Therein he speaks of a chariot which moved with great rapidity, though impelled only by machinery; of an apparatus for flying; a species of diving-bell; an engine for the elevation or depression of great weights by the application of a very small force, only three fingers high and four broad; and of a ship which could be managed by one man as well as an ordinary vessel by a whole crew. His quick imagination, however, outstripped such results as these, and fired by the conquests over space and matter which he conceived possible to humanity, he indulged in those vague speculations and airy dreams which were the besetting sins of the philosophers of his age. Some of them are so extravagant that it is impossible to conceive how a genius so

profound as Bacon's could for one moment entertain them; but we must remember how much of childish simplicity and innocent faith there was in these brave, large-hearted pioneers of science, just as the old travellers, in their boundless admiration of the strange lands they discovered, were full of eager credulity and prone to the most facile self-delusion. The Dweller on the Threshold feeds his imagination with conceptions of the most brilliant mysteries and dazzling marvels; it is only the priest of the temple for whom Isis has uplifted her impenetrable veil, who can form a just conception of the wonders of which he is the hierophant.

Astrology and alchemy had their attractions for Bacon's keen and vivid fancy, and he believed in the direct influence of the stars upon human affairs through their influence upon human bodies; in the existence of a universal menstruum or solvent, which converted every other metal into gold and prolonged life through many generations. But he was no magician—no pretender to the possession of supernatural means. His intellect could play with trifles, but not stoop to imposture. "No true philosopher," he says, "did ever regard to work by these means." He did

not search for his universal solvent by any of the methods common to the pretended necromancers; he supposed it to be an essence, or a composition of simples, drugs, or metals, that might reveal itself to the persevering inquiries of the chemical student.

Besides the works to which we have already referred, Roger Bacon wrote a treatise "De Multiplicatione Specierum," inserted in the "Opus Majus;" the "Opus Minus," and the "Opus Tertium," and others which are set forth in a long list prefixed to Dr. Jebb's edition of the "Opus Majus." [See also Bale's "Scriptores Anglorum."] The best life of this truly great philosopher with which we are acquainted is contained in the "Biographia Britannica." The title of the chronicle which treats of the popular or traditional Roger Bacon, is "The Famous History of Friar Bacon, containing the Wonderful Things that he did in his Life; with the Lives and Deaths of the Two Conjurors, Bungay and Vandermast: very pleasant and delightful to read." It was very popular in England at the close of the sixteenth century, and appears to have suggested to the dramatist, Roger Greene, his curious play of "The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay."

§ 3. DR. FAUSTUS.

Born of parents base of stock,
 In Germany, within a town called Rhodes :
 At riper years to Wirtemberg he went,
 Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up.
 So much he profits in divinity,
 That shortly he was graced with Doctor's name,
 Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute
 In the heavenly matters of theology :
 Till swoln with cunning and a self-conceit,
 His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
 And, melting, heavens conspired his overthrow :
 For falling to a devilish exercise,
 And glutted now with Learning's golden gifts,
 He surfeits on the cursèd necromancy.
 Nothing so sweet as magic is to him,
 Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

The story of Dr. Faustus suggested to "Kit Marlowe" his most powerful tragedy, "The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus," which Lamb has not unjustly characterized as "an agony and bloody sweat," so sombre in their intense passion are the closing scenes, so sorrowful and pining a spirit broods over the whole play. The plot is sufficiently simple. Faustus has run through the entire circle of human knowledge, and longs for a wisdom which is not of the earth, earthy, but shared by the spirits of the unseen world. Assisted by the instructions of Valdes and

Cornelius, he becomes profoundly versed in the secrets of the magical art, and to obtain the command of an evil spirit, for four-and-twenty years sells his soul to the devil. He makes use of this potent familiar to visit various countries, enjoy the most fantastic luxury, and delight himself with the charms of the most fascinating beauties. He performs various necromantic feats, but they are of a sorry order; and the interest of the drama flags until, at the expiration of the four-and-twenty years, he stands on the brink of eternal ruin. Then, indeed, the genius of the poet reaches its highest development, and he paints, with terrible power, the struggles of a repentant soul, conscious of guilt which no penitence can expiate, and imploring a pardon which it knows can never be extended to so fearful a sin.

In the grand philosophical mystery of the German Goethe, Faust receives a poetical apotheosis, and becomes the type of the yearning and aspiring student who has tasted of the knowledge of good and evil, and discovered that all is *vanitas vanitatum*. Owing to the genius of the great German, and the force and pathos of the English poet, the story of Dr. Faustus has preserved to this day a vigour and a

freshness not enjoyed by the traditions of other popular necromancers.

Faustus, according to his sixteenth century biographer, was the son of a German peasant, born near Wittemberg, and on account of his great natural abilities, adopted at an early age by a wealthy uncle. After obtaining some reputation as a scholar at the University of Wittemberg, he turned his attention to magical pursuits, and soon acquired such a proficiency as to be enabled to secure the services of a demon named Mephistopheles, who agreed to act as his servant for a certain number of years. The sole disagreeable stipulation in the compact was, that at the end of those years, Mephistopheles became the proprietor of Faustus' soul.

The scholar made use of his new power to foretell the secrets of the future—to visit the various countries of the globe, the regions of the air, and the confines of Paradise—to dazzle the Emperor Charles V. by summoning before him the spirits of Alexander and the beautiful Roxalana—and to perplex the multitude with astonishing feats of necromancy. One specimen of these will satisfy the reader :—

“ Dr. Faustus came in Lent unto Frankland [Frankfort ?] fair, where his spirit Mephisto-

pheles gave him to understand that in an urn were four jugglers that cut one another's heads off, and after their cutting off sent them to the barber to be trimmed, which many people saw. This angered Faustus, for he meant to have himself the only cook in the devil's banquet, and he went to the place where they were to beguile them. And as the jugglers were together, ready to cut off one another's head, there stood also the barber ready to trim them, and by them upon the table stood likewise a glass full of stilled waters, and he that was the chiefest among them stood by it. Thus they began: they smote off the head of the first, and presently there was a lily in the glass of distilled water, where Faustus perceived this lily as it was springing up, and the chief juggler named it the Tree of Life. Thus dealt he with the first, making the barber wash and comb his head, and then he set it on again; presently the lily vanished away out of the water; hereat the man had his head whole and sound again. The like did he with the other two; and as the turn and lot came to the chief juggler that he should also be beheaded, and that his lily was most pleasant, fair, and flourishing green, they smote his head off, and when it came to be barbed, it

troubled Faustus his conscience, insomuch that he could not abide to see another do anything, for he thought himself to be the principal conjuror in the world; wherefore Dr. Faustus went to the table whereat the other jugglers kept that lily, and so he took a small knife and cut off the stalk of the lily, saying to himself, 'None of them shall blind Faustus.' Yet no man saw Faustus to cut the lily; but when the rest of the jugglers thought to have set on their master's head, they could not; wherefore they looked on the lily, and found it bleeding. By this means the juggler was beguiled, and so died in his wickedness; yet no one thought that Dr. Faustus had done it."

As the chapbook containing the Doctor's history is sufficiently common, we shall content ourselves with one more extract, which relates his tragical end.

Having invited a company of students to a farewell supper, and "improved the occasion" by warning them to avoid the crimes which had placed *him* in the power of the Evil One, he showed them to their chambers, while in silence and solitude he prepared for his end. And "it happened that between twelve and one o'clock at midnight there blew a mighty storm of wind against the house, as though it

would have blown the foundation thereof out of its place. Hereupon the students began to fear, and go out of their beds, but they would not stir out of the chamber, and the host of the house ran out of doors, thinking the house would fall. The students lay near unto the hall wherein Dr. Faustus lay, and they heard mighty noise and hissing, as if the hall had been full of snakes and adders. With that the hall-door flew open wherein Dr. Faustus was; then he began to cry for help, saying, 'Murther!' 'Murther!' but it was with a half voice and very hollow: shortly after, they heard him no more!

"But when it was day, the students that had taken no rest that night, arose and went into the hall in the which they left Dr. Faustus, where, notwithstanding, they found not Faustus, but all the hall sprinkled with blood, the brains cleaving to the wall, for the devil had beaten him from one wall against another; in one corner lay his eyes, in another his teeth, a fearful and pitiful sight to behold. Then began the students to wail and weep for him, and sought for his body in many places. Lastly they came into the yard, where they found his body lying on the horse-dung, most monstrously torn and fearful to

behold, for his head and all his joints were dashed to pieces. The forenamed students and masters that were at his death, obtained so much that they buried him in the village where he was so grievously tormented."

The fictions which cluster round the typical Dr. Faustus are inferior in picturesqueness to those suggested by the traditional Roger Bacon, but all have a strong Teutonic character, and are marked by strong contrasts, broad and effective colouring, and exceeding minuteness of detail. How widely in these respects they differ from the classic myths! More direct, but less suggestive; more vigorous, but less poetical, they yet embody that same great principle of compensation—of woe for the evil and weal for the good—which animates the mystic dream of the *Hindú* as well as the elegant allegory of the Greek. These fables of the popular mind, what are they, after all, but dim shadowings forth of immortal truths—fancies that hover between the two worlds of the real and the ideal—ideas that catch something of the lustre of heaven, but more of the cloud and blackness of hell, and are pregnant with the hopes and fears of blind, bewildered man?

CHAPTER III.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANCIENT AND
MEDIÆVAL SORCERY.

§ 1. THE ORACLES AND SIBYLS—§ 2. MEDIÆVAL
MAGIC: THE STORY OF THE LORD OF CORASSE,
AND ORTON HIS FAMILIAR—§ 3. ANOTHER
PHASE OF HUMAN FOLLY: OATHS, ORDEALS,
AND JUDICIAL COMBATS—§ 4. ORDEALS AND
PRIESTCRAFT.

Non igitur oportet nos magicis illusionibus uti, cum potestas
philosophica debeat operari quod sufficit.—ROGER BACON.

The earth hath bubbles as the water hath,
And these be of them.—BYRON.

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§ 1. THE ORACLES AND SIBYLS.

MANKIND in all ages has endeavoured to discover some medium between earth and heaven, by which it might gratify its curiosity in regard to the events and characters of the future. This was more especially the case with those nations which, in the old world,

were shut out from the benefit of God's revelation through Moses and the Prophets, groping in an unutterable darkness sought Divinity in every grove and rill—every fountain and shady wood; imagined an Olympian heaven and peopled it with half-human deities, and read a sign and a portent in every changing cloud or flashing meteor. The Greeks, having created their gods, created the means of communicating with them through a privileged priesthood, whose mission it was to make known "the ways of God" to man. Over all there rested the intolerable shadow of an oppressive Fate—a Fate which was omnipotent, and controlled the gods themselves, and whose decrees, once uttered, were for ever irreversible. Fate was the will of the Supreme Deity—the awful Demogorgon—the mysterious Ever Presence—which had been from the beginning; and Fate occasionally revealed itself to men through the oracles of the different gods.

A temple, an altar, a priesthood, a Pytho-ness, or *medium*, made up the requisite machinery for the production of Oracles. The deceptions were managed by means of some slight knowledge of the science of optics, ventriloquial exhibitions, and by bold impo-

tions upon the excited senses of the credulous worshippers. Very often these Oracles furnished the agency by which a king aroused the passions of his people; still more often the oracular utterances were so vaguely worded, and with so artful an equivocation, that any event might be interpreted as predicted by them. The priests who managed these impostures contrived to avoid awkward exposures by another stratagem; the gods reserved to themselves the right of not answering questions which referred to things not permitted to be revealed. The medium selected to be the channel of the utterances of the god was always a woman, because the female temperament is easily influenced by artificial means, and excited into a species of hysterical ecstasy,—“possessed by the gods,” as the priest explained it. She inhaled a vapour or gas, probably of an intoxicating character, and was frequently the unhappy victim of attacks which seem to have resembled epileptic fits.

The most famous of the ancient Oracles were those of Apollo, who was pre-eminently the god of Prophecy and Divination. These were twenty-two; but the most esteemed was that of Delphi in Greece. At Delphi an Oracle was supposed to have existed from the eldest

days of time. But, according to Plutarch,* was for ages desolated by a terrible serpent, that no one could approach it. This serpent was called Pythius, and slain by Apollo, who then took possession of the Oracle—formerly belonging to the earth, the Demeter—was surnamed Pythius in commemoration of his victory. Hence the prophetess was called a Pythoness, or the Pythia. “After Greece had by Divine providence increased very much in cities, and when the population had augmented, two prophetesses were employed who repaired alternately to the sanctum, and a third was also retained in case of necessity. At the present day,” writes Plutarch, “there is but one prophetess, and we do not complain of it; for she suffices to answer all the questions that are proposed to her. For the prophecy which still exists and endures long enough for all, and no one applying thereat is dismissed unsatisfied. Here Apollo now employs one, where he formerly employed several voices when the population was much more numerous. On the other hand we should marvel at Apollo, if he allowed his oracle to flow on unused like water, or die away like

* Plutarch, De Orac. Def. c. 51.

the echoing voices of shepherds and herdsmen in the solitudes and among the rocks.”

For the ambiguous character of the utterances pronounced by the Delphian Pythoness, Plutarch suggests an ingenious interpretation: “As regards ambiguity, circumlocution, and obscurity,” he says, “I am not surprised that the ancients were sometimes compelled to have recourse to them. For those who visited the Oracle were not common people to ask counsel upon a purchase or trade, but powerful states, kings, or princes. To foretell disagreeable events to these would not have been favourable to those connected with the temple; for Apollo does not seem to find it advisable to follow that saying of Euripides,—Phœbus alone must prophesy to man. He employs mortal men as his servants and prophets; over their safety he must watch, and see that his priests do not come to harm by the wicked. He does not wish entirely to crush out the truth, but leaves his revelation, like a ray of light, to shine through and become softened in verses, for the purpose of removing from it all that is harsh and unpleasant. Moreover, tyrants and enemies may not learn that which stands before them. For them he clothes his replies in doubt and obscurity, which conceal the meaning of the

oracle to all others, but reveal it to the frank and truthful inquirer."

Those inscriptions on the doors of the Delphian temple, of which the one is E, or "Thou art," and the other Γνωθί σεαυτὸν, "*Know thyself*," are, remarks a profound German author, of a deep psychological meaning. The first is an address and welcome to the questioner of Apollo; the second is, as it were, the reply. "The first awakens," says Pictarch, "at once a conception of the power of this god, and contains the true, single, and only fitting greeting which is taken from the being."

The Pythia at Delphi, when overpowered by the vapours which issued from under the tripod on which she sat, gave utterance to unintelligible sounds, and these were written down and explained by the priestess before being delivered to the questioner. The Pythias were in early times youthful girls, but owing to a moral lapse of one of them, they were afterwards not appointed until they had attained the age of fifty years, but even then assumed the dress of young maidens. The gas operated so perniciously upon their constitutions that their time of service was necessarily short, and they frequently fell victims

to the fatal nature of the vapour. It was customary for the Pythoness to prepare herself by fasting for three days, and bathing in the pure waters of Castaly.

Another famous Apolline Oracle was that of Didyma, in the territory of Miletus. It was named the Oracle of the *Branchidæ*, from Branchos, a son of Apollo, who came from Delphi, and built the altar at Didyma.

A third was that of *Claros*, in the territory of Colophon. The replies were delivered in verse by a priest, who descended into a cavern, drank of the water from a secret well, and then pronounced the oracle.

Other oracles which were held in great repute were those of Zeus, or Jupiter, at Olympia; of Amphiaraus, near Thebes; and Æsculapius, at Epidaurus.

THE SIBYLS.*

“Sibylla est puella, cujus pectus numen recipit”—A Sibyl was an oracular woman, who, informed by the Divine spirit, foretold the events of the future. The word is composed of *δῖος*, God (Æolian for *θεὸς*), and *βουλῆ*, the counsel; wherefore it means the will or

* Ennemoser's "History of Magic."

counsel of God. Another etymology derives it from $\deltaίω$, to agitate violently, and $\betaύλα$ full — full of the stir and rush of prophecy.

How many Sibyls were there? On this point authorities are not agreed. Some write the name *one*; others, two, three, or four; others ten. Varro speaks of ten; Ælian, of four; and Solinus, of three. Pliny also speaks of three, whose statues were to be found in the Capitol at Rome. The three of Solinus are the Delphic, the Erythræic, and the Cumæan. Diodorus Siculus speaks only of one, whom he calls Daphne. Others call her Mantia, the daughter of Tiresias, who was sent, concealed in a sack, from Thebes—through the Egyptians—to Delphi, 720 years before the destruction of Troy. Plato, in his “Phædo,” alludes to one,— $\text{Καὶ ἔάν δὲ λέγωμεν Σίβυλλαν}$ —and Cicero speaks only of one, both in his work “De Natura Deorum,” and “De Divinatione.”

Of these the most celebrated was the Cumæan Sibyl, held in especial honour by the Romans, because, in their belief, she foretold the entire history of the commonwealth. A circumstantial account of her is given by Virgil in the 6th book of the “Æneid.” She uttered her oracles before Æneas landed in Italy, but was said to dwell in a deep cave near the Lake

Avernus. She was called a maiden, and the priestess of Apollo. She wrote her answers on palm-leaves, and laid them at the mouth of the cave, whence they were borne afar by the winds. Occasionally she vouchsafed an oral response to her questioner. Then her whole frame was moved by the prophetic afflatus. "She changes her features," says Virgil, "and the colour of her countenance. Her hair springs up erect; her bosom heaves and pants; her wild heart beats violently. The foam gathers on her lips, and her voice is terrible. As if possessed, she paces to and fro in her cave, and gesticulates as if she would expel the god from her breast."

Taking as our guide the authority of Varro,* we shall admit the existence of ten Sibyls: the Cumean—the Persian or Chaldean, who is said to have prophesied the birth, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ—the Libyan—the Delphic, to whom are attributed many of the most remarkable sayings of the oracle of Delphi—the Erythræic, who is said to have foretold the destruction of Troy—the Samian—the Herophite—the Sibyl of the Hellespont—the Phrygian—and the Tiburtine, whose statue was placed in the temple

* Varro, *Ad Cæsarem*, lib. ix.

of Jupiter Capitolinus by order of Senate.

These Sibyls were the authors of the Sibylline Books, which were consulted respecting the fortunes of the Roman state, and were regarded as embodying the secrets of human destinies. Their number was great, but uncertain, since only one, the Erythræic, signed her book with her name. They are, moreover, of two kinds; namely, the books of the earlier Sibyls, that is, of the earlier Greek and Roman times; and the later, which were much falsified and disfigured with numerous interpolations. Of the latter, eight books in Greek and Latin are still said to be extant. Those which were preserved in Rome had been collected from various places, at various times, and contained predictions of future events couched in the most mysterious of symbolic languages. At first they were permitted only to be read by the descendants of Apollo, but later by the priests until their care was entrusted to certain officers who only replied to inquiries at the command of the Senate, in cases of extraordinary emergency. They were two at first, and named *duumviri*: these were appointed by Tarquin the Superbus. Two hundred and thirteen years afterwards, ten more were appointed to them.

guardianship (*decemviri*), and Sulla increased the number to fifteen (*quindecimviri*).

According to Tacitus, these books were at first preserved in the Capitol. When it was burnt down, the precious leaves of Fate were preserved, and removed to the temple of Apollo Palatinus. Their after fate is enshrouded in mystery, but it would seem that the Cumean books existed until 339 A.D., when they were destroyed by Stilikon. Augustus sent three ambassadors — Paulus Gabinus, Marcus Otacilius, and Lucius Valerius — into Asia, Africa, and Italy, but especially to the Erythræan Sibyl, to collect whatever could be discovered of the Sibylline Oracles, to replace those which had been lost or burnt.

Some of the predictions of the Sibyls apparently point to an acquaintance with the magnificent inspiration of the Hebrew prophets, and for this reason they obtained a very general acceptance in the early Christian Church. Thus the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead still couples David and the Sibyl:—

Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibyllâ.

[That day, that day of wrath, shall dissolve the ages in fire,
as David and the Sibyl testify.]

The coming of Christ was distinctly foretold.

“If we attend to the rhymes of the Sibyl says Cicero, “they tell us—‘Him whom esteem to be the true King, we must also st King, in order to become happy.’ And if s things are contained in these books, to w times and to what man do they apply Forty years before the birth of Christ, Vir in his finest Eclogue, wrote:—

*Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto,
Ultima Cumæi venit carminis ætas,
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna . . .
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primùm
Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,
Casta Lucina, fave.*

Now a new race from lofty heaven descends,
The final age, sung in the lofty verse
Of Cumæa's Sibyl, comes, and quick return
The happy days of the Saturnian reign.
Then, O Lucina chaste, be gracious thou
Unto this boy who shall be born, that so
The iron time may cease; the Golden Year
Arise to bless the world.

The Fathers of the early Christian Church a singular stress upon these prophetic rha dies, and St. Augustine defended them v burning eloquence.† He quotes numer runes of the Erythræan Sibyl, which pla indicate an acquaintance with the writings

* Cicero, “De Divinatione,” lib. ii. c. 110.

† “De Civitate Dei,” lib. xviii. c. 23.

the Jewish prophets. Thus speaking of the Saviour and his sufferings, the Sibyl says:—

“He will fall into the cruel hands of the wicked; with a poisonous spittle will they spit on him. They will strike him on his sacred back; they will crown him with a crown of thorns; they will give him gall for food, and vinegar for drink.”

“The veil of the temple will be rent, and at mid-day a darkness will prevail for three hours.”

“And he will die, and for three days repose in sleep, and then, in the happy light, he will come again as at the first.”

The testimony of Justin Martyr will show the high estimation in which the Sibyl's books were generally held. “It would be easy,” he says, “to determine which is the true religion if people observed what the prophets and the Sibyls have foretold. The Sibyl was born at Babylon, and came thence to Cumæ, where she proclaimed the future. In the centre of her dwelling were three cisterns, hewn in the stone, for bathing purposes. The Sibyl, though her speech was wise and wonderful, did not herself understand the import of what she said. Especially when she began to lose the divining spirit did she lose the recollection of all that

she had told. Therefore people should wonder at the deficiencies which are found in her books. The fault lies not in them, but in the scribes who recorded her utterances, and their ignorance did not write them down fully or correctly."

It was thus that the Primitive Church adopted many of the superstitions and beliefs of the Pagan world, and handed down magical traditions of the ancients to be interrupted and modified by the mediæval necromancers. Accustomed to the performance of miracles, they accepted with little hesitation the pretended marvels of the Oracle and Sibyl and the skilful delusions of priests. They ascribed to them, as to the wonderful works of Christ and the Apostles, a preternatural origin—a divine character; and it has been left for later inquirers to distinguish between the false and the true, between the impositions of a subtle priesthood and the physical revelations of the Son of God.

§ 2. MEDIÆVAL MAGIC.

The ideas of the Church upon the subject of magic in due time underwent a change. It became the policy of the Roman See to

cumscribe as far as possible the operations of the human intellect; to limit its researches, to check its speculations; for freedom of thought was dangerous to that absolute and uncontrolled power which the priests of Rome enjoyed and longed to preserve. Therefore the writers of the Church and its dignitaries assembled in solemn conclave, spoke of magic as necessarily the work of the Evil One:—"Ceremonial or superstitious magic," exclaim those decisive authorities, "is the art of accomplishing things which surpass the forces of nature, and are commonly iniquitous, in virtue of an express or tacit compact with the demons.

"Would-be sages believe that devils have no share in the operations of magicians, and that it is with shadows only they astonish the spectators. But the Scriptures do not permit us to doubt that they are the work of Satan, since they tell us that the magicians of Pharaoh transformed into serpents the wands which they held in their hands; that they also changed water into blood, and performed almost the same miracles as Moses had done; and it is certain that those magicians could not have wrought works so far beyond the power of humanity, but with the help of the Evil One. The evocation of Samuel by the Witch of

Endor, described in the twenty-eighth chapter of the first Book of Samuel, is decisive upon this point.

“The Church is so persuaded that the magicians and sorcerers, who formerly existed, and still exist, magicians and sorcerers, that she has delivered against them a great number of canons in her councils, and placed their crimes upon the list of special cases, and declared them excommunicated from her lectures and rituals.”*

It is thus that a French theologian resumed at the end of the eighteenth century, the opinions of the Church upon the subjects of magic and sorcery. We shall see hereafter what conclusions may be drawn from these words. At present we shall confine ourselves to extracting from different authors some illustrations of the changes of public opinion upon these topics.

Among the ancients, the Oracles were generally employed for the detection of robbers and the recovery of the things plundered. “Amasis, before he was king (says Herodotus) was accustomed to rob on every side when he was in need of money. Those who suspected him of having plundered them, summoned him, when he dared to deny his crime, to

* “Analyse des Conciles Généraux,” par Ricard, ed. 1770.

nearest oracle, which often convicted him and often sent him away absolved."

In the Middle Ages magicians and sorcerers took the place of the oracles of antiquity. "There lived at this time," says Gregory of Tours, "a woman with the inspiration of a Pythoness, and who was worth, through her divinations, a considerable sum to her masters; she at length so wrought herself into their good graces that she obtained her liberty, and was left to her own pleasure. Whoever experienced any robbery or other loss, she immediately declared where the thief had gone, to whom he had confided his booty, or how he had disposed of it. She daily gathered much gold and silver, clothing herself in splendid attire, so that the people believed there was in her something of divinity. The news reached Agéric, Bishop of Verdun; he sent some one to arrest her. As soon as she was brought before him, he discerned, from what we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that she had a Pythonic spirit; and as soon as he had pronounced the exorcism, he anointed her forehead with holy oil; the demon shrieked, and revealed the truth to the pontiff, who, unable to expel him, permitted the woman to depart. She, perceiving that she could dwell

in those parts no longer, sought out Queen Frédégonda, by whom she was concealed."

Rimual, cited by M. Maury,* indicates an infallible method of discovering the author of a theft. You must take a mirror or vase; if you take a vase, it must be filled with holy water, and brought close to a holy taper, when you pronounce these words—*Angelo bianco, angelo santo, per la tua santità e per la tua verginità, mostrami che ha tolto tal cosa* [Angel white, angel holy, by thy sanctity and thy virginity, show us this thing.] The image of the thief will not fail to appear immediately at the bottom of the vase! A simple and effective method of thief-taking, which, if generally successful, would considerably relieve the labors of the Metropolitan police.

Divination by means of a mirror is very ancient. According to Varro, it was originally practised in Persia, whence it travelled to almost every country, and flourished from the earliest antiquity until late in the Middle Ages. "Before the temple of Ceres, at Palta," says Pausanias, "flowed a fountain which was consulted upon the condition of the sick. A mirror was attached to the end of a string, and suspended above the fountain so that

* "Revue Archéologique," 1846.

extremity alone came in contact with the water. Afterwards, prayers were addressed to the goddess, some perfume was burned in her honour, and looking at the same time into the mirror, the spectator would see if the patient was likely to recover."

Sir David Brewster has clearly explained the mode in which these delusions were created. The mirrors were probably of silver, and gave multiplied and inverted images of objects according as they were plane, polygonal, and concave. Two plane mirrors combined made the Magician's Mirror. A spectator in front of a plane mirror sees a distinct image of himself; but if two persons take up a mirror, and if the one is as much to one side of a line perpendicular to the middle of it as the other is to the other side, each will see the other, but not himself. It is obvious that upon the ignorant this deception might be practised with great effect.

But far more powerful illusions may be produced with the concave mirror. "In order to be quite perfect, every concave mirror should have its surface elliptical, so that if any object is placed in one focus of the ellipse, an inverted image of it will be formed in the other focus. This image, to a spectator rightly placed, ap-

pears suspended in the air, so that if the mirror and the object are hid from his view, the effect must appear to him almost supernatural.”

In certain species of divination children played an important part. When Septimius Severus marched against Didius Julianus, the latter had recourse to that kind which employs a mirror, in whose rear are placed some children to read the future, their heads and eyes having previously been submitted to divers enchantments. The children on this occasion predicted the arrival of Severus and the retreat of Julian. But it was chiefly among the Orientals that this mode of divination was employed.

An old Greek martyrology records a very curious example of the confidence which the Christian worthies placed in magical operations. Casaubon has related the incident—not without astonishment—in connexion with the previous anecdote. An Italian Christian, who took an active part in the games of the Circus, being at a loss to what cause his continual defeats should be ascribed, consulted thereupon a man of great piety, named Hilarion. The latter placed a vase full of water in the Italian's hands, who quickly discovered on the shining surface the horses and chariots of the arena.

and among them his own, fettered and burdened by hostile spells. Hilarion returned thanks to God for the discovery, and with the sign of the Cross broke the charm of which the Italian had been the victim.

A few words are necessary upon a species of divination very similar to the foregoing. The tale which illustrates it is told by the Greek historian Nicetas.*

“Andronicus Comnenus addicted himself to demon-worship in order to obtain some revelation of the future, and he consulted the sorcerers as Saul had formerly consulted them. The interpretation of dreams and the presages drawn from the entrails of victims and the flight of birds having been abolished with the sacrifices of Paganism, judicial astrology alone remained, and the art of divination by inspection of a basin of water. The Emperor despised judicial astrology on account of its obscurity, and resorted to those necromancers who sought in water the images of future events. He did not assist himself at the ceremony, but entrusted Stephen Agiochristophorites with the mission. The latter took with

* *Vie d'Andronic Comnène*, 6. 11. c. 7.—Translated by Cousin. See Gibbon's admirable sketch of his character in the fifth vol. of the “Decline and Fall.”

him a man named Seth, who from his early youth had been initiated in these detestable mysteries, and therefore, in the reign of Manuel, had been condemned to lose his eyes. After having performed various rites—whom the rites I do not wish to know, and which the curious must seek elsewhere than in my history—he demanded who would be the successor of Andronicus, and who would depose him of the sovereign power? The demon was marked obscurely in the perturbed water with the first letters of the word Isaac, displaying first an S, and then an I, and thus enveloped his answer in shadow to stimulate a very early spirit of curiosity or conceal his own ignorance. Andronicus judged immediately that the oracles indicated Isaac the Isaurian, whom he had always regarded with mistrust as his successor. Surprised at this response, Stephen demanded at what epoch the Empire would change its master. But the aerial and terrestrial spirits plunging impetuously in the water, whither they had been drawn by spells and enchantments, said that it would take place at the time of the elevation of the Cross.”

The mediæval chronicles are replete with anecdotes of magicians and sorcerers. We have chosen the following, as appearing the most

characteristic. They are extracted from a variety of sources:—

After a terrible war which had broken out between the Persians under Pacurius, and the Armenians under Arsaces, the two chieftains swore an inviolable peace. But Arsaces yielding himself up to intrigues with the object of renewing the war, was seized by Pacurius, and flung into prison, in company with a partisan named Basicus. As they denied the crime of which they were accused, the Magi to whom Pacurius had recourse indicated a means of compelling Arsaces to confess himself guilty. They caused one-half the area of the prince's tent to be re-covered with earth brought from Armenia. "Then," says Procopius,* "they performed some of the rites of their art in the entire extent of the pavilion, and bade the King walk in it with Arsaces, and accuse him, while walking, of having violated the treaty. Pacurius, having caused Arsaces to be brought before him, walked with him in the tent, in view of the Magi, and demanded why he had broken his vow and attempted to involve the Persians and Armenians in fresh miseries. While Arsaces stood upon Persian ground, he denied everything of which he was accused,

* "Histoire de la Guerre contre les Perses," b. i. c. 5.

and asserted that he had always remained faithful to the interests of Pacurius. But soon as he, while speaking, arrived in the middle of the tent, and touched the Armenian soil, suddenly, as if overcome by some incredible power, he changed his language, loudly threatened to avenge himself as soon as he was able. He continued his threats while walking on the Armenian ground, but immediately that he returned to the Persian, became submissive to Pacurius, and addressed him in terms full of honour and respect. Upon returning to the earth of Armenia he renewed his menaces, and thus discovered what lay at the bottom of his heart. Then the magicians condemned him as a violator of his promises as a perjurer. Pacurius ordered him to be flayed, his skin to be stuffed with straw, and suspended to a tree. As for Arsaces, being of the royal blood, he could not be put to death but was thrown into the prison of Oubli."

A monk belonging to a monastery not named by Guibert de Nogent, who tells the story, having been cured of a severe illness by a physician famous for his necromantic skill, pressed so earnestly to raise the devil that the magicians at length consented. He kept his promise

The circle was drawn, the incense burnt, the invocation muttered, and the monk, finding himself confronted by the Evil One, demanded to be initiated into his secrets. The wicked prince replied that such could only be done if he abjured the Christian faith, and offered him a sacrifice. "And what sacrifice?" inquired the monk. The devil named one with which we dare not disgust our readers. But we are told that the miserable monk consented. This monstrous story is gravely related by Guibert de Nogent, who evidently believed in its veracity.

"A certain clerk lived in the district of Beauvais, of the profession of a scrivener, and whom I knew," says the same chronicler, "for he had been employed in that kind of work at Flavigny. Afterwards he had a discussion at the Château de Breteuil with another clerk, a sorcerer, who spoke to him in these terms:—'If I could profit by it, I would teach thee a means by which thou mightst daily gain considerable sums of money, without having any hard work to do.' 'And how wouldst thou accomplish so desirable an end?' 'Thou must first make a sacrifice to the citizen of hell, that is to say, to the devil.' 'And what victim must I offer?' replied the latter. 'A cock,' answered the sorcerer; 'but a cock

sprung from an egg produced on a Monday in the month of March. After having cooked this cock, at the very beginning of the next day thou wilt take him with thee, roasted and spit on the spit, and accompany me to the neighborhood of the pond. There, whatever thou mayst do, beware thou dost not invoke God, or the blessed Mary, or any Saint.' 'I will do nothing surprising thing,' replied the other."

At night, therefore, they repaired to the destined spot, bearing with them the vessel worthy of such a god. When the sorcerer invoked the demon, summoning him by name, and while his wicked disciple held the cock, there broke a loud clap of thunder, *He* appeared! He seized upon the cock from the clerk who held it, filled with terror, he uttered a loud sigh and called for aid upon the name of the Virgin Mary. On hearing the name of this powerful sovereign, the sorcerer fled with his prize, and on the morrow, a fisherman found him concealed in an island in the centre of the pond. The name of the Virgin Mary is a royal and benignant name for those that seek her aid, but terrible, indeed, for evil spirits. It is thus that Guibert apostrophizes the wonder-working name of the Virgin Mary.

The sorcerer was keenly irritated against the clerk who, in the middle of so great an ex-

had invoked so powerful an intercession. But the clerk, moved to repentance, repaired to Lysiard, Archdeacon of Beauvais, a man as learned as he was wise, and well adapted and renowned for healing souls in such a pitiful condition; and having confessed his sin, he was purged of it by prayer and fasting.

“In the diocess of Sens,” says one of the continuators of the chronicle of Guillaume de Nangis, “in a royal château of France called Landon, that is, in French, Château-Landon, a sorcerer and thaumaturgist had promised to an abbé of the order of Citeaux to recover for him a great sum of money which he had lost, and to name the thieves and their accomplices. Listen, now, how he essayed to perform his promise. He took a black cat, and shut it up in a box with some bread dipped in cream, in sacred oil and holy water,—a quantity sufficient for the nourishment of the animal for three days. He afterwards deposited the box underground, in a public highway, taking care to open two conduits from the box to the surface of the earth, that the cat might have enough air to breathe.

“Now it happened that some peasants passing near this place, their dogs, detecting the feline odour, began to scrape the earth with so

much eagerness that nothing could draw off. One of the hinds, more prudent than others, immediately repaired to the magister and related the occurrence: he, arriving on the spot with several attendants, was, like the others, very much surprised at the sight of the sorcerer's deed. It was with some anxiety he reflected how best he should discover the horrible a feat of magic, for he perceived it had been done by way of enchantment, but knew nothing of its nature or its author. For some days after numerous reflections, remarking that the box was newly made, he summoned thither the carpenters of the neighbourhood, and commanded of them who had made it. One of them, stepping forward, confessed that he had made it, and that he had sold it to a man named Jean du Prieuré, without knowing for what purpose it was intended. The latter, suspecting himself, was arrested and put to the question, and confessed everything, and accused Jean Persan of being the principal author of the incantation, and that his accomplices were a monk of Citeaux, Persan's chief pupil, the Abbé de Sarcelles, and some Canons regular.

“ All were arrested, chained, and removed to Paris, to appear before the official of the bishop and some other inquisitors in

heretical perversity. There, being interrogated what use they had intended to make of their incantation, they replied that if, when after three days they drew the cat from its box, they had flayed it, and had made with its skin some thongs, so fashioned that by knotting them together they assumed the shape of a circle, and had put in the centre a man whose back they had taken care to anoint with the food prepared for the cat, he would have summoned the demon Bérich. The demon would have appeared, and replying to all their questions, have revealed the theft and its authors, and all that was necessary to the success of the enchantment."

After these confessions had been received, Jean de Prieuré and Jean de Persan were condemned to the stake as the authors of the incantation; but their punishment being delayed awhile, one of them died, and his bones were burned in expiation of his crime; the other, on the day after the feast of St. Nicholas, terminated his miserable life in the midst of flames. The apostate abbé, and the Canons regular who had supplied, for the performance of the spell, the holy cream and holy oil, were degraded, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment, to undergo the chastisements suitable to

their crime. In the same year the book of a monk of Morigny (near Etampes), which contained many painted images of the holy Virgins and many names which were believed known to be names of demons, was justly condemned at Paris as superstitious, because he promised delights and wealth, and all that a man can desire, to whomsoever should purchase a similar book, inscribe therein his name repeatedly, and fulfil other conditions even the most false and futile.

Such was the credulity of men, and the sanguinary mode in which men equally credulous punished that credulity, in the "good old times" of chivalry and romance, as lauded by mediocre poets! Strip them of their artificial lustre flung upon them by the glare of the strong arm, and how brutal and ignorant how weak and servile they appear! The "good old times" when the sacrifice of a black cat could raise the devil Bérich, and the ignorance of those who believed in the efficacy of such a sacrifice was punished by a fiery death—need we, O my friends, reproach them ever so little?

In the course of the war between the houses of Duras and Anjou for the possession of the kingdom of Naples, Louis I., Duke of A

invaded that country (July, 1382), and laid siege to the capital.

“Then an enchanter, a master of necromancy,” says quaint old Froissart, “came boldly to the Duke of Anjou, and said to him, ‘My lord, if you will, I will place the castle of Œuf and its garrison at your disposal.’ ‘And how shall this be?’ said the Duke. ‘My lord, I will tell you,’ said the enchanter; ‘I will, by enchantment, make the air so thick that to those in the castle there shall seem upon the seas a great bridge for ten men abreast, and when they see it they shall be so dismayed that they will submit themselves to your pleasure, for they will think, if you assault them they will be made prisoners by force.’

“The Duke marvelled much at this speech, and summoned some of his knights, the Count de Vendôme, the Count de Genève, Messire Jean and Messire Pierre de Bueil, Messire Mauvinnet and others, and related what the great enchanter had said, and all wondered at it, and assented to what he thought of it. Then said the Duke of Anjou to the enchanter, ‘Good sir, upon the bridge which you say you will make, can you assure our soldiers they will be able to march to assault the castle?’ ‘My lord,’ replied the enchanter,

‘this I may not dare to promise; for if any of those who passed across the bridge made the sign of the cross, it would instantly disappear, and all would fall into the sea.’ The Duke began to laugh, and several young knights and squires who were present, said, ‘Oh, my lord, for God’s sake, let him do it! We will make the sign of the cross, and more easily than you can make it, we will conquer them; we cannot secure our enemies.’ The Duke replied, ‘I will consider of it.’

“Soon afterwards the Count of Savoy came into the Duke’s tent, and to him the Duke related the enchanter’s words, and what he had promised. The Count thought a little, and then said: ‘Send him to my lodging, and I will examine him. It is the man who was a necromancer by whose means the Queen of Naples and Otho of Brunswick were formerly captured in the castle of Cœuf, for he made the sea swell so high that it threatened to overflow the castle; and it so alarmed those who were within it that it seemed to them they would surely be drowned. One ought not to put too much confidence in such people.’ After these words the Count summoned the enchanter, and as the latter persisted in his promise to deliver the castle into the power of the besiegers, ‘I am not willing,’ cried

Count, 'we should be reproached in time to come that, in so high a deed of arms, and with so many valiant knights and squires, we worked by enchantment, nor by such arts overcame our enemies.' Then he summoned his valet and said, 'Take a headsman, and bid him cut off this man's head.' As the Count said, so was it done; they beheaded him outside his tent. Thus was made an end of this master-necromancer, and thus was he paid his reward."*

In the year 1403,—Juvenal des Ursins relates the story,†—a priest named Ives Gitaume, the demoiselle Marie de Blansy, Perrin Hamery, locksmith, and Guillaume Floret, clerk, made certain invocations of devils, and the priest said that he had power over three, and boasted that they could cure the king, Charles VI. It was resolved to employ them, and to permit them to make their incantations. They asked that there should be handed over to them twelve men loaded with chains. And this being done, they told the men to be under no alarm, and they did what they would, but nothing came of it. Then were they interrogated why they had accomplished nothing, and they replied that they had failed because

* Froissart, livre ii. c. 137-138.

† "Histoire de Charles VI.," 1ère, série tome ii.

these twelve men were protected by the sign of the cross; which was nought but a fraud, as Floret the clerk confessed, when all were arrested by the provost of Paris. And finally they were harangued in public on the enormity of their offence, and burnt alive.

It is surprising that with so terrible a doom staring them in the face, men could be found to practise such a dangerous trade. Here there is a wonderful fascination in the reputation of being possessed of powers superior to ordinary mortals. The influence which this reputation naturally secures; the lucrative nature of the profession; the self-delusion of those engaged in it, who often believed themselves to be really endowed with the powers of which they boasted;—these were motives sufficiently potent to induce men to brave prison, the rack, and the stake in the pursuit of their unhallowed art.

Louis Farnese, son of Pope Paul II., having been invested by his father with the Duchies of Parma and Placentia, speedily aroused, through his tyrannical rule, his subjects to conspire against him. "It is said, and not without foundation," relates De Thou, "that the Duke, informed of the conspiracy, as well as the place where it would break out

had recourse in the end to magic, which his father had studied, and with which he himself was sufficiently familiar. He evoked, then, by the force of his enchantments, a demon, of whom he demanded the names of the conspirators. All the enlightenment afforded by the demon was, that he should attentively examine a piece of the money which he had coined, and he would find thereon the names of the accomplices of the plot, and of the place where it would break out. This however, was an enigma which no one could penetrate, and it was pronounced an illusion of the infernal spirit; but the event of it soon cleared up the sense, and justified its truth; for upon one side of the Parmesan money were engraved these words:—P. Alois. Farm. Parm. Ex. Plac. Dux. The word *Plac.* designated Placentia, where he was slain, and the first letters of the names of the conspirators, Pallavicini, Cando, Anguisciola, and Confalonieri . . . very remarkable instance of the effects of magic.”* Farnese was assassinated in 1547. The Mémoires of Duclos relate the following fact as having taken place at Vienna in the first half of the eighteenth century.

“The Abbé de Sinzendorff, son of the Great

* De Thou, tome i. p. 289.

Chancellor, the Count de Westerloo, captain of the Emperor's halberdiers, and the Duke of Richelieu, were engaged at Vienna in a series of adventures. One of those impostors who live upon the credulity of certain *esprits forts*—less rare, perhaps, than the world thinks,—that believe in magic and similar absurdities, persuaded our three lords that each, by means of the devil, might obtain the thing he most desired. It is said that the Duke's wish was to possess the key of the heart of princes, for he thought himself sure of that of the women. The rendezvous appointed for the evocation of the fiend was in a quarry near Vienna. They repaired thither at night. It was summer, and the conjurations were so protracted that the day began to break, when the workmen arriving to their work, heard such piercing cries that they flew to the spot, and found there the three lords and a man dressed like an Armenian, bathed in his blood, and breathing his last sigh. It was apparently the pretended magician whom these gentlemen, as great barbarians as they were silly dupes, and ashamed of being dupes, had just immolated in their anger. The workmen, fearing to be taken for accomplices, fled immediately to make a declaration of what they had seen. The officers

justice, on hearing the names of the guilty ones, and especially that of the Abbé de Sinsendorff, advised the Chancellor, his father, of the transaction, who forgot nothing in his anxiety to hush it up."

A belief in familiar spirits — a natural consequence of the belief in magic — was very popular in the dark ages, and even up to the middle of the 17th century. In connexion with this subject Froissart relates an interesting *historiette*. The old chronicler's narrative is too long for extract, and we must content ourselves with an abridgment of it, though, in our version, his graphic simplicity will unhappily be lost.*

THE STORY OF THE LORD OF CORASSE, AND ORTON
THE FAMILIAR.

About 1365, the Lord of Corasse — a castle situated about seven leagues from Orthes — having unjustly deprived a clerk of Catalonia of certain tithes, the latter adopted the novel revenge of sending to his castle one night some invisible messengers, who began to hurl and fling about everything in it, so that it seemed they were on the point of total destruction. The chevalier pretended that he noticed

* Froissart, book iii. c. 22.

nothing, but the following night the same uproar being renewed, he demanded with loud voice who was the cause of it. The invisible being replied that he was sent by the clerk of Catalonia. "And how does he name thee, who art so trusty a messenger?" "He calls me Orton." "Orton, the service of a clerk is worth nothing to thee; he will trouble you too much, believe me; I pray thee leave him in peace; serve me, and I will reward thee well."

After some hesitation Orton accepted the offer, and soon grew so attached to his lord that he often went to visit him at night, and if he found him asleep, would shake his pillow or knock loudly at the door or window of the chamber. Then the chevalier, when he awaked would say, "Orton, let me sleep, I pray you." "Not so," replied Orton, "until I have told you my news." Thereat the knight's wife would grow so afraid that her hair would stand on end and her limbs tremble, and she would hide herself under the clothes. Thereupon the knight would inquire of him, "And what news can you tell me, and whence do you come?" "I come," he would reply, "from England, or Germany, or Hungary, or some other country, from whence I set out yesterday, and such and such things have happened."

Thus the lord of Corasse knew whatever happened in the world ; and the affair went on in this manner for some five or six years ; and he would not remain silent about it, but discovered it to the Count de Foix.

“So Orton continued to serve the lord of Corasse for a long time. I do not know,” says Froissart, “whether he had more than one master, but, every week, at night, twice or thrice, he visited his master, and related to him the events which had happened in the different countries he had traversed, and the lord of Corasse wrote of them to the Count de Foix, who took a great pleasure in them, for he was the man in all the world who most willingly heard news of strange countries.

“Now it happened that the lord of Corasse, as on other nights, was lying in his bed in his chamber by the side of his wife, who had become accustomed to listen to Orton without any alarm. Orton came, and drew away the lord's pillow, for he was fast asleep ; and his lord awoke, and cried, ‘Who is this?’ He answered, ‘It is I, Orton.’ ‘And whence comest thou?’ ‘I come from Prague, in Bohemia.’ ‘And how far from hence is this Prague, in Bohemia?’ ‘Why,’ said he, ‘about sixty days’ journey.’ ‘And thou hast come so

quickly?' 'Faith, I go as quickly as t
wind, or even swifter.' 'And hast thou wings
'Faith, none!' 'How then canst thou fly
quickly?' Orton replied—'It does not conce
thee to know.' 'Nay,' said he, 'I shall
very glad to know what fashion and form th
art of.' Orton answered, 'It does not conce
thee to know; it is sufficient that I come hith
and bring thee sure and certain news.' 'I
G—, Orton,' exclaimed the lord of Corasse,
should love thee better if I had seen the
'Since you have so keen a desire to see m
said Orton, 'the first thing thou shalt see a
encounter to-morrow morning, when you r
from your bed, shall be—I!' 'That is enoug
said the lord of Corasse. 'Go, therefore; I g
thee leave for this night.'

∴ 'When the morrow came, the lord of Cora
began to rise, but the lady was so affright
that she fell sick and could not get up t
morning, and she said to her lord, who did
wish her to keep her bed, 'See if thou se
Orton. By my faith, I neither wish, if
please God, to see nor encounter him.' 'I
I do,' said the lord of Corasse. He leapt
nimble from his bed, and seated himself up
the edge, and waited there to see Orton,
saw nothing. Then he went to the windo

threw them open that he might see more
ly about the room, but he saw nothing so
he could say, 'This is Orton.' The day
ed; the night returned. When the lord
Corasse was in his bed asleep, Orton came,
began speaking in his wonted manner.
, go,' said his master, 'thou art a fibber ;
didst promise to show me to-day who
wert, and thou hast not done so.' 'Nay,'
he, 'but I did.' 'Thou didst not.' 'And
t thou not see anything,' inquired Orton,
en thou didst leap out of bed?' The lord
Corasse thought a little while, and said—
s, while sitting on my bed, and thinking of
, I saw two long straws upon the pave-
t, which turned towards each other and
ed about.' 'And that was I,' cried Orton;
ad assumed that form.' Said the lord of
Corasse: 'It does not content me: I pray
e change thyself into some other form, so
I may see and know thee.' Orton replied:
u will act so that you will lose me, and I
l grow vexed about you, for you require too
h of me.' 'Not so,' said the lord of Corasse ;
en I have once seen you, I shall not want
ee you ever again.' 'Then,' said Orton,
u shall see me to-morrow ; and remember
the first thing you shall see upon leaving

your chamber, will be I.' 'Be it so,' replied the lord of Corasse. 'Begone with you, there now. I give thee leave, for I wish to sleep.'

"Orton departed. When the morrow came, and at the third hour, the lord of Corasse rose up and attired in his usual fashion, he went forth from his chamber into a gallery, and looked upon the castle-court. He cast thence his glances, and the first thing he saw was a large sow he had ever seen; but she was so thin she seemed nothing but skin and bone, and she had great and long teats, pendent and quite attenuated, and a long and inflamed snout. The Sire de Corasse marvelled very much at this sow, and looked at her in anger, and exclaimed to his people, 'Go quickly, bring the dogs hither, and see that this sow be hunted.' The varlets ran nimbly, threw stones at the place where the dogs lay, and set them upon the sow. The sow heaved a loud cry, and looked up at the lord of Corasse, who supported himself upon a pillar buttress in the corner of his chamber. She was seen no more afterwards, for she vanished, nor did any one know what became of her. The Sire de Corasse returned into his chamber pensively, and bethought himself of Orton, and said, 'I think that I have seen my familiar; I repent me

ny dogs upon him, for I doubt if I shall behold him again, since he has several told me that as soon as I should provoke should lose him, and he would return re.' He spoke truly: never again did return to the lord of Corasse, and the died in the following year."

The sixteenth century a belief in familiar was still in full vigour. It was to their at the constant success which attended enterprises of some men was generally ted.

veral Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Ita- relates Brantôme, "said of M. de Sal-, and firmly believed, that he had a r spirit, which prepared for him all his papers and designs, and conducted his for him so ably that no one whom I have Piedmont but has believed and affirmed he devil came for him in haste at his and carried him away. But this is an ity." However, he afterwards adds, "I t say but that he, who was curious in r branch of knowledge, may have found nce as much in the natural as the super- l." Elsewhere the same historian relates analogous rumours relating to Langeay, non, d'Espéron, and others.

We have already alluded to the fact that the Church of Rome admitted the existence of magic, and we have spoken of the severity with which it punished its professors, and indeed they were sheltered by some powerful king or wealthy noble. At many of the General Councils a formal condemnation of the art and the artist was solemnly registered.

The 36th canon of the Œcumenical Council held at Laodicea in 364, forbids magicians and priests to become magicians, enchanters, mathematicians, or astrologers. It orders moreover, that the Church shall expel from its bosom those who employ ligatures or phylacteries; "because," it says, "phylacteries are the prisons of the soul."

The 4th canon of the Council of Auxerre, A.D. 525, prohibited the consultation of soothsayers, augurs, diviners, the *sortes Sanctorum*, and divinations made with wood or bread.

The 60th canon of the Council of Constantinople, in 692, excommunicated for a period of six years, diviners and those who had recourse to them. The prohibition was repeated by the Council of Rome in 721.

The 42nd canon of the Council of Tours, in 813, is to the effect that the priests shall teach to the people the inefficacy

al practices to restore health to men or
ls.

e 37th canon of the Council of Trèves,
38, forbids, under penalty of sus-
n for clerks, and excommunication for
ty, to prophesy by examination of fire or
word.

us cite also the canon of a Council held
at Berkhamstead, a canon which con-
d to a pecuniary fine or corporal punish-
those who offered sacrifices to demons.
worship rendered to demons was a natural
equence of the popular belief in their great
and their constant and minute inter-
e in the affairs of humanity.

(says M. Lalanne) ecclesiastical power
its anathema at magicians and sorcerers,
y easily imagine how blindly and how
ly the civil power raged against those
py wretches. The mediæval writers
eir pages with narratives of trials for
r—trials which almost always terminated
punishment by fire. In the fifteenth
y there broke out almost all over France
the most horrible persecutions recorded
ory, and whose causes as yet have not
ade clear by historians.

453 a doctor in theology, and prior of St.

Germain-en-Laye, named Guillaume de l'A was accused of *Vaulderie** or magic—that a compact with the devil, and condemn perpetual imprisonment. Six years later was burned at Lille a hermit named Alph who preached heterodox doctrines. Such the preludes of a persecution which, in the following year, the Vicar of the Inquisition, nistrator of the Diocess of Arras, secured by the Count d'Etampes, Governor of A directed at first against loose women, but afterwards against citizens, magistrates, knights especially the wealthy. The procedures against the accused had almost always for their some accusation of sorcery. Most of unhappy creatures confessed to have attended the "Witch's Sabbath," and the strange relations wrung from them by torture, with some idea of the ceremonies which, according to the popular traditions, were enacted in lurid festivals presided over by Satan. are some extracts from the judgment pronounced at Arras in 1460 upon five women painter, and a poet, nicknamed "an abbé of sense," and aged about seventy, and so

* One of the first persons accused of this crime hermit named Robinet de Vaultx, whence sorcery was commonly known as *Vaulderie*.

rs, who all perished in the flames kindled
barbarous ignorance and fed by a cruel
stitution.

And the said Inquisitor did say and declare,
those hereinunder named had been guilty of
herie in manner following, that is to say :—
That when they wished to go to the said
herie, they, with an ointment given to
by the devil, anointed a small wooden
and their palms and their hands ; then
put the wand between their legs, and soon
flew wherever they wished to go, over fair
s, woods, and streams ; and the devil
ed them to the place where they should
their assembly, and in this place they
d others, and tables placed, loaded with
s and viands ; and there they found a
on in the form of a goat, a dog, an ape, or
times a man ; and they made their obla-
and homage to the said demon, and adored
and yielded up to him their souls, and all,
least some portion, of their bodies ; then,
burning candles in their hands, they kissed
ear of the goat-devil. . . . [Here
[nquisitor becomes untranslatable]. . . .
this homage done, they trod and trampled
the Cross, and befouled it with their
le, in contempt of Jesus Christ and the

Holy Trinity, then turned their backs to heaven and the firmament in contempt of
 And after they had all eaten and drunk
 they had carnal intercourse all together,
 even the devil assumed the guise of man
 woman, and they had intercourse, the men
 the devil, in the guise of a woman, and
 women with the devil, in the guise of a
 And many other crimes, most filthy
 detestable, they committed, as much ag
 God as against nature, which the said Inqui
 did not dare to name, that innocent ears m
 not be told of such villanous enormities.”

The eagerness displayed by the Inquisito
 his acolytes so excited the public indigna
 that at the close of the year 1460 the ju
 did not dare any longer to condemn to c
 the unfortunate wretches accused, it is said
 for the purpose of depriving them of their
 perty. The popular feeling was expressed
 contemporary satirist in wrathful verses :—

Les traiteurs remplis de grande envie;
 De convoitise et de venin couvers,
 Ont fait regner ne scay quelle vauldrie
 Pour cuider prendre à tort et à travers
 Les biens d'aucuns notables et expers,
 Avec leurs corps, leurs femmes et chevance,
 Et mettre à mort des gens d'etat divers.
 Ah, noble Arras, tu as bien eu l'advance.*

* Cited by Duclerc, liv. iv. c. 16.

As in the case of all great wrongs a reaction set in—a reaction in favour of the right; and thirty years later, when the county of Artois had been re-united to the Crown, the Parliament of Paris declared, on the 20th of May, 1491, these trials “abusive, void, and falsely made,” and condemned the heirs of the Duke of Burgundy and the principal judges to an amend of 6500 Parisian livres, to be distributed as a reparation among the heirs of the victims. “And moreover the said court has forbidden and does forbid the said bishops of Arras, their officers, inquisitors of the faith, and all other judges, ecclesiastic and secular, from hereafter employing in any trial extraordinary punishments of a hellish nature (*de chienne*), inhuman and cruel tortures and questions, such as the iron bonnet, putting fire to the soles of the feet, making the accused swallow oil and vinegar, beating or striking the belly of criminals, or similar and unwonted questions, upon pain of being recalled and punished according to the exigency of the case.”

Until comparatively modern times there have been few political trials of any importance in which some accusation of magical practices has not found a place. Take, for example, the

trial of the Templars, and above all process against Joan of Arc. Such, too, the charge against Guichard, Bishop of Troyes, of being the son of an incubus named *Pa* of being able to evoke the devil whenever willed, &c. The prelate remained a prisoner in the Louvre from 1308 to 1313, when in the latter year, he was declared innocent.

In Portugal the penalty for sorcery was nearly so severe as in France. Thus, a decree returned by the Chamber of Justice at Lisbon on the 14th of August, 1385—the day of the battle of Aljubarrota—interdicted, in the city and its environs, all kinds of sorcery, diabolical conjurations, magic signs, interpretation of dreams, predictions, supernatural remedies for the diseases of men and animals, under penalty of banishment from Lisbon and its territory.

Persecution, by augmenting in the popular mind its belief in the reality of sorcery, had the customary effect of increasing the number of sorcerers. In the sixteenth century, according to Crepet, there were no less than a hundred thousand pretended sorcerers in France. One sorcerer confessed that he had twelve hundred associates. Even at that epoch the most illustrious men were frequently accused of magical practices. Kings were

exempt from the calumny, nor could even—as in the case of Sextus V.—the Holy Father of the Church escape.

“The Spaniards,” says De Thou,* “continued their vengeance against this Pontiff even after his death, and they forgot nothing in their anxiety to blacken his memory by the libels which they flung against him. Sextus, said they, who, by means of the magical art, was for a long time in confederacy with a demon, had made a compact with this enemy of humanity to give himself up to him, on condition he was made Pope, and allowed to reign six years. Sextus *was* raised to the chair of St. Peter, and during the five years he held sway in Rome he distinguished his pontificate by actions surpassing the feeble reach of the human intellect. Finally, at the end of this term, the Pope fell sick, and the devil arriving to keep him to his pact, Sextus inveighed strongly against his bad faith, reproaching him with the fact that the term they had agreed upon was not fulfilled, and that there still remained to him more than a twelvemonth. But the devil reminded him that at the beginning of his pontificate he had condemned a man who, according to the laws, was too young

* “Hist. Universelle,” tome xi.

by a year to suffer death, and that he nevertheless caused him to be executed, saying that he would give him a year out of his life; that this year, added to the other five, completed the six years which had been promised to him, and that in consequence he was very wrong to complain. Sextus, confused and unable to make any answer, remained motionless and turning himself towards the *ruelle* of the bed, prepared for death in the midst of a terrible mental agitation caused by the remorse of his conscience. For the rest," adds the narrator, "Thou, with amiable frankness, "I only mentioned this trait as a rumour spread by the Spaniards, and I should be very sorry to guarantee its truth."

In England the most terrible penalties were decreed against sorcerers by Henry VIII. in 1541; by Elizabeth in 1562; and especially by the witch-hating Stuart, James I. These laws afford some idea of the fanatical malignity of the latter, which made him on one occasion punish the members of a court of justice who, in a crime it was to have pronounced an acquittal in an accusation of sorcery, we quote an extract from his "Demonology."

"P.—To terminate our conference, for which it groweth late, what punishment, in your opinion

o magicians and sorcerers deserve? I see that you look upon them as equally guilty.

“*E. (the King).*—They must be put to death, according to the law of God, the civil and imperial law, and the municipal law of all christian nations.

“*P.*—But what kind of death ought to terminate their lives?

“*E.*—It is, usually that by fire; but the punishment may be indifferently inflicted according to the usage of such or such a country.

“*P.*—Ought any regard to be paid to age, sex, or blood?

“*E.*—None.”

A truly Draconian spirit, and worthy, indeed, of the lewd, drunken, and filthy monarch who loved to be called the British Solomon! No marvel that under his royal countenance and patronage the most atrocious deeds of cruelty were perpetrated; and that in an age infected by his example such a monster as the Witchfinder, Matthew Hopkins, could live and flourish. Butler has immortalized some of this knave's nefarious doings:—

Hath not this present Parliament
A lieger to the Devil sent,
Fully empower'd to treat about
Finding revolted witches out?

And has he not within a year
 Hanged threescore of them in one shire?
 Some only for not being drown'd,
 And some for sitting above ground
 Whole days and nights upon their breeches,
 And feeling pain were hung for witches;
 And some for putting knavish tricks
 Upon green greese, or turkey chicks;
 Or pigs that suddenly deceased
 Of griefs unnatural, as he guessed;
 Who proved himself at length a witch,
 And made a rod for his own breech.

But on this dark chapter in the History of Human Folly we shall dwell more at length hereafter.

The casuists and theological doctors did disdain to busy themselves with sorcery and magic professors, and Pascal has wittily exposed some singular doctrines which they enunciate. Thus in the eighth of his *Lettres Provinciales* there occurs the following passage:—

“The father said to me, ‘Is a man who dabbles in divination obliged to give up his money which he has gained by that practice? Ah, I see that you could never find a way of this difficulty by yourself. Let us try to resolve it with the help of Sanchez. Now he distinguishes between the diviner who has made use of astrology and other natural means, and him who has employed

* Sanchez was a celebrated Spanish casuist, who died in 1610.

diabolical art. And he says, in the one case the necromancer is obliged to give up his money, but not in the other. Can you now explain the matter?' 'There is no difficulty in it now,' said I. 'I perceive clearly,' replied he, 'what you wish to say. You think that the diviner ought to restore it if he has gained by any confederacy with demons. You understand nothing about it: it is just the contrary. Listen to the decision of Sanchez on this point: If the diviner has not taken the trouble and the care to know by the devil's agency what he could not know otherwise (*si nullam operam apposuit, ut arte diaboli id sciret*), he must restore it; but if he *has* taken the trouble, he is not obliged to do so.' 'And how is that, my father?' 'Do you not understand?' he said to me; 'that is because one can rightly divine by the art of the devil, while astrology is a false method.' 'But, my father, if the devil does not truly reply—for that is not more probable than astrology—must not the diviner give up the money on the same principle?' 'Not always,' said he. 'I make a distinction,' says Sanchez, 'on this point. For if the astrologer is ignorant of the diabolical art (*si sit artis diabolicæ ignarus*) he is compelled to restore it; but if he be a skilful sorcerer, and

have done what in him lies, no such confession exists, for in that case his diligence be weighed against the money.' 'That is sound sense, my father,' I replied, 'and a capital mode of engaging sorcerers to render themselves wise and experienced in their art by the hope of gaining wealth legitimately according to your maxims, while faithfully serving the public.'"

In the seventeenth century, and even in the first half of the eighteenth, the sorcerers discovered no ointment to prevent their information. Here are a few facts relative to the latter days of magic in France.

The story of the unfortunate Provencal priest Godfrey, who, having seduced several women, and among others a nun named Madeleine de Mandols, and was accused by the latter—to save herself—of having bewitched her, is well known. Arrested and imprisoned, he was tortured until he confessed that he *was* a magician, and that he had by means of his breathing and other enchantments, corrupted this woman and several others. He was even induced, in his extreme agony, to speak of his presence at the Witches' bath, and to give a long description of it. After these confessions had been cr

extorted from the anguish of failing nature, the Parliament of Aix condemned him, on the 30th of April, 1611, to be burnt alive, as guilty of magic, sorcery, impiety, and abominable lust—the sentence which was carried into execution without delay.

This horrible affair gave rise to an adventure which has been agreeably related by the Abbé Papon.

“The process,” said he, “contained many depositions upon the power of the demons. Several witnesses protested that after being anointed with a magic oil, Godfrey transported himself to the Sabbath, and afterwards returned to his chamber down the shaft of the chimney. One day, when these depositions had been read to the Parliament, and the imagination of the judges excited by a long recital of supernatural events, there was heard in the chimney an extraordinary noise, which suddenly terminated with the apparition of the tall black man! The judges thought it was the devil come to the rescue of his disciple, and fled away swiftly, with the exception of a councillor Thoron, their reporter, who, finding himself entangled in his desk, could not follow them. Terrified by what he saw, with trembling body and staring eyes, and repeatedly

making the sign of the cross, he in his affrighted the pretended demon, who was lost to understand the magistrate's perturbation. Recovering from his embarrassment he made himself known, and proved to be a chimney-sweeper who, after having swept the chimneys of the Messieurs des Comptes, whose chimneys joined those of the Tournelle, had by mistake descended into the chamber of the Parliament.

It was by the agency of an accusation of sorcery that the Jesuits in 1628 obtained banishment from Lorraine of the juriscor Blaise Jaquet, who, in his office of Dean of the University of Pont-à-Mousson, had closed the schools of philosophy, and forced the students to restrict themselves to the study of Latin.

In the month of April, 1634, two sorcerers named Adrian Bouchard and Gargantua were burnt at Paris; and some months later celebrated Urbain Grandier—a handsome and fascinating man, whose morals were not of the strictest, and who was less successful than the monks in concealing his delinquencies—underwent the same punishment at Loudun as “attainted and convicted of the crime of magic, and as having bewitched several lines of nuns and other secular women.” A profitable use has been made of this tragic histo-

Alfred de Vigny in his admirable novel of "Cinq Mars."

In 1640, in the barony of Belvoir, in Franche-Comté, a woman named Cathin, having confessed that she was a sorceress, that she went to the Sabbath without ever stirring from her bed, and other monstrous absurdities, which she rack wrung from a diseased mind and feeble frame, was condemned to the stake.

In 1670, at the time that a question arose of modifying the laws relating to accusations of magic, the Parliament supplicated Louis XIV. to permit the tribunals to continue the institution of these abominable trials. In spite of these remonstrances, the entire code of the ancient and barbarous jurisprudence on this subject was wholly swept away. It is to the credit of France that she was the first nation which manifested the wisdom and the courage to do an act so righteous.

Punishments for the crime of sorcery were very numerous in England and Germany throughout the seventeenth century, and few years passed which were not disgraced by the doom of some unfortunate wretch to the scaffold, the gibbet, or the prison. These horrors were in part renewed during the first half of the eighteenth century. Thus the years 1705,

1712, and 1722 were marked by executions for witchcraft. In 1786 a servant was burnt on the same pretext in Ireland; and the laws against sorcery were not finally repealed until 1821.

These superstitious beliefs, which cost the lives of so many thousands of unfortunate creatures, have been discussed in a crowd of works issued in every European language. The reader may refer to Gabriel Naudé's "Apologie pour les Grands Hommes faussement accusés de Magie;" the "Histoire des Démones de Loudun," by Aubin; the Jesuit Debray's books, "Disquisitionum Magicarum;" H. Boguet's "Discours des Sorciers, tirés de quelques procès, avec une Instruction pour le Juge en fait de Sorcellerie;" Cotton Mather's "Wonders of the Unseen World;" Jules Verne's admirable and comprehensive "Histoire de la Magie;" the "Demonologie" of Jean Bodin the First; "Lettres Philosophiques sur la Magie," by Fiard; and the "Démonologie" of Francis Perreaud.

§ 3. ANOTHER PHASE OF HUMAN FORTITUDE. OATHS, ORDEALS AND JUDICIAL COMBAT.

The belief in supernatural events and in the immediate interference of good and evil spirits

human affairs, naturally led to an appeal to their power in cases of disputed guilt. Unaccustomed to careful and accurate reasoning, to close and impartial examination of evidence, our ancestors sought an easier method of deciding intricate causes and balancing between conflicting testimony. For this purpose they appealed to the direct interposition of Providence,—to the judgment of God,—by submitting the accused to certain ordeals, and pronouncing them guilty or innocent according as they underwent those ordeals in safety or with personal damage. The earliest instance of this judicial proof is recorded in the Bible (Numbers, c. v.), where we are told that if a woman accused of adultery drink the bitter waters, and she be guilty of the crime, her belly will swell, and her thigh increase in bulk. In these curious trials it was supposed that Heaven would intervene in favour of the innocent by rendering them impregnable to fire or water, to loss of life or limb; and it was believed that the consciousness of innocence would give additional strength and courage to those who were wrongfully accused. “Thrice he armed who hath his quarrel just.” But as the conduct of these judicial trials was necessarily vested in the priesthood, it is obvious that

a channel was opened for unfair dealing and lusion on the part of the wealthy or the power

Ordeals were in vogue among the Gre
At Palin, a town in Sicily, there flowed
fountain in whose waters the accused threw
tablet inscribed with his declaration of in
cence. If the tablet floated he was acquitted
if it sank, he was flung into the flames wh
immediately sprang from the fountain.
another place, a woman accused of adul
exculpated herself by an oath written u
a tablet, which was suspended to her n
She then advanced into the water until
reached mid-thigh; if she was innocent,
water remained peaceful; if not, it mounted
her neck, and so covered the tablet.

Among the Gauls, according to an epig
in the Greek anthology, it was the Rhine
the exultant and abounding river — wh
proved the sanctity of the conjugal b
Hardly had the new-born leapt from
maternal womb, and heaved its first cry,
the father bore him away; he laid him u
his buckler, he hastened to expose him to
caprices of the waves; for he durst not
the heart of a father beat in his bosom u
the stream, the judge and avenger of marria
had pronounced the fatal sentence. Th

en, to the mother's pains of maternity succeeded *other* pains: she knew the true father, and nevertheless she trembled; in her mortal anguish, she waited for what the uncertain waters should decide!

In the Middle Ages the ordeal by cold water, which appears to have been wholly reserved for the lower orders, consisted in casting into a pond of cold water the individual who was accused of a crime or a falsehood. They tied, before the trial, the right hand to the left foot, and the left hand to the right foot. If he floated, he was declared guilty; if he sunk, his innocence was declared unimpeachable. Either way, he ran the risk of a fatal termination to the ordeal.

According to some authorities, he was plunged into the water as many times as were equal to the number of misdemeanours of which he was accused.

A regulation of the monastery of Ouche, in Normandy, provided that the basin which was to be employed in the ordeal should be twelve feet deep, twenty feet in diameter, and filled up to the very brim. A third part of this basin, or tank, was covered with planks and beams for the support of the priest, the judges who assisted him, the man who was to undergo

the test, and two or three guards and attendants.

A manuscript of the abbey of Saint Remy of Rheims, — a manuscript usually supposed to date from the ninth century, — pretends that it was Pope Eugenius II. (who died in 817), who instituted the ordeal of the water, in order that persons might not swear upon the holy relics, or place their hands upon the holy altar. The following ceremonies were observed at the ordeal:—A mass was chanted at which the accused assisted and communicated; but the priest, before giving them communion, conjured them, in the name of the Holy Trinity, not to receive the body of Jesus Christ if they were guilty. Then he gave them the sacrament, saying—“May this body and blood of Jesus Christ serve you in this day of trial!” The mass finished, he blessed the water, bore it to the place where the ordeal was to be made, and made them drink of it; then, after exorcising the water into which they were to be plunged, he plunged himself in himself, praying Jesus Christ to prevent from receiving them if they were guilty. The priest and the accused were both required to undertake these ceremonies fasting.

An article of the Council held at Worms

), under Louis the Débonnair, vainly prohibited recourse to the ordeal of cold water.

heed was given to the Emperor's proposition, and Hincmar, a celebrated priest of the same age, consulted on this subject by Addegair, Bishop of Meaux, sought to explain, on mystical reasons, this prejudice so favourable to the accused, that the water would not receive a guilty person into its bosom. He named, among other instances, the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and the Deluge. "Christianity," said he, "has repeated and sanctioned, in all antiquity, the judgment by water, a judgment whose efficacy was first shown in the ark of Noah, when the innocent were saved and the guilty punished."

Guibert de Nogent relates that two brothers named Everard and Clement, having been accused of heresy, were summoned before Hincmar, Bishop of Soissons, who submitted them to an interrogatory. As they could not be satisfied in their answers, "I said to the prelate," says Guibert, "since the witnesses do not have heard these people profess their religious dogmas are absent, submit them to the ordeal of water. The prelate then celebrated mass, and the two brothers received from his hand the holy communion, which he

gave them, pronouncing the words—
 the body and blood of Our Lord serve y
 this day of trial!' This done, the d
 bishop, and the Archdeacon Peter — a m
 the purest piety, and who had rejected a
 false pretences by which they had soug
 escape the judgment — repaired to the
 where the water was prepared. The b
 shedding tears, intoned the litanies, and sol
 pronounced the exorcism. The two br
 then made oath that they had neve
 lieved nor taught anything contrary t
 holy law. However, no sooner had Cl
 been flung into the water, than he float
 a light twig. At this spectacle, the c
 resounded with cries of joy; for this affa
 in effect drawn such a concourse of indiv
 of both sexes, that not one of the assi
 had ever seen so numerous a throng.
 other acknowledged his error; but, as he r
 express any penitence, he was thrown
 prison with the brother whom the orde
 proved guilty. Some time afterwards
 people of the faithful fearing that the
 would show too much lenity, ran to the p
 raised a scaffold outside the town, and con
 the condemned to the flames."

The ordeal by cold water was emplo

even as late as the opening years of the sixteenth century, although it had been abolished by a decree of the Parliament of England dated the 1st of December, 1601. But this legislative edict was not more effectual than the prosecutions of sorcery.

We find, in Millin a brief notice of a fanatic trial adopted of old in a small town of Normandy.

There was formerly an ordeal for lepers in the fountain basin of Tourne. We read in an ancient Act that, on the 3rd of June, 1422, a man was conducted to this fountain a man whom the townsmen thought to be a leper; they bled him; they received the blood in a vessel which they placed in a sack, and the accused was plunged into the fountain. Two persons of the town were named to make the verification: they declared that nothing had been corrupted in this immersion, and the judge pronounced that the accused person was not a leper."

The ordeal by hot water consisted in plunging the hand into a tubful of boiling water, and to take from it a consecrated ring. If the hand bore no trace of burning, the accused was declared innocent.

It was sworn in the name of God, and by order of

the archbishop and all our bishops," says an ancient ritual cited by M. Martène, ordain, with reference to the ordeal, that no person enter the church until the fire for judgment shall have been prepared, except the priest and he who prepares it. It is to measure nine feet across—the foot of the accused to be the standard—from the middle of the bar. If the judgment be by water, it must be heated even to boiling, and the vessel should be of iron, copper, lead, or clay. When the ordeal shall be ready, the two parties shall enter one on each side, and assure themselves of the heat of the water, and stand therein on opposite sides; and they must fast, and may not have lain with their wives that night. And no one must light the fire until the benediction has commenced. The priest must leave the iron grating upon the water, and even up to the last collect; and the accused shall drink the consecrated water, and afterwards besprinkle the hand which is about to be submitted to the ordeal."

"Two priests," says Gregory of Tours, "one an Arian, the other a Catholic," discussed respecting their different creeds. The latter finally said to the former, "Of what good are these prolonged discussions? let us

the truth of our words by our deeds. Let us heat a vessel of brass, and cast into it a ring ; one of the two who shall draw it out of the boiling water shall be considered to have won, and his adversary shall be converted to his faith, thus shown to be the true one. The trial was deferred until the morrow. The night brought counsel : the Catholic rose with the dawn, rubbed his arm with oil, and covered it with an ointment. About the third hour they met at the appointed place ; the crowd gathers ; the fire is kindled ; a brazen vessel is placed upon a tripod, and a ring flung into the ebullient water. The deacon now invites the heretic to snatch the ring from the burning fluid. He refuses ! ‘ *You made the proposal,*’ he says, ‘ and it is for you to carry it out.’ The deacon, trembling, then uncovers his arm, but his opponent discovering the precautions he has taken, cries out, ‘ This is a juggle, and the ordeal cannot be done.’ Now by chance (?) arrives on the spot a priest of Ravenna named Jacinto, who, when informed of the cause of the uproar, uncovers his arm without hesitation, and plunges it into the vessel. The ring was small and light, and the water rolled it to and fro as the wind carries a straw. For a long time, and with numerous efforts, he searched for it, and found

it at length when an hour had expired. Meanwhile the heat, of the furnace was redoubled, but Jacinto felt it not on his flesh, and declared on the contrary, that the vase was cold at the bottom, and the surface only of a temporary warmth. Perceiving this, the heretic, in confusion, boldly thrust his hand into the vase, saying, 'My faith inspires me to do as manna. But his entire flesh was burned even to the joints of the bones.'

The ordeal by fire appears to boast of no great antiquity as that by cold water. In the "Antigone" of Sophocles, the messenger who apprises Cleon of the recovery of Polyneices' body, exclaims, "We were all prepared to handle the burning iron, to traverse the flames, to attest before the gods that we were neither actors nor accomplices in the crime which had been committed."

The ordeal of the hot iron was executed in different manners. It consisted either in holding in the hand, for a longer or shorter time, a red-hot iron; in thrusting the hand into a red-hot gauntlet; or walking, with naked feet, upon a certain number of iron bars or upon a dozen ploughshares red with fire.

"He who has killed a priest," says the 20th canon of the Council of Mayence

329, "if he deny the fact, and be a slave, shall prove his innocence by walking upon a frozen ploughshares red with fire."

"In his youth," says Ordericus Vitalis, "Richard, Duke of Normandy, having fallen in love with the beautiful concubine of an old priest, had two sons by her, Richard and William. Their mother having brought them up with care, presented them to the duke; and she gave him unequivocal proofs of the intimacy in which she had formerly lived with him. As he acknowledged a part of her allegations, but nevertheless hesitated to recognise her children, the mother publicly carried a red-hot bar of iron, and not receiving the slightest burn, demonstrated by this means that Richard was really their father."

The same preparatory ceremonies were performed in this instance as in the ordeals of water. Whosoever designed to submit himself to it, repaired, three days beforehand, to his priest, from whom he received the ordinary benediction. For these three days he abstained from sensual pleasures; drank only water; eat nothing but bread, salt, or vegetables; and assisted daily at mass, and made his offerings. On the day of the ordeal he received the sacrament, and made oath that he was innocent

of the crime of which he was accused. The accuser, as well as the accused, was obliged to fast three days, and to attest, by his oath, the truth of his accusation. Often, the two parties brought a number of witnesses on each side, who also took their solemn oaths.

In some cases the accused was permitted to find a substitute who underwent the trial or ordeal in his place.

Matthew Paris relates that Remy, Bishop of Dorchester, having been accused of treachery towards William the Conqueror, one of his servants offered to undergo the ordeal of the red-hot iron, and thus saved his master.

Louis, son of Louis the German, was accused against his uncle, the Emperor Charles the Bold, in 876, "submitted in the presence of those who were with him, ten men to the ordeal of boiling water, ten to that of the red-hot iron, and ten to that of cold water, supplicating God to declare, by his judgment, if Louis had rightfully any claim to a larger share of the kingdom left by his father than that which had fallen to him out of the partition previously made with his brother Charles. They experienced no ill, and Louis then passed the Rhine at Andernach with his army."

The ordeal by fire consisted in pass-

ough a pile of blazing wood. Although of
at antiquity it was not so commonly
mployed as that by water; but both had
oubtedly their origin in the purifying
roperties possessed by the two elements.
e of the earliest instances of a recourse to it
European history, is that of Pierre Barthe-
y, who, during the siege of Antioch by the
acens in 1097, discovered to the Crusaders,
accordance with a revelation he pretended to
e received from heaven, the place of conceal-
at of the spear that pierced the sacred body
the Saviour. Some months later, there
ke out an eager discussion on the subject of
imposition; and Pierre, to silence his
agonists, offered to prove the truth of his
elation by undergoing the ordeal of fire.
s offer was accepted with equal alacrity by
se who hoped to confute, and those who
e interested in supporting him.

On the appointed day, and at an early hour,
s the chronicler, who was himself an actor
the ceremony,* the necessary preparations
e commenced; they were completed before
n. The Crusading princes and their fol-
ers assembled to the number of forty thou-

Raimond d'Agiles. See "Histoire des Croisades," by
cher de Chartres.

sand; the priests were present, clothed in rich sacerdotal vestments, and with their heads bare and their feet naked. A pile of dry, crackling olive-branches, some fourteen feet in length and four in height, was separated into two divisions by a path of more than twelve inches wide—the sacrificial path of the daring adventurer who was thus to invoke a manifest interposition of Providence before the eyes of men. The pile was blessed by the bishops of the Crusaders' army, and Pierre Barthelémy passed quickly and safely through its glowing midst. But the other priests had not adopted his cause nor sanctioned his pretensions, and the unhappy warrior appeared, on escaping from the flames, with his face charred and blackened flesh, a witness to his mendacity and guilt. He had also received a severe internal injury, and twelve days afterwards expired in great agony, a victim to the ordeal by fire.

The last time that superstition resorted to this singular *experimentum crucis* was towards the end of the sixteenth century, and on a memorable occasion in the annals of martyrdom. The great Dominican monk and reformer, Girolamo Savonarola, had enunciated the following theses:—1st. The Church of Rome has need of reformation. . . . 2nd.

shall be chastised. . . . 3rd. She shall be renewed. . . . 4th. Florence also shall be renewed, after having been chastised. . . . 5th. The unfaithful shall be converted. . . . 6th. All these events shall soon occur. . . . 7th. The excommunication declared against Fra Girolamo is null and void, inasmuch as he has only proclaimed the truth, and declared the will of God.

He announced that he was prepared to support these propositions; and a Minor friar, a partisan of the Pope, attacked them in his sermons, and offered to prove their utter heresy. Savonarola's disciples stoutly maintained their truth; the friar's comrades eagerly declaimed against them. The Dominicans then declared themselves ready to demonstrate the truth before a judge whom all would recognise as impartial: that judge was fire. The Franciscans having accepted the challenge, Dominique de Pescia signed a paper by which he engaged to undergo the fiery ordeal in company with the friar-minor who had preached against the theses. The latter protested that he was willing to go to the stake with Savonarola, but that another Franciscan must meet Dominique de Pescia. There was no difficulty in finding a zealot, but still the cry arose that Savonarola

himself should enter the fire, and many avowed their belief that he would perish therein. A large number of Dominicans engaged themselves in writing to submit to the fiery trial, and quite as many Franciscans were eager to meet their opponents on so perilous a field of battle. On the 1st of April, 1498, almost all the hearers of Savonarola interrupted his eloquent discourse with shouts of "Behold me! behold me! I will enter the fire, O Lord, for Thy glory, and for the honour of Thy holy name!"* It was thought strange that Savonarola had not accepted the challenge so distinctly offered by the Franciscan friar, but he pleaded in defence that it was unworthy of him to enter the fire with a single monk, but that if his adversaries, and notably those who resided at Rome, would expose themselves to the ordeal, he would willingly accompany them, well assured he should escape the flames like the three Hebrews who were flung into the Babylonian furnace.

The magistrates of Florence having carefully examined the various cartels of defiance, and the movements which they excited in the town, ordained that the great trial should take place on Saturday, the 7th of April, 1498. The

* Bayle's Dictionary, art. *Savonarola*.

friar-minor, accompanied only by one of his confrères, repaired to the place of execution before the appointed hour, but Dominique de Pescia allowed it to pass by, and shortly afterwards arrived, with a grand procession, with the crucifix and the host, with Savonarola and his companions, and a great multitude of people.

The friar-minor declared to the magistrates that he did not doubt he should be burnt, and besought them not to decide in favour of Savonarola, unless the Dominican passed out from the fire wholly uninjured. This they promised him; and because there were many people who suspected that one or other of the monks, or perhaps both, had concealed some charm under their robes, they ordered them to take off their garb and assume another which was specially provided for them. The friar-minor consented, and even offered to enter the flames all naked. The Dominican, on the other hand, put forward various pretexts to avoid a change of dress, and he was at length allowed to retain his raiment, at the instance of the Franciscan himself, who pointed out that, as it was of cloth, it would certainly be burned with him who wore it. He then protested that he would not enter the fire without his

crucifix. This was placed in his hands, the friar representing that as it was fashioned of wood, instead of being a preservative against fire it would perish with the Dominican. The latter then demanded, as a further indulgence, that he should be permitted to enter the flames with the holy sacrament, and made a declaration that without it he would not undergo the fiery ordeal. The magistrates refused this last request, and thereupon the assembly broke up, returning to their homes, and so farcical was the termination of an affair which had excited the attention of all Florence. But nevertheless the farce had its tragical consequences. The people murmured, their indignation was inflamed by the artful inventions of the Franciscan monks; they attacked the Dominican monastery on the 9th of April, and dragged Savonarola from its shelter, and the great Italian reformer was tried, condemned, and burnt as a heretic, on the 23rd of May in the same year.

But the ordeal of fire was applied to books as well as their authors. If the practice now prevailed, how many would survive so severe a criticism? . . . A dispute having arisen in Spain on the relative excellence of the Roman and the Mozaratan offices, it was determined,

after protracted debates—which, like the galleries in the house described by Gray, “led to nothing”—to cast both liturgies in the flames, and adopt that which best withstood the ordeal. The Roman liturgy came forth from the trial victorious.

In 1284 an experiment of this kind was essayed at Constantinople. Arsenes, the patriarch of the city, having been driven from his chair, a schism resulted which excited prolonged disturbances. “To terminate them,” says Pachymère,* “it was agreed that the Arsenists and their antagonists should write the subjects of their complaints and their accusations one against the other, that a great fire should be kindled and the two writings flung into it; and in case one of these two writings remained untouched, it should be regarded as a distinct indication of the side which God favoured. If the two writings were consumed, all should renounce their quarrels. The Emperor Andronicus II. liberally supplied the cost of the furnace, and far from grudging the expense would willingly have exhausted the Imperial treasury to reconcile the two factions. On Holy Saturday, the day appointed for the trial, the Arsenists and their adversaries made

* Pachymère, cited by Lalanne.

long and fervent prayers for the successful issue of their enterprise, and, in the presence of the Emperor and his court, delivered the two writings into the hands of two venerable personages, who flung them into the fire. The flames, with their usual activity, consumed them like straw, and an hour afterwards there remained nothing but a few cinders."

In the preceding year the Arsenists had proposed to the same Emperor an experiment which—so they pretended—had formerly been essayed with success at Chalcedony, in the tomb of Saint Euphemia. They asked him to entrust them with the body of a saint, at whose feet they would depose as writing affirming that in testimony to the goodness of their cause, this writing would spontaneously place itself in the hands of the Holy One. "Andronicus," says Pachymère, "accorded to them at first the body of St. John of Damascus; and to prevent all jugglery, he caused a large chest to be prepared wherein might be enclosed the body and the shrine which contained it, and guarded it with so many locks and seals that no one—not even the subtle Dædalus—could employ any ingenious artifice." However, in spite of these precautions, the Emperor not unjustly suspected the priests

of the ability to work a miracle, and finally declined to grant them the desired opportunity.

The ordeal of the Cross was made in the following manner:—

The two antagonists placed themselves in front of a crucifix, with their arms extended, while they recited the mass, the Gospel, or some prayers. The first who trembled, or lowered his arms, was declared vanquished.

“If a woman complains that her husband has never consummated their marriage,” says the 17th canon of the Council of Veberie, in 753, “let them go to the Cross, and if it be found that the woman has spoken the truth, let them be separated, and let her do whatsoever she will.” We find the following prescription in article 8th of the charter relative to the partition of the empire of Charlemagne. “If there should be raised, on the subject of the limits of kingdoms, any difficulties which cannot be solved by the evidence of men, resort must be had to the judgment of the Cross, and not to any species of combat, in order to ascertain the truth and the will of God.”

This ordeal, which is frequently mentioned in the early French chroniclers, was abolished by Louis the Débonnair in 816, at the Council

of Aix-la-Chapelle, as "compromising the reverence due to the Passion of Christ." We are not acquainted with any allusion to it in the writings of the English historians.

The mass, the Eucharist, and the fast have often served as ordeals. "At the feast of Saint Julian the martyr," says Gregory of Tours, "when the citizens were gathered around the bishop, Eulalius prostrated himself at his feet, complaining that he had been excluded from the communion without being heard. The prelate then permitted him to assist at the mass with the multitude; but when he came to the communion, and Eulalius approached the altar, the bishop said to him—'The popular rumour accuses thee of parricide, but I know not whether thou hast or hast not committed this crime; I remit, therefore, thy judgment to God and the holy martyr Julian. If then thou art innocent, as thou affirmest, approach, take a portion of the Eucharist, and put it in thy mouth; God will behold thy conscience.' The latter took the Eucharist, and went away after having communicated."

"If any one accuse a bishop or a priest of crime"—so runs the 10th canon of the Council of Worms (A.D. 868)—"the bishop or priest shall purge himself by saying as many masses

as there shall be crimes imputed to him; and, if he do not so, he shall be forbidden to enter his church for a period of five years, according to the ancient canons."

"If a theft be committed in a monastery," says the 15th canon of the same Council, "and no one knows the author, the abbé or another priest shall say mass, at which every brother shall communicate, so as to reveal by this means those who are innocent."

"If any one be accused of theft," says the law of the monastery of Ouche, "and he deny the fact, he shall repair on Wednesday evening to the church, in a woollen garb and with naked feet, and there, under a legal watch, shall remain until the following Saturday. He shall fast for three days, only nourishing himself with unleavened bread, made of pure barley, water, salt, and cresses. The measure of barley, for each day, shall be as much as one can take up with hands joined together; of cresses there shall be a handful, and enough salt to flavour these viands."

Mention is made of a very singular ordeal, in Expilly's "Dictionnaire Géographique des Gaules," as having been employed at the village of Mandeuire, near Montbéliard. When a theft had been committed, all the inhabitants

were subjected to an examination on the following Sunday, after vespers, in the place of judgment. There, one of the *maires* ordered the thief to restore the stolen property, and to separate himself, during six months, from the company of honest people. If the guilty person did not confess himself, they then proceeded to the *décision du batón*. The two mayors made all the inhabitants pass under a stick which they held at each extremity. There was no instance of a criminal daring to undergo this experiment; he remained alone, and thus found himself discovered. If he had had the audacity to pass under the stick, and had afterwards been discovered as the thief, all communication with him would for ever have been broken off.

“The law which instituted the *judicial combat*,” says Montesquieu,* “was the natural consequence, and the remedy, of the law which established the negative proofs. When one person made a demand, and saw that he was about to be unjustly evaded by an oath, what remained for a warrior who perceived himself thus on the point of being defeated?”

“What, but to demand reparation for the wrong that had been done him, and to offer i

* Montesquieu, “De l’Esprit des Lois,” l. xxii. c. 24.

even to the perjurer? The Salic law, which did not sanction the use of negative proofs, had no need of the proof by combat, and did not receive it; but the laws of the Ripuarii, and those of other barbarous peoples which admitted negative proofs, were constrained to establish the proof by combat."

It is in the pages of Gregory of Tours that we find the most ancient relation of a judicial combat.

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Childbert, which was the twenty-ninth of the reign of Gontrun (A.D. 159), the latter, when hunting in the forests of the Vosges, found there the remains of a wild bull which had been killed. The forest-keeper, severely interrogated to know who had dared to kill a wild bull in the royal forest, named Chundon, the king's chamberlain. Thereupon the king ordered him to be seized, bound, and conducted to Chalons. The accuser and the accused, having been confronted in the royal presence, and Chundon maintaining his innocence, the king ordered the trial by combat. The chamberlain presented his nephew to fight as his representative. The champions repaired to the place of combat, and the young man, having levelled his lance against the forest-

keeper, pierced him in the foot. The latter immediately fell forward, and as the young man, drawing the knife which was suspended from his girdle, attempted to cut his throat, the other stabbed him in the belly with his sword, and both fell dead. On seeing this, Chundon took to flight, and endeavoured to gain the church of Saint Marcel; but, in obedience to the orders of the king, he was captured, fastened to a stake, and stoned to death. Afterwards the king repented sorely of having so rashly yielded to his choler, and of having slain, with so much precipitation, for a trifling fault, a man who was faithful and necessary to him."

Here is another illustration:—*

"The Queen Gondeberge (wife of Charoald, king of the Lombards, about 626), a beautiful woman, benevolent to all the world, inspired with piety and religion, generous in almsgiving, was loved by all on account of her goodness. A man of the nation of the Lombards, named Adalulfus, who repaired to the palace assiduously to pay his homage to the king, finding himself on one occasion in her presence, the Queen, who esteemed him as she did the others, observed that he was of a fine figure. Adalulfus overhearing it, whispered to the

* *Frédégaire*, Collection Guizot, t. ii. p. 99.

Queen, 'You have deigned to praise my figure; permit me to share your bed.' The Queen repulsing him with contempt, scratched him in the face. Adalulfus, perceiving that he had put his life in jeopardy, betook himself in all haste to King Charoald, asked to speak to him in secret, and said, 'My mistress, the Queen Gondeberge has conferred for three days with Duke Jason (Duke of Tuscany, then in revolt against Charoald): she wishes to poison thee, marry Jason, and raise him to the throne.' King Charoald, believing his falsehoods, dismissed the Queen into banishment at Lamello, where she was immured in a tower.

"Clotaire having sent ambassadors to demand of King Charoald wherefore he humiliated the Queen Gondeberge, mother of the Franks, and why he detained her in exile, Charoald replied by repeating the scandals of Adalulfus. Then one of the ambassadors, named Ansoald, said of his own accord to Charoald: 'Thou mayst arrange this affair without blame: order the man who related to thee these rumours to don his armour, and let another man, in the Queen's name, confront him, so that they may fight in single combat; we shall see, by the judgment of God, whether the Queen Gondeberge is guilty or innocent.'

This advice proving satisfactory to Charoald and his chief nobles, he bade Adalulfus arm himself for the combat, and a cousin of Gondeberge, named Pitton, engaged Adalulfus who was killed. Thus, after three years' exile Gondeberge was replaced upon the throne."

Of greater interest is another mediæval story, as an illustration of the general belief that God made known His judgment by the issue of the *champ clos*. We extract it from the quaint pages of Ermold le Noir:—*

"The Franks," he says, "have a custom which dates from the highest antiquity and will be, so long as it shall exist, the honour and the glory of the nation. If any person, yielding to force, bribes, or cunning, refuse to preserve towards the king an eternal fidelity, or by a criminal artifice attempt against him, his family, or his crown, some traitorous enterprise; and if one of his equals present and bear himself as his accuser, both owe it to their honour to combat, sword in hand, in presence of the kings of the Franks and all who compose the council of the nation: so great is the horror the Franks entertain of such a crime. A noble named Béro, famous

* Collection Guizot, "Faits et Gestes de Louis le Pieux" tome iv.

for his wealth and his power, held from the munificence of the Emperor Charles the county of Barcelona, and for a long time exercised therein the rights attached to his title. Another noble, named Saniton, ravaged his lands. Both were Goths by descent. The latter repairs to the king's presence, and, in the hearing of the people and the assembled lords, brings an accusation against his rival. Béro denies the whole. Then steps each of them forward, prostrates himself at the illustrious feet of the monarch, and demands that he puts into their grasp the arms of combat.

“Béro is the first to cry, ‘Cæsar, I pray thee, in the name of religion, that it may be permitted me to repel this accusation; and that it may also be permitted me, in conformance with the customs of our nation, to fight upon horseback, and make use of my proper weapons.’ This prayer Saniton repeats with eagerness. ‘It is to the Franks,’ replies Cæsar, ‘belongs the right of deciding; it is their privilege; it must even be so, and we ordain it.’ The Franks having delivered their opinion in the forms consecrated by their ancient customs, the two champions prepare their arms, burning with a desire to leap into the arena of battle. Cæsar, moved by his

love of God, addresses them meanwhile in few words, but full of goodness: 'Whoever of you it may be, if he will voluntarily confess himself guilty of the crime imputed to him, I, in my infinite indulgence, will pardon it; believe me, it is far more profitable for you to yield to my counsels than to resort to the cruel extremities of a horrible combat.' But the two enemies renew their demand with earnestness, and cry, 'It is the combat only can decide; let all be disposed for the combat.' The wise Emperor, yielding at length to their desires, permits them to combat according to the manner of the Goths.

"Near the imperial palace named the Palace of Aix, is a remarkable spot whose renown extends far and wide. Surrounded by walls of marble, defended by terraces of turf and planted with trees, it is covered with a herbage always thick, fresh, and verdurous. Thither repair Béro and Saniton, trembling with rage. These tall and stalwart warriors are mounted upon superb chargers; they have their bucklers flung back upon their shoulders, and gauntlets protect their hands. They await the signal which the king will give from the summit of his palace: conformably to his orders, they are followed by a troop of the soldiers of the royal

bodyguard, armed with bucklers, and who, if one of the champions shall be stricken by his adversary's sword, must, according to a custom dictated by humanity, snatch him from the hands of his conqueror, and put him to instant death. In the arena stands Gundold, who, according to his custom on these occasions, is followed by a coffin. The signal at length is given from the throne. A combat of an unusual kind for the Franks breaks out between the two rivals: at first they hurl their javelins, then they make use of their swords, and engage in a furious strife. Already Béro has pierced his adversary's charger: the incensed animal rears, and flies at a gallop across the vast meadow. Saniton pretends that he runs away with him, finally lets go the reins, and with his sword strikes his adversary, who then acknowledges himself guilty. Immediately the valiant youth run forward, and faithful to Cæsar's orders, carries off to the death the unhappy Béro, exhausted with fatigue. Gundold is astonished, and returns with his coffin empty of the burthen it ought to bear. Cæsar meanwhile grants life to the vanquished, permits him to retire in health and safety, and even carries his clemency so far as to consent that he may enjoy the revenues of his estates."

The church, while favouring ordeals in which the skill and knowledge of the priesthood could be employed to determine the issue, opposed itself to judicial combats, wherein its hostility to bloodshedding would not permit it to interfere. A French authority quotes the following passage from the decrees of an Irish Council held about 451 or 456:—

“If a clerk has become security for a sum of money for a pagan, and the latter, having wherewithal to pay, hides his goods that he may not discharge his debt, the clerk shall pay the sum for which he became responsible; if, to acquit himself of it, he engage in a duel with the pagan, he shall be excluded from the church.”

“He who shall have killed or wounded his adversary in a duel,” says the 12th canon of the Council of Valence, A.D. 855, “shall undergo the punishment of homicide, and death deprived of prayers and ecclesiastical burial. We will beseech the Emperor to confirm this decree, and to abolish by his laws so great an evil.”

A man named Anselm, having stolen the chalices of a church and sold them to a merchant of Soissons who swore not to betray him, the latter, fearing to incur excommunication, denounced the thief. “Anselm,”

says Guibert de Nogent, "denied the fact, furnished his sureties, and demanded the combat *à coups de poing* (with fists) against his accuser, who accepted it. It was Sunday; the clerks, in haste to repair to their devotional offices, left them to come to blows; the accuser fell vanquished. From this fact there evidently results one of two things; either that he who, in falsifying his oath, betrayed the thief, did not commit a right action, or, which is more probable, that he was the victim of an unjust law. And in effect, it is certain that no canon has ever sanctioned this law."

In the twelfth century a salutary reaction relative to ordeals and judicial combats took place in the popular mind. In 1199 the 5th canon of the Council of Dalmatia pronounced the punishment of excommunication against any person who should bring a clerk before the secular tribunals, to be condemned by them to the ordeal of hot iron, or water, or to undergo any other judgment. Still later, in 1205, the 18th canon of the Council General of Latran, and the 9th canon of the Council of Buda, in 1279, forbade clerks to give the benediction in the ordeals of the hot iron, and of the hot or cold water.

In 1145 Louis VI. abolished the usage

which authorized the provost of Bruges to summon to the single combat whomsoever refused obedience to his mandates; and he forbade, in 1167, the duel to be resorted to in legal processes, when the articles in dispute did not exceed the value of five sous.

When Philip Augustus made himself master of Normandy in 1204, he refrained from interfering with most of the customs of his new subjects. But in those which had an injurious effect upon the common weal he exercised his sovereign authority; and thus he ordained that in every legal process which led to the trial by battle, the law of retaliation should be equally administered, in such sort that the appellant, if he chanced to be conquered, was submitted, as well as the defendant, to the same penalty—either mutilation or loss of life. Until this time it had been the usage with the Normans that the appellant, if he were vanquished in a judicial combat, paid a crown and sixty sous, and thus remained unpunished—except by losing his cause; while the defendant, if *he* were conquered, lost all his property, and perished moreover by a shameful death. On this point Philip Augustus decreed that the laws of the Normans should be assimilated with those of the French.

But about this date the custom of appealing to the sword for the decision of legal difficulties was falling into decay, except in some benighted localities. It lingered, however, for a few years longer, and in England was illustrated by a judicial combat which largely affected the course of English history—the fight between Bolingbroke and the Duke of Norfolk, presented with such graphic vigour by the dramatic genius of Shakspeare. Our readers are probably familiar with the whole scene, but we may quote an illustrative passage:—

Marshal.—Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby,
Receive thy lance, and God defend thy right!

Bolingbroke (rising).—Strong as a tower in hope, I
cry Amen.

Marshal (to an officer).—Go, bear this lance to Thomas
Duke of Norfolk.

1st Herald.—Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby,
Stands here for God, his sovereign, and himself,
On pain to be found false and recreant,
To prove the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray,
A traitor to his God, his king, and him,
And dares him to set forward in the fight.

2nd Herald.—Here standeth Thomas Mowbray, Duke
of Norfolk,

On pain to be found false and recreant,
Both to defend himself and to approve
Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby,
To God, his sovereign, and to him disloyal;
Courageously, and with a free desire,
Attending but the signal to begin.

Marshal.—Sound, trumpets, and set forward, combatants.

[*A charge sounded.*

Stay, the king hath thrown his warder down.

King Richard.—Let them lay by their helmets and their spears,

And both return back to their chairs again ;

Withdraw with us ; and let the trumpets sound,

While we return these dukes what we decree.

The appeal to judicial combat was only abolished in England as late as 1819, although it had been practically obsolete for three hundred years. But in 1817 a man named Thornton was accused of having assassinated a young girl, tried, and acquitted. The victim's brother, returning soon afterwards from a long voyage, took proceedings for a new trial. The accused then offered to exculpate himself by single combat, as the statute authorized, and the judges were constrained to recognise this mode of defence. The combat was on the point of taking place when the appellant reflecting that if he was conquered he would be put to death, and that his defeat was probable, owing to the strength and vigour of his opponent, declared that he abandoned his appeal. It was in consequence of this singular transaction that Parliament, in 1819, abolished this rag of the feudal law.

A curious example of a judicial combat took place in France in 1306, and is described by Froissart with his usual picturesque simplicity.

The facts were briefly these:—During the absence of a gentle knight, named Jean de Carrouget, from his beautiful wife, that lady met with a misfortune which she thought proper to attribute to the violence of a squire, one Jacques le Gris. The squire professed his indignation at a charge which he declared to be totally false, but Carrouget would not believe him—summoned him before the king—and obtained permission to decide the dispute by single combat. So the two adversaries met with the usual forms, and though Carrouget was suffering from fever, he fought with such skill and earnestness that the squire was stricken to the ground. Then the knight with drawn sword stood over him, and demanded if he would speak the truth. And he answered that in the name of God, and upon the peril of his soul's damnation, he had never committed the crime with which he was charged. Carrouget, however, believing in his wife's fidelity, slew him where he lay. But his innocence was afterwards demonstrated by the confession of the man who was really guilty, and who, when dying, revealed the pitiful truth.

The judicial combat was sometimes required to decide in cases of disputed ownership. "If two neighbours," say the Capitularies of

Dagobert, "quarrel respecting the boundaries of their possessions, let a piece of the turf of the disputed land be dug up by the judge, and brought by him into the court; the two adversaries shall touch it with the points of their swords, calling on God as a witness of their claims;—after this, let them *combat*, and let the issue decide their rights."

The elder D'Israeli relates a solemn circumstance which, in Germany, was practised in these appeals to the arbitrament of the sword. A bier was placed in the middle of the lists; accuser and accused stood by its side—one at the head and the other at the foot, and so remained for some time in profound silence before the combat was begun.

The ordeal of the *Corsned* was another of the mediæval follies. A piece of unleavened barley bread, on which the mass had been said, was administered to the accused, who were declared innocent if they could, and guilty if they could not, swallow it. Du Cange observes that the expression—"May this piece choke me!"—originated in this custom. The great Earl Godwin is said to have fallen dead at the table of Edward the Confessor, while attempting to swallow the *corsned*; but the incident was probably invented by the monkish chroniclers.

Another proof of guilt was that of *the bleeding of a corpse*. On the approach, or at the touch of the murderer, the blood flowed from the dead body of his victim ; but as, “ when a body is full of blood, warmed by a sudden external heat, and a putrefaction coming on, some of the blood-vessels will burst, as they will all in time,” many innocent persons must have perished through this custom. Any bystander was liable to be denounced by the suddenly-bleeding corpse.

As the light of a pure religion rose upon the gloom of feudal Europe, these absurd and dangerous practices fell into disuse, and out of their rude appeals to the justice of an invisible Providence came the wiser and calmer issues of the law. They were all associated with that craving after a knowledge of the unseen which animated the dabblers in magic, and sprang from an ignorance of the operations of nature and a superstitious belief in God’s special interposition in every human action. For the mediæval European the world was as full of secret but active agents—demons and angels, saints, martyrs, and spirits—as, of old, to the classic fancy of the Greek it had been inspired by Oread and Naiad, Dryad and Hamadryad, and the divinities of earth, air,

and water. The Evil One was ever counteracting the beneficent designs of Heaven, and the archangels and the celestial hierarchy were ever busy in thwarting *his* malignant projects. Hence the superstition which credited the existence of spells that converted the devil into man's servant and humble instrument also believed in the direct interference of God and the angels to uphold innocence and overwhelm guilt by the decision of the ordeal and the judicial combat. It is thus that the faith of Ignorance renders it the slave of the most miserable delusions.

§ 4. ORDEALS AND PRIESTCRAFT.

The Church of Rome, while, as we have seen censuring and prohibiting judicial combats, lent its favourable countenance to the ordeal because it afforded its priests an admirable means of extending their influence. Their superior chemical knowledge enabled them to determine the issue of the trial according as their interests or the interests of their Church dictated. If the accused was wealthy or powerful, or if his acquittal was essential to the success of some ecclesiastical project, it was easy for the priesthood to secure his immunity from danger by

the application of drugs and unguents, or the exercise of artful machinery, unknown to, unsuspected by the vulgar, but tolerably familiar now-a-days to the veriest tyro in chemistry or legerdemain. The crowd looked on amazed as the "innocent man" passed uninjured over the red-hot plough-shares, or plunged his arm innocuously into boiling water; and the priests rejoiced in the twofold advantage thus secured their order: the extension of their power over the minds of the people, and the rich gifts and costly oblations by which the "innocent" purchased their exemption from peril.

"In the Middle Ages," says D'Israeli, "they were acquainted with *secrets* to pass unhurt these singular trials. Voltaire mentions one for undergoing the ordeal of boiling water. Our late travellers in the East have confirmed this statement. The Mehvelch dervishes can hold red-hot iron between their teeth. Such artifices have often been publicly exhibited at Paris and London. Mr. Sharon Turner observes, on the ordeal of the Anglo-Saxons, that the hand was not to be immediately inspected, and was left to the chance of a good constitution to be so far healed during three days (the time they required to be bound up and sealed before it was examined) as to

discover those appearances when inspected, which were allowed to be satisfactory. There was likewise much preparatory training suggested by the more experienced; besides, the accused had an opportunity of *going alone into the church*, and making *terms with the priest*. The few spectators were always *distant*, and cold iron might be substituted and the fire diminished at the moment."

M. Salverte, in his ingenious but somewhat too speculative work on "The Philosophy of Magic," has some interesting remarks upon the deceptions practised in these sacerdotal ceremonies. He points out that they had their origin in the pagan temples, where optical delusions and chemical secrets were employed to dazzle and bewilder the ignorant worshipper. A knowledge of those substances which enable the human body to come in contact with flame or fire was possessed by the thaumaturgists of Egypt, from whom it probably descended to the priests of Greece and Rome, and thence, when the Primitive Church adopted and modified many of the rites of Paganism, to the servants of the Roman Pontiff.

Fire has always held an important place in the creeds of heathendom as a purifying agent, and was employed either as a test, a torture, or

a deadly punishment. In the ceremonies of initiation, the fire test was, however, preceded by the process of bathing, and it is probable that the baths were so prepared as to communicate to the flesh of the bather the property of enduring heat or flame uninjured. Albertus Magnus speaks of a compound of powdered lime, ground into a paste with the juice of the radish, the white of egg, the juice of the marsh mallow, and the seeds of the fleabane.* Apply, he says, one coat of this mixture to the body and let it dry; then apply a second coat, and the body, so indued, will sustain fire without any injury (*audacter sustinere ignem sine nocumento*). The human body will, indeed, endure with impunity an extraordinary degree of heat, and the experiments of Sir Joseph Banks and Dr. Fordyce have shown that a temperature of between 198° and 260° Fahrenheit may easily be borne, if the feet of the experimentalist be covered with flannel, which acts as a non-conductor.†

Sir David Brewster, in his "Letters on Natural Magic," relates some interesting facts:—"Sir Charles Blagden," he says, "went into a room where the heat was 1° or

* De Mirabilibus Mundi, ed. Amsterdam, 1760.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. for 1773.

2° above 260°, and remained eight minutes in this situation, frequently walking about to all the different parts of the room, but standing still most of the time in the coolest spot, where the heat was above 240°. The air, though very hot, gave no pain, and Sir Charles and all the other gentlemen were of opinion that they could support a much greater heat. During seven minutes Sir Charles Blagden's breathing continued perfectly good, but after that time he felt an oppression in his lungs, with a sense of anxiety, which induced him to leave the room. His pulse was then 144—double its ordinary quickness. In order to prove that there was no mistake respecting the degree of heat indicated by the thermometer, and that the air which they breathed was capable of producing all the well-known effects of such a heat on inanimate matter, they placed some eggs and a beefsteak upon a tin frame near the thermometer, but more distant from the furnace than from the wall of the room. In the space of twenty minutes the eggs were roasted quite hard, and in forty-seven minutes the steak was not only dressed but almost dry. Another beefsteak, similarly placed, was rather overdone in thirty-three minutes. In the evening

when the heat was still more elevated, a third beefsteak was laid in the same place, and as they had noticed that the effect of the hot air was greatly increased by putting it in motion, they blew upon the steak with a pair of bellows, and thus hastened the dressing of it to such a degree that the greatest portion of it was found to be pretty well done in thirteen minutes."

The priestesses of Diana Parasya, a Cappadocian divinity, excited the wonder of the devotees by walking barefooted on glowing coals, the worshipper ascribing to the interposition of the goddess the immunity that was due to a chemical unguent.* A similar "miracle" was performed by the Hirpi at the annual festival of Apollo, on Mount Soracte in Etruria.† The feet may be rendered impervious by the constant application of oil, or by frequently moistening the callous parts with sulphuric acid.‡ It is probable, also, that the incombustible properties of asbestos or amianthus were known to the priests of the classic temple as well as to the priests of the Mediæval Church, and that the person who underwent

* Strabo, lib. xii. † Pliny, "Nat. Hist." lib. vii.

‡ Beckmann, vol. iii.

the ordeal of fire was clothed in a garment fashioned from this stuff.

In Hindustan the fire ordeal is of great antiquity. *Sita*, the wife of *Rama*, the sixth incarnation of *Vishnu*, stood upon red-hot iron to prove herself innocent of the crimes imputed to her by her husband. "The foot of *Sita*," say the Hindûs, "being clothed in innocence, the devouring heat was to her as a bed of roses." Until recently the custom was still in vogue, and there, as elsewhere, it was under the influence of the priests, who were well acquainted with the means of rendering the trial innoxious.

In England it was suppressed by Parliament in the third year of the reign of Henry III. But the ordeal by cold water, which proved the guilt of the accused by drowning him, survived for two or three centuries, being a favourite method of testing the culpability of a supposed witch.

Wherever such trials prevailed they were under the direction of the priests, and there is no reason to doubt but that they were acquainted with secret preparations which nullified their injurious effects, and which they employed in cases where they desired to vindicate the innocence of the accused. But th

success of such deceptions strikingly demonstrates the existence of the most voracious credulity and the most debasing superstition, and was only possible in an age when magic was revered as an art, and its professors worshipped as prophets.

CHAPTER IV.

ALCHEMY: AND THE ALCHEMISTS.

- § 1. A SURVEY OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE SCIENCE—§ 2. ITS PATRONS: THE STORY OF PIERRE D'ESTAING: THE STORY OF GILLES DE RETZ—§ 3. THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSY CROSS.

Mercury.—O the variety of torment that I have endured in the reign of the Cyclops, beyond the most exquisite wit of tyrants! The whole household of them are become Alchemists, since their trade of armour-making failed them, only to keep themselves in fire, for this winter; for the mischief a secret that they know, above the consuming of coals and drawing of usquebagh! howsoever they may pretend, under the specious names of Geber, Arnold, Lully, Bombast of Hohenheim, to commit miracles in art, and treason against nature. And, as if the title of philosopher, that creature of glory, were to be fetched out of a furnace, abuse the curious and credulous nation of metalmen through the world, and make Mercury their instrument.—BEN JONSON.

§ 1. THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE
SCIENCE.

THE splendid delusion of Alchemy has occupied the minds of men for many centuries. Who can marvel that it has proved so attractive! To purify the body from the pollution of disease; to prolong life—if not to an im-

mortality—at least to a term as protracted as that of the Antediluvians; to surround oneself with boundless luxuries by the possession of that Philosopher's Stone which transmuted all commoner metals into gold: were not dreams such as these well calculated to seize upon the imaginations of the early pioneers of science? Upon their half-formed minds the ocean of knowledge opened in all the mysterious grandeur of the Unknown. They sailed out to sea with bursting canvas, but without a compass, and as they drifted onward over the gleaming depths, fed their eager fancies with joyous conceptions of the lands of romance and beauty that lay beyond. Ah! if these fancies were often wild and extravagant, let us remember that they were the fancies of enthusiastic and resolute men, sailing onward—onward—through the darkness, the first to dare the perilous seas, the first to yearn after a fuller and purer knowledge! There is much to be learned from, but little to ridicule in, the errors of earnest, believing, sincere, and adventurous minds.

When the dream of the Alchemist first arose, or who first conceived it, are questions more easily asked than answered. Most of its votaries attribute to the science an antiquity

coëval with the patriarch Noah, who could hardly have begotten children at the age of 500, and lived to the age of 950, had he not possessed the secret of the *elixir vitæ*. According to Lenglet du Fresnoy,* these credulous enthusiasts looked upon Shem, or Chem, as a great master of their art, and, in their ignorance of Arabic, derived both alchemy and chemistry from the Hebrew's name. Moses was not only an inspired law-giver and a great ruler, but a successful alchemist, having gained his knowledge from the Egyptians, who had previously learned it of the wonderful Hermes Trismegistus. This was the alchymical realization of the old myth of Mercury, or Hermes, whose caduceus, or magic staff, was in reality, a magnetic rod, with which he produced slumber or destroyed it. As Homer sings :—

Then taking his staff, with which he the eyelids of mortals
Closes at will, and at will the slumbering mortal awakens.

—*Odyssey*, lib. v.

So Virgil :—

The staff, which pale shadows from Orcus
Calls up, or down into gloomiest Tartarus sends them,
Awakens the sleeper, or soothes him, and seals up the eyes
of the dying.

—*Æneid*, iv. 242.

* "Histoire de l'Hermétique Philosophie," a most comprehensive and elaborate work upon a subject surrounded with difficulties.

From the disciples of Hermes Trismegistus, Moses gained a complete acquaintance with the principles of alchemy, as who can doubt that remembers the story of the golden calf! When Moses took the golden calf that the idolatrous Israelites had made, he "burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." Coming down to historical times we find that in the early years of Christianity, pretenders to the art of the transmutation of metals arose at Rome, and were treated as knaves and impostors; and at Constantinople, in the fourth century, there existed numerous professors of "the mystery," and profound treatises were compiled by some of the Greek ecclesiastics.

"The ancient books of Alchemy," remarks Gibbon, "so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, to Solomon, or to Hermes, were the pious frauds of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inattentive either to the use or the abuse of chemistry. In that immense register where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the errors of mankind, there is not the least mention of the transmutations of metals; and the persecution of Diocletian is the first authentic event in the history of alchemy.

The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human heart, it was studied in China, as in Europe, with equal eagerness and equal success. The darkness of the Middle Ages insured a favourable reception to every tale of wonder; and the revival of learning gave new vigour to hope, and suggested more specious arts to deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchymy; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humble means of commerce and industry."

We first emerge from the cloud and shadow into a precise and definite region in the eighth century, when an Arabian mystic revived the dreams and speculations of the alchymists, and in his pursuit of an *ignis fatuus*, discovered some important secrets. Geber, who flourished about 720-750, is reputed to have written upwards of five hundred works upon the Philosopher's Stone and the *elixir vitæ*. His researches after these desiderata proved fruitless, but if he did not bestow upon mankind immortal life and boundless wealth, he gave them nitrate of silver, corrosive sublimate, red oxide of mercury, and nitric acid.

Among his "fancies" were—a belief that a preparation of gold would heal all diseases in animals and plants, as well as in human beings; that the metals were affected with maladies, except the pure, supreme, and precious one of gold; and that the Philosopher's Stone had often been discovered, but that its fortunate discoverers would not reveal the secret to blind, incredulous, and unworthy man.

His "Summa Perfectionis"—a manual for the alchymical student,—has been frequently translated. A curious English version, of which there is a copy in the British Museum, was published by an English enthusiast, one Richard Russell, at "the Star, in New Market, in Wapping, near the Dock," in 1686. Geber's true name was Abou Moussah Djafar, to which was added Al Sofi, or "the Wise," and he was a native of Houran, in Mesopotamia.*

Passing over the Arabian *Alfarabi*, who flourished 890-954, and of whom the tales narrated savour too much of the fanciful and extravagant, we come to

AVICENNA,

named *Aben Sina* by Hebrew writers, but properly, Ebor Sina, or—to give his long

* "Biographie Universelle," art. *Geber*.

array of names in full—*Al-Sheikh Al-Rayis Abu Ali Al-Hossein ben Abdallah ben Sina*, born at Kharmatain, near Bokhara, in the year of the Hegira 370, or A.D. 980.* He was educated at Bokhara, and displayed such extraordinary precocity that, when he had reached his tenth year, he had completely mastered the Koran, and acquired a knowledge of algebra, the Mussulman theology, and the *His âb ul-Hind*, or Arithmetic of the Hindoos. Under Abdallah Al-Natheli he studied logic, Euclid, and the Almagest, and then, as a diversion, devoted himself to the pursuit of medicine. He was only twenty-one years old when he composed his "*Kitab al-Majmû*"—or, *The Book of the Sum Total*, whose mysteries he afterwards endeavoured to elucidate in a commentary in twenty volumes.

His reputation for wisdom and erudition was so great, that on the death of his father he was promoted by Sultan Magdal Douleth to the high office of Grand Vizier, which he held with advantage to the State until a political revolution accomplished the downfall of the Samanide dynasty. He then quitted Bokhara, and wandered from place to place, increasing his store of knowledge, but yielding himself

* Sprengel, "*Histoire de la Médecine*," ii. 205.

to a life of the grossest sensuality. About 1012 he retired to Jorjan, when he began his great work on medicine, which is still held in some repute as one of the earliest systems of that art with any pretensions to philosophical completeness. It is arranged with singular clearness, and presents a very admirable resumé of the doctrines of the ancient Greek physicians.

Avicenna subsequently lived at Rui, Kazwin, and Ispahan, where he became physician to the Persian sovereign, Alâ-eddaulah. He is said to have been dismissed from this post on account of his debauched living. He then retired to Hamadan, where, worn out with years of sensual indulgence, he died, at the age of 58, in 1038.

His works on philosophy, mathematics, and medicine are nearly one hundred in number, and include at least seven treatises on the Philosopher's Stone. His "Book of the Canon of Medicine" acquired an European celebrity, and has been several times translated into Latin.

Contemporary with Avicenna were numerous votaries of the delusive science, and almost every professor of medicine was an alchymist or an astrologer. The influence of the stars

upon the conditions of the human body was generally accepted as a first principle in medicine; and the possible transmutation of metals engaged the attention of every inquiring intellect. At this time, the Arabians were almost the sole depositories of human knowledge; and in the East glowed that steadily-shining light which, never utterly extinct, had withdrawn its splendour and its glory from the classic lands of the West. "They cultivated with success," says Gibbon,* "the sublime science of astronomy, which elevates the mind of man to disdain his diminutive planet and momentary existence. The costly instruments of observation were supplied by the Caliph Almamon, and the land of the Chaldeans still afforded the same spacious level, the same unclouded horizon. In the plains of Sinaar, and a second time in those of Cufa, his mathematicians accurately measured a degree of the great circle of the earth, and determined at twenty-four thousand miles the entire circumference of our globe. From the reign of the Abbassides to that of the grandchildren of Tamerlane, the stars, without the aid of glasses, were diligently observed; and the astronomical tables of

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. vii.

Bagdad, Spain, and Samarcand, correct some minute errors, without daring to renounce the hypothesis of Ptolemy, without advancing a step towards the discovery of the solar system. In the Eastern courts, the truths of science could be recommended only by ignorance and folly, and the astronomer would have been disregarded, had he not debased his wisdom or honesty by the vain predictions of astrology. But in this science of medicine, the Arabians have been deservedly applauded. The names of Mesua and Geber, of Razis and Avicenna, are ranked with the Grecian masters; in the city of Bagdad, eight hundred and sixty physicians were licensed to exercise their lucrative profession; in Spain, the life of the Catholic princes was intrusted to the skill of the Saracens, and the school of Salerno, their legitimate offspring, revived in Italy and Europe the precepts of the healing art. . . The science of chemistry owes its origin and improvement to the industry of the Saracens. They first invented and named the alembic for the purposes of distillation, analysed the substances of the three kingdoms of nature, tried the distinction and affinities of alkalis and acids, and converted the poisonous minerals into soft and salutary medicines. But the most eager search of

Arabian chemistry was the transmutation of metals, and the elixir of immortal health; the reason and the fortunes of thousands were evaporated in the crucibles of alchymy, and the consummation of the great work was promoted by the worthy aid of mystery, fable, and superstition.*

One of the most eminent names of this period was the justly famous

AVERROES,

or Averrhoes,—more properly, *Abul-Walid Mohammed ben Ahmed ben Mohammed ben Roshd*,—born at Cordova in Spain, A.D. 1149.†

His father occupied the distinguished office of Myti, or chief judge and priest of Andalusia, uniting both the secular and sacerdotal characters. His son, therefore, enjoyed the advantage of prosecuting his early studies under the most famous scholars of the age. His progress was worthy of his instructors. From

* The Arabian origin of alchymy is indicated by the fanciful terms under which the adepts concealed their drugs and processes; allegorical and symbolic expressions plainly revealing an Oriental character.

† Sprengel, "Histoire de la Médecine;" Bayle, "Dictionnaire," art. *Averross*; "Heroes of Medicine," by Russell.

his father he acquired a complete knowledge of Mohammedan jurisprudence; from Tofail and Ebnr-as-Sayeg, of the Arabian philosophy and Mussulman theology; and from Avenzohar, of medicine. His keen and practical intellect cared little for the lighter pursuits of poetry and history; and it was the charms of divine philosophy and the attractions of grave medicine that wooed the youthful student.

On his father's death he was appointed Mufti of Andalusia, and afterwards chief judge of Mauritania, but was dismissed on the ground of having professed heretical opinions. His successor, however, proved incompetent, and Averroes having made a partial recantation, was reinstated in his judicial seat. Therein he continued until his death, which occurred in 1198, or, according to some authorities, 1206.

His works were very numerous. Those which have obtained the widest celebrity are his "Kulliyat," or "Comprehensive Medical System;" and his commentaries on the works of Aristotle and the "Republic" of Plato. An edition, in Latin, in eleven folio volumes, was published at Venice in 1562.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS.*

This famous philosopher was born in 1193, at Lawingen, in the Duchy of Neuburg, on the Danube. His family was of noble descent, and their name De Groot, or Grot, which he is said to have Latinized into Magnus. It is, however, but fair to admit that many authorities ascribe this sonorous surname to the admiration of his contemporaries, which his extraordinary erudition and benevolent industry fully deserved.

Albertus, unlike most great philosophers and thaumaturgists, showed no youthful precocity or early indications of genius. His mind flowered late. He entered a Dominican monastery in 1222, but made no progress in the acquisition of knowledge; and when, as he advanced towards middle age, his intellect suddenly expanded, his contemporaries could only explain the circumstance by supposing a miracle to have been wrought. The Virgin Mary had taken pity upon his lack of talent and his ardent desire of knowledge, and

* "Biog. Dict. of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," Lenglet du Fresnoy's "Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique," Godwin's "Lives of the Necromancers," Naudé's "Apologie," c. 17, 18.

appearing before him as he mused and sorrowed in the silence of his cell, had asked him whether he would wish to excel in divinity or philosophy. When he chose the latter, the Virgin expressed her regret that he had not made the better election. She granted his request, but clogged her concession with the provision that when he had attained to the climax of his glory, his intellect should decay into its original feebleness. Albertus did not contradict the legend, and probably thought it not unlikely to be fulfilled, since it is not uncommon for old age to bring with it a diminution of the mental powers.

The fame of Albertus as a scholar soon spread over all Europe. His public lectures at Cologne attracted the best intellects of the age, and Thomas Aquinas enrolled himself among his disciples. In 1259 he was made Bishop of Ratisbon, but he resigned the see after an occupancy of four years, its duties abstracting him too largely from his beloved philosophical studies. To enjoy the seclusion of his cell, to pore over abstruse volumes, to meditate on the wonders that coy Science was gradually unfolding,—these were pursuits that had for the calm pure mind of Albertus a greater attraction than the projects of ambition

or the dreams of power. He died at Cologne in 1280, aged 87. His published works are contained in twenty-one volumes folio, and include a curious treatise on minerals,—a more curious treatise, “*De Admirabilibus*,”—and a most curious treatise, “*De Secretis Mulierum*.” His other dissertations are mainly theological and metaphysical.

The extensive erudition and abstruse pursuits of the “great” philosopher suggested to his contemporaries a legion of ridiculous fables. Like Roger Bacon, he was reputed the maker of a brazen head gifted with the power of speech. For thirty years he laboured on this marvel of human ingenuity, and by casting his materials under the favourable aspects of auspicious constellations, infused such a spirit into his work, that the daily growth of its limbs, and head, and trunk was actually visible. At last, assisted by Thomas Aquinas, he completed his undertaking, and the brazen statue spoke, and performed all the services of a household drudge. You may make your man, however, and yet not be able to endow him with reason. The man of brass talked so foolishly, and talked so constantly, that he wearied his masters; and as nothing could check his garrulity, Thomas Aquinas, in a fit of

rage, silenced him as many other chatterers have been silenced—by a thundering knock on the head.

This talking statue has completely puzzled the admirers of the early alchymists. Naudé seems willing to believe in its existence, but is evidently unable to classify satisfactorily so peculiar a variety of the *genus homo*. Were they sensitive and reasoning heads, these miracles in metal? They could not be sensitive, for they were unable, like plants, to supply their own nutriment: they could not reason, for they were oblivious of the past and ignorant of the future! "They said," writes Naudé, "what they had to say, which no one could contradict; and having said their say, you might have broken the head for aught more that you could have extracted from it. If they had possessed any life, would they not have moved as well as spoken? Life itself is without motion; but these had neither lungs nor spleen, and though they spoke, had no tongue. Was there a demon in them? I think not. Yet why should men have taken all this trouble to make, not a man, but a trumpet!"

This fable of the brazen head may have originated in some automaton which the mechanical ingenuity of Albertus Magnus enabled

him to fashion, and whose motions were directed by a concealed performer. The early virtuosi had a peculiar affection for these ingenious tricks and amusing deceptions, and a visit to their house was like a visit to the "temple" of some dexterous professor of legerdemain. Albertus Magnus is said to have entertained William Count of Holland with a very remarkable entertainment. He invited that prince, when passing through Cologne, to a banquet for himself and his suite. It was then mid-winter; the Rhine was frozen into silence; the snow lay thickly on the ground; the wind was keen and shrill; yet when the Count and his knights arrived at the philosopher's residence, they found their banquet spread in the rimy garden. Wroth was the count—nay, very wroth—and he remounted his horse to seek some more hospitable entertainer, when Albertus at last persuaded him to take his seat at the board. Immediately, the wind melted into a soft and summery breeze; the dark shadows vanished from the sky, and the sun broke forth in noonday splendour; the loosened waters of the Rhine rolled on their way rejoicing; the snow vanished, and green sward brightened beneath their feet; blossoms sparkled in all the desert places; and a flood of melody

rushed forth from the songsters of the neighbouring groves.

In wondering delight Count William and his attendants finished their repast; when lo! the darkness again spread over the skies—the birds ceased to sing—the river forgot to flow—the snow mantled thick on the ground—the boughs stretched out their spectre-arms all quaint and ghastly; and shivering with the cold, each guest retreated into the philosopher's house to warm himself by the blazing ingle!*

A great thaumaturgist was Albertus Magnus! Who will wonder that for three centuries his body escaped corruption and remained as fair and as sweet as in life? His enchantments and those of equally celebrated necromancers were undoubtedly known to Chaucer, who, in his "Franklin's Tale," describes the illusions which he himself had probably seen:—

For I am siker that there be sciences
By which men maken divers apparences
Swiche as these subtil tregetourès play.
For oft at festès have I wel herd say
That tregetourès, within an hallè large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the hallè rowen up and down.
Sometime hath seemed come a grim leoun,

* Lenglet du Fresnoy, "Histoire de la Philosophie Herétique."

And sometime flourès spring as-in a mede,
Sometime a vine and grapès white and rede,
Sometime a castel al of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon :
Thus seemeth it to every mannes sight !*

After all, greater wonders than these are nightly wrought at our metropolitan theatres.

Thomas Aquinas, the pupil of Albertus, was worthy of such a master. We are told that he lodged in a street of Cologne, where he was as much perturbed by clattering horses and talking grooms as Mr. Babbage by the organ-grinders of London. Finding that the grooms would not retire at his request to some more convenient spot, he constructed a small horse of bronze, inscribed upon it certain cabalistic characters, and interred it at midnight in the centre of the thoroughfare. On the following morning a band of his foes rode by as usual, but when they reached the grave of the magic steed not a horse but began to plunge and kick as if possessed ! Their riders plied them with whip and spur, but in vain ; they were compelled to return. And as the same scene took place on the following day, the grooms owned themselves vanquished, selected some other spot for the exercise of their horses, and

* Chaucer, ed. Tyrwhitt. "The Franklin's Tale."

left the scholar to pursue his studies uninterrupted.*

Contemporary with Albert the Great was *Alain de Lisle*, of Flanders, who became a friar of the Abbey of Citeaux, and died in 1298, aged 110 years. He wrote a Commentary on the works of Merlin. He would have died at fifty, but discovered the *elixir vitæ*, and drank enough of it (we suppose) to add another sixty years to his existence. Foolish mortal! Why did he not drink deeper when once he tasted the true "Pierian spring?" *Artephuis*, who wrote in the twelfth century, had been as fortunate as Alain de Lisle, and far less abstemious. In an essay on the "Art of Prolonging Life," he speaks of himself as then in the one thousand and twenty-fifth year of his age; a very respectable longevity, as it seems to us. Some of his disciples believed him to be the wonderful Apollonius of Tyana, whose miracles have been related with so much simplicity by Philostratus. His memory being as good as his erudition was extensive he played his part in the farce with admirable skill—replying with astonishing facility to any questions put to him respecting the great men

* Naudé's, "Apologie des Grands Hommes accusés de Magie," c. 17.

whom it was reasonable to suppose a man of so many generations must have known. He declared that he had descended to hell, where he had seen the Evil One on a throne of gold, fenced round by his dark cohorts of fallen angels, and from him had received the secret of the Philosopher's Stone. His works—a far-rago of vain speculation and audacious conjecture—have been translated into French.

ARNOLD DE VILLENEUVE was born in 1245. He studied medicine at the University of Paris, and if his contemporaries may be credited, practised it with extraordinary success. Led by the impulse of a sanguine intellect to trespass upon the bounds of forbidden knowledge, he gave himself up to the dreams of the astrologer and the alchemist. While travelling in Italy he made the acquaintance of another curious seeker, Pietro d'Apone, and when the latter was tried and convicted as a sorcerer,* only escaped the same fate by a rapid flight to France. He died about 1300, and his great work, "The Practice of Medicine," having been lost, Pope Clement V. thought it worth his while to address a missive

* Pietro d'Apone's religious opinions were extremely lax. The Church of Rome might have forgiven the sorcerer, but could not spare the heretic.

to all the clergy of Europe, imploring them to use their untiring exertions to recover it.

Arnold, on very slight authority, is said to have been the author of a famous recipe for the prolongation of human life. It was necessary, as the first step, to rub oneself well, twice or thrice a week, with the marrow of cassia (*moëlle de la casse*). Then, every night on retiring to bed, a plaster must be put upon the heart, composed (in equal parts) of saffron, amber, aloes, sandal-wood, and red rose-leaves, the said mixture having previously been dissolved in oil of roses and the best white wax. This plaster may be used several times, a satisfactory circumstance when we consider its evident costliness; but every morning, when taken off, it must be carefully put away until night, in a leaden case.

Take, moreover, a certain number of chickens. If you are saturnine, like Cassius, twenty-five; if melancholy, like old Robert Burton, thirty; if joyous and sanguine, as Shakspeare may have been, sixteen will suffice. Feed them upon a broth made of serpents and vinegar, thickened with wheat and bran, for two months, and then eat one daily, qualifying the moderate repast with draughts of white wine or claret. Repeat these processes for

seven years, and you need not die until you are weary of living!

One of the most illustrious of the masters of the alchymical science was

RAYMOND LULLI,

who must be placed in the same rank as Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. This enthusiast was born at Palma, in the island of Majorca, in the year 1234. His father, who was of a noble Catalonian family, settled in Majorca after the conquest of that island from the Saracens by James I., King of Arragon, and received an appointment of some responsibility. He bred his son to the profession of arms, but Raymond marrying at an early age, abandoned himself to a round of gaieties, and repaired with his bride to shine at the Court of Spain. King James was well pleased at the handsome courtly soldier, and made him his Grand Seneschal; and Raymond immediately plunged into the mazy depths of pleasure. Forgetful of his wife, his fickle fancy passed from flower to flower, from beauty to beauty, until it centred at last in the lovely Ambrosia di Castello. The love of such a man is sure to be unhallowed, and Raymond's was doubly so. A married man, he loved, and passionately,

a married woman. But Ambrosia was not less chaste than beautiful. In vain her lover followed her from place to place with looks of earnest devotion; in vain he watched beneath her lattice, and filled the night with snatches of tender song; in vain he addressed to her the most pathetic and eloquent letters. All passed unnoticed. The hot wind of passion glided by the cold beauty without warming her into even the slightest pity.

It chanced one day when Raymond waited beneath the window that Ambrosia looked forth, and a gusty breeze lifting her gauzy neckerchief, revealed to the lover's enraptured gaze her snowy bosom; it was but for a moment. But Lulli returned to his home enchanted, and penning some passionate stanzas, addressed them to the lady. She had never before acknowledged his protestations, but now she returned an answer. She said that it was impossible for her ever to comply with his desires; that it was sinful in him to devote himself so persistently to any other than God, and exhorted him to conquer a passion which was dishonourable to her and degrading to himself; but she offered to bare to his gaze the fair bosom with which he had been so enraptured.

Raymond was well pleased with the lady's letter, for if the first part was discouraging, the second promised to him a favourable issue to his suit. He repaired to her house, and claimed the fulfilment of her promise. With tears she declared that she could never be his; that were she free on the morrow she would still reject his prayers. Astonished and confounded he exclaimed, "What, then, was the purport of your letter?" "Behold!" she cried, and tore the veil away from her throbbing bosom. Raymond looked, and fell back in horror, for a deadly cancer was spreading its ravages over both the swelling breasts. Ambrosia held out her hand, and besought him to repent of the life he was leading, to turn his eyes from the mortal to the immortal beauty, and devote himself to the service of God.

Raymond returned to his home changed in his very heart. He threw up his post at Court, he shook off his licentious associates. Dividing his wealth among his wife and children, he bade them farewell, and retired to a life of devout self-denial and untiring zeal. Kneeling before a crucifix, he vowed himself to the service of God, and to the conversion of the Mahommedans to Christianity. He was

encouraged in this resolve by a thrice-repeated dream, in which the Saviour appeared to him with beckoning finger, and said, "Raymond, Raymond, follow me!"

Receiving this as a direct mission from heaven, Raymond retired to the mountains of Aranda to study Arabic and prepare for his holy work. Through the medium of the new tongue he studied grammar and dialectics, and from the writings of Geber caught that spark of philosophical mysticism which afterwards kindled in his soul into a burning fire. Grand dreams of a reformation of the world by the aid of Science—of the establishment of a golden age of purity and devotion—brightened upon his fervid imagination; and a second vision of the Saviour—the natural result of the operation of a fixed idea upon an enthusiastic temperament—confirmed him in his great design. It was in obedience to the Saviour's commands that he composed his celebrated treatise entitled the "Ars Lullia," admirably designated by his followers the "Ars Magna."

He had entered his fortieth year when he abandoned his mystic solitude, and came forth into the world. With the scanty relics of his fortune he built, under the countenance of

James of Arragon, a monastery in Majorca for the education of thirteen monks as Arabian missionaries, and he contemplated similar establishments elsewhere, but met with little encouragement from the Pope, Honorius IV.

It was now that Raymond Lulli had a narrow escape from the martyrdom he had professed to desire. In one of his religious accesses, he had prayed to God that he might perish in His holy service, and an Arabian youth who acted as his servant, and whom he had vainly endeavoured to convert, attempted to plunge a dagger into his heart one day when he sat at table. Lulli forgot the martyr in the natural instinct of self-preservation; grappled with the youth, disarmed him, and handed him over to the civil power. The would-be murderer, however, escaped punishment by committing suicide in prison.

Lulli now visited Paris and Genoa with the view of obtaining funds for the foundation of Arabian missions. It was not a proselytizing age, and he received but scanty encouragement. At Paris he became acquainted with Arnold de Villeneuve, and held many colloquies with him upon the splendid promises of alchymy, which served to divert his mind in some degree from its fanatical purposes.

From Genoa he crossed into Africa, where his life was in danger from the hostility of a Mahometan whom he had endeavoured to convert. Rescued through the generous intervention of an Arabian mufti, he was compelled to promise to quit Africa for ever. He returned to Italy, and sought the assistance of Pope John XXI., but received no more satisfactory help than encouraging words. Looking upon a promise wrested from him by the fear of death as not morally binding, he once more crossed to Cyprus, and thence into Africa, to resume his missionary enterprise. At Tunis he was welcomed by some Arabian scholars who recognised the alchymist and ignored the proselytizing Christian; but turning from dreams of the Philosopher's Stone to invectives against the doctrines of the Koran, he was nearly stoned to death, arrested, flung into prison, and only released through the generosity of some Genoese merchants.

The enthusiast returned to Italy, and a new Pontiff, Clement V., occupying the papal chair, made an unsuccessful effort to interest him in his devout exertions. The successor of St. Peter was by no means anxious to secure any Arabian converts to the faith preached by St. Peter's master, and Lulli retired to Milan

to practise alchymy and pursue the visionary speculation of the *elixir vitæ*.

According to most of his biographers, Lulli at this time received a letter of invitation from Edward II. of England, at the instigation of Abbot Cremer of Westminster, who was himself a votary of the hermetic science. Edward appears to have employed him in refining gold and casting a new coinage, and to have provided him with apartments in the Tower. These pursuits, and Lulli's own vaunts, were a sufficient foundation for a variety of popular stories, pointing to his discovery of the Philosopher's Stone and his transmutation of metals into gold. Little, in his "Testamentum," declares that in the course of his career he converted no less than 50,000 lbs. weight of lead, pewter, and quicksilver into the precious metal. Gifted with such a capacity for boundless wealth, it is marvellous to the eyes of a generation of unbelievers like the present, that he wandered through half the countries of Europe in search of funds for the prosecution of his missionary enterprise against the Crescent. Perhaps it was part of his probation to abstain from the extended practice of his miraculous science; and yet, in so holy a cause, it could not surely have been unlawful.

The coin cast by Lulli for the King of England is supposed to have been named rose-nobles, or the nobles of Raymond. As he was well skilled in metallurgy, it is very probable that his coinage was really of a superior excellence, and the fact seems to be confirmed by the testimony of Camden.

Raymond next made another attempt to secure the patronage of Rome for his great projects,—the introduction into the European monasteries of the study of the Eastern languages, and the combination of the various orders of Christian knighthood into one, for the effectual subjugation of Mahomedanism ; but the enthusiast again turned his face from the holy city, a rejected and disappointed man. Though eighty years of age, his fiery soul still throbbed quickly in his wasted frame, and his vivid imagination still kindled with glorious dreams of the universal reign of Christ and the Cross. He returned a third time to Africa,—landing at Bona in 1314,—and preaching against Mahomet with characteristic fervour, was beset by the natives, hunted to the seashore, and almost stoned to death. There he was discovered,—a sorry spectacle, bleeding and sorely wounded, — by some Genoese merchants, who a second time rescued

him from imminent death. They conveyed the martyr-enthusiast on board their own vessel, and sailed for Majorca, but his injuries were so severe that he died as the bark came within sight of his native shores. His body was interred, with all the honours of a public funeral, in the church of St. Eulalia, at Palma, and miracles are reputed to have been wrought at his tomb, in proof of his extreme sanctity. Lulli's death occurred in 1415, when he was eighty-one years of age.

The writings of this generous and devout enthusiast, one of the least extravagant of the alchemists, and a philosophical reformer of equal resolution and generosity, include nearly five hundred volumes, touching upon a vast variety of scientific and moral subjects. His "*Ars Magna Lulli*," despite of its fantastic absurdities, shows a boldness of thought and a breadth of view which entitle its author to be ranked among the acolytes of the temple—among the Dwellers on the Threshold. Its object was to effect such an arrangement of ideas as should systematize knowledge, and so facilitate its acquisition. This was to be accomplished by—1. Letters—"the *alphabetum artis*"—which indicate certain general terms common to all sciences; 2. Figures,—viz.,

triangles, squares, and circles, intended to point out the relations of those general terms ; and 3. *Camerae*, or Divisions,—wherein a certain adjustment of the aforesaid figures should combine the general terms according to their proportions. Predicates are inscribed within the squares and triangles, and certain subjects in the circles. The triangles of subjects being so fixed upon the circle of subjects as to move freely, the combinations of ideas produced by their revolutions would infinitely vary, and definitions, propositions, axioms, and syllogisms might be easily created. But it is obvious that a logical machine of so arbitrary a nature could produce few useful results, and its chief importance is to be found in the proof it affords of Lulli's conviction that the Aristotelian dialectic of the schools stood in need of a reformation or a modification.

Lulli's works, in ten folio volumes, were edited by Salzinger, and published at Mayence, in 1721-42.

JEAN DE MEUNG.

Jean de Meung owes his celebrity to his poetical genius rather than his alchymical powers ; to his "Roman de la Rose," rather than to his rhyming treatise upon the hermetic

philosophy. He was born about 1280, and flourished through the reigns of Louis X., Philip the Long, Charles IV., and Philip de Valois. He appears to have possessed a light and railing wit, and a keen appreciation of a jest; and it may well be doubted whether he was altogether sincere in his praises of alchemy. Having composed a quatrain on Woman, which stigmatized her in the strongest terms—

Toutes êtes, serez, ou fûtes,
De fait ou de volonté, putains ;
Et qui très bien chercherait,
Toutes putains vous trouverait—

the ladies of Charles VI.'s court resolved to revenge their affronted honour, and surrounding him in the royal antechamber, desired the courtiers present to strip him preparatory to their inflicting a sound flagellation. Jean solicited to be heard before he was condemned and punished; and having obtained an interval of grace, set forth, with fluent eloquence, that he was certainly the author of the calumnious verses, but that they were not intended to vilipend all womankind. He referred only to the vicious and debased, and not to such models of purity as he saw around him. Nevertheless, if any lady present felt that the

verses really applied to her, he was her very humble servant, and would submit to a well-deserved chastisement.

Whatever the secret convictions of the ladies as to the justice of the poet's satire, not one was disposed to admit the application, and Jean de Meung escaped the promised rods.

Like most of the mediæval poets, Jean de Meung was a bitter enemy of the priesthood, and he contrived with great ingenuity a posthumous satire upon their inordinate greed. He bequeathed in his will, as a gift to the Cordeliers, a chest of immense weight. As his fame as an alchemist was wide spread, the brotherhood accepted the legacy in the belief that the chest contained the golden results of his labours in quest of the Philosopher's Stone. But when they opened it, their dismayed eyes rested only on a pile of *slates*, covered with the most unintelligible hieroglyphics and cabalistic characters. The perpetrator of this practical joke was hardly, we think, a very sincere believer in the wonders of alchymy.

NICHOLAS FLAMEL

was born at Pontoise, of a poor but respectable family, about the beginning of the fourteenth century. He received a good education, of

which his natural abilities enabled him to make the best use. Repairing to Paris, he obtained employment as a public scrivener,—sitting at the corner of the Rue de Marivaux, copying or inditing letters and other documents. The occupation brought with it little profit, and Flamel tried in succession poetry and painting with an equally unsatisfactory result. His quick wits suggested that as he could make no money by teaching mankind, it might be more profitable to cheat them, and he took up the pursuit of Astrology, casting horoscopes and telling fortunes. He was right in his conjectures, and soon throve so vigorously that he was enabled to take unto himself a wife named Petronella. But those who begin to study the magic art for profit or amusement generally finish by addicting themselves to it with a blindly passionate love. Nicholas devoted himself both day and night to his fascinating but deceptive pursuits; and soon acquired a thorough knowledge of all that previous adepts had written upon the *elixir vite*, the universal Alkahest, and the Philosopher's Stone.

In 1257 he lighted upon a manual of the art which would have been invaluable if it had been intelligible. He bought it for two

florins. It contained three times seven leaves written with a steel instrument upon the bark of trees. The caligraphy was as admirable as the Latin was cryptical. Each seventh leaf was free from writing, but emblazoned with a picture; the first, representing a serpent swallowing rods; the second, a serpent crucified on a cross; and the third, the arid expanse of a treeless desert, in whose depths a fountain bubbled, with serpents trailing their slimy folds from side to side.

The author of this mysterious book purported to be "Abraham, the patriarch, Jew, prince, philosopher, Levite, priest and astrologer," who added to his other claims upon the wonder of mankind *a knowledge of Latin*. He had included within these precious pages a complete exposition of the art of transmuting metals; describing every process, explaining the different vessels, and pointing out the proper seasons for making experiments. In fact, the book would have been perfect, but for one deficiency; it was addressed not so much to a tyro as to an adept, and took it for granted that its student was already in possession of the Philosopher's Stone. This was a terrible obstacle to the inquiring Flamel. The more he studied the book the less he understood it.

He studied the letterpress, and he studied the illustrations; he invited the wise men of France to come and study them, but no light was thrown upon the darkness. For thrice seven years—as Flamel would have said—he pored over these perplexing pages, until at length his wife suggested that a Jewish Rabbi might be able to interpret them. As the chiefs of the Jews were principally located in Spain, to Spain went Flamel, and there he remained for two years. From one of the Hebrew sages he obtained some hints which afforded a key to the patriarchal mysteries, and returning to Paris, he recommenced his studies with a new vigour. They were rewarded with success. On the 13th of February, 1382, o. s.,—it is well to be particular in a matter of so much importance—Flamel made a projection on mercury, and produced some virgin silver. On the 25th of the following April he converted some mercury into gold, and found himself the fortunate possessor of an inexhaustible Potosi.* But his good fortune did not end here. It is of little use to collect treasures if you cannot live to enjoy them, and Flamel, continuing his researches, discovered the elixir of life, which enabled him to prolong his

* Lenglet du Fresnoy.

existence—and accumulate gold—to the venerable age of 116. Like a good and faithful husband he administered the life-giving potion to his wife, who reached nearly as great a longevity as himself, dying in the year preceding his own death, A.D. 1414. As they had no children, they spent their wealth upon churches and hospitals, and several of the religious and charitable institutions of France still attest their well-directed benevolence.

There is no doubt that Flamel practised alchemy, and one of his works on the fascinating science—a poem entitled “The Philosophic Summary”—was reprinted as late as 1735. In Salmon’s valuable and very curious “Bibliothèque des Philosophes Chimiques” are preserved some specimens of the drawings in Abraham’s treatise on metallurgy, and of his own handwriting. But Flamel was neither an enthusiast nor a dupe. His alchymical studies were but the disguises of his usurious practices. To account for the immense wealth he acquired by money-lending to the young French nobles, and by transacting business between the Jews of France and those of Spain, he invented the fiction of his discovery of the Philosopher’s Stone. He nevertheless obtained great repute as a magician, and his

followers believed that he was still alive though retired from the world, and would live for six centuries. In that case he must be still a denizen of this earth of ours, and may have abandoned, for aught we know, his researches after the Philosopher's Stone for that much easier method of making money peculiar to the present age—the foundation of a joint-stock company!

A famous German alchymist, whom in this brief summary it would be unpardonable to pass over, was

BERNARD OF TRÊVES.*

He was born at Trêves or Padua in the year 1406. Some authorities represent his father to have been a Paduan physician; according to others he was Count of the Marches of Trêves. Considerable uncertainty, therefore, rests upon his early life; but it is certain that his parents were wealthy, that he received a careful education, that his abilities were good and his powers of application unwearied. If we may believe his own autobiography, he first became acquainted with the delights of alchemy at the age of fourteen, and imme-

* Lenglet du Fresnoy, "Biographie Universelle."

diately commenced the study of the Arabian authors in their own language. He found a peculiar fascination in the pages of the philosopher Rhazes, and imagining that they contained the secret of the multiplication of gold, devoted himself for four years to their unwearied study, but without discovering in his crucibles a grain of the precious ore. He then took Geber for his "guide, philosopher, and friend," but his experiments were equally unsuccessful. The two Arabic apostles of a delusive creed cost their votary nearly three thousand crowns.

A crowd of eager and voracious speculators surrounded this wealthy and ingenuous young man. He shook them off after the failure of his last experiments, and made the acquaintance of a Franciscan, who was as enthusiastic as he was poor, and as poor as he was disinterested. The two students contracted a warm affection, which philosophy seemed to sanctify. They pursued their studies by the light of each other's lamp, and fancied at last that they had discovered the dissolvent, or universal alkahest, so necessary in the process of transmutation, in highly rectified spirits of wine. Having rectified the alcohol thirty times until it broke the vessels containing it, and spent

three hundred crowns upon various alcoholic experiments, Bernard and his friend concluded they had made a mistake. They tried alum; they tried copperas; they tried human and animal excrement; they tried salt; and they tried mercury. The adepts came to Bernard from all countries, attracted by the fame of his experiments. He divided his wealth among them, and obtained in return the name of the "Good Trevisan"—all that he did obtain as a recompense for twelve years of patient labour.

Surely there was something sublime in this unwearied quest after knowledge, even though the knowledge sought was of a poor and indifferent kind. Days of disappointment and nights of toil—months and years of profitless labour—of labour which was without result, and without encouragement—were undergone by the credulous enthusiast in the hope of adding something to the store of human learning, and increasing the sum of human happiness. Let us not laugh at these patient, persevering workers. Of what endurance were they capable! Of what wonderful self-denial! Toiling on in the darkness and the shadow, and yearning for a glimpse of morning-light! Wandering through a pathless wilder-

ness, and sighing in vain for a beacon or a guide! Sailing over a trackless sea in search of the Blessed Isles, and longing for a skilful pilot, a compass, or a chart! The errors of such men we may pity, but their virtues we must admire, and their laborious diligence respect.

The death of the Franciscan, about 1445, was a heavy blow to Bernard's patient spirit, but he still continued to toil, and happily lighted upon a second confidant in a Trevisan magistrate whose enthusiasm was as ardent as his own. This philosopher's pet theory pointed to Neptune and Thetis as the progenitors of gold, and asserted, as an irrefragable fact, that sea-salt would transmute lead or iron into the glittering and more precious metal. Removing his laboratory to a suitable point on the shore of the Baltic, Bernard and his new adherent essayed the powers of salt. Probably that admirable substance was never before or since subjected to such a variety of processes; but after a twelvemonth's toil, but one result was ascertainable, that chloride of sodium would dissolve no crude metal whatsoever.

Bernard was now nearly fifty years old; withered, wasted, pale, and prematurely aged; but his unconquerable spirit was not yet weary

of its bootless toil. He began a series of tours through southern Europe in search of knowledge. In the vineyards of France and the orange groves of Spain he sought for the τὸ καλὸν—for the great secret. At Citeaux, a Benedictine named Leuvier, protested that it resided in egg-shells; an attorney of Berghem in Flanders, declared that the alkahest was composed of vinegar and copperas. He resided in France for five years. Then he visited Germany,—accompanied, of course, by a train of blood-sucking dependents,—and at Vienna made the acquaintance of Brother Heinrich, the chief confessor of the Emperor Frederick III. He found in him a student as persevering and unsuccessful as himself. A warm intimacy sprang up between them. A grand *cœna philosophorum* was celebrated, and each alchemist present was required to contribute something towards a total of forty-two marks, which Brother Heinrich promised to quadruple in his wondrous furnace. The Brother himself put down five; Master Bernard, twelve; the others, three, two, or one, according to their means. Into a greedy crucible were flung the forty-two marks of gold, with aquafortis and copperas, mercury and egg-shells, vinegar and lead, sea-salt and alcohol, dung and iron,—a

vast and curious agglomeration of heterogeneous substances. The fire blazed ; the mass seethed. Day and night the furnace was fed, and the hopes of the alchymists were fed with visionary glories for three times seven days. It was then agreed that the experiment had failed. Nay, it was found upon examination that they had discovered a process of wasting, and not of multiplying gold, for of forty-two marks only sixteen were left. If they had tried the experiment a fortnight longer, the money would probably have vanished altogether !

Bernard had inherited a large fortune from his father, but his generosity and his alchymical studies had made sad inroads in it. He was half-resolved to abandon the pursuit while yet he retained a moderate competency ; but there was a wonderful fascination in those bright dreams of his—bright dreams of inexhaustible wealth and immortal life ! To enjoy this noble humanity with which Heaven has endowed us, free from the blemish of disease and the throb of pain ; to know that no premature death can cut short one's glorious projects of good, or check too soon the current of one's aspirations ; to command all the pleasures that art can bestow, all the triumphs that science can realize, and to surround oneself with an

Armida's garden of love and beauty; these are visions that, once indulged in, hold the spirit in an irresistible thrall. Bernard could not tear himself away from the goddess he had worshipped so long, though he felt that that worship meant hopeless, irretrievable ruin. What other pursuits had life for him? What object could satisfy the mind so long directed upon one irresistibly attractive aim? And besides, was not the secret obtainable after all? Had it not been mastered by many, though they had jealously hidden their knowledge in cabalistic phrases which it was almost impossible to interpret? Was it not possessed by some adepts yet living?

This was Bernard's last hope, and to realize it he set out on a fresh course of travel, introducing himself everywhere to the reputed students of the occult sciences.

He wandered from Vienna to Rome; from Rome to Madrid. Thence he sailed to Messina, and from Messina to fertile Cyprus. Next he passed over into Greece, the land of myth and fable; and turning his face eastward, visited the silent sands of Egypt, the sacred places of Palestine, the haunted ruins of Susa and Persepolis. After an Odyssey of eight years' duration he returned to Messina, and once

more visited France. Not having found the desired knowledge in the extreme East, he determined to seek it in the farthest West, and crossed the channel into England. But neither east nor west, neither north nor south, could Bernard discover the Great Secret, and he returned to Trêves, disappointed, forlorn, and impoverished.

Recovering what he could from the wreck of his fortune, he retired to Rhodes to spend his old age in peace. He had secured enough for a competency; but unhappily he met with a monk who was an alchymist like himself, and just as enthusiastic and as irrepressible. Upon the security of the few acres that remained to him, a merchant advanced eight thousand florins, and the two enthusiasts recommenced their labours with all the vigour of youth. Eighty years had not quenched the fire of Bernard's imagination, or weakened his fond belief in the reality of his life-long dream. Once more the furnaces blazed and the crucibles hissed, but the only transmutation of metals that took place was the conversion of Bernard's gold into—smoke. At the age of eighty he found his resources expended, and the grand secret as far off as ever. Will you believe that the resolute, hopeful old man

calmly sat down to read over again the treatises of the alchemists, from Geber to Basil Valentine, in the conviction that he must have somewhere overlooked the key to the great mystery? The hermetic philosophers will have it that he succeeded at last; that at the age of eighty-two, he discovered the secret of inexhaustible wealth, and lived three years longer to enjoy it. He tells us himself that he did, indeed, discover *one* previous secret, but a secret that might have been obtained at infinitely less cost—contentment is the handmaid of Philosophy, and

Virtue alone is happiness below.

The good, amiable, credulous, but persevering Trevisan, died at Rhodes in the year 1490, and in the eighty-sixth of his age. He left behind him several works on alchemy, of which the most curious is the “De Natura Ovi.” A sceptical generation like the present would, we fear, pronounce the ovum to be but an addled one!

TRITHEMIUS.

The son of a German vine-grower, named Heidenberg, he received his Latinized appellation from Trittheim, a village in the electorate of Trêves, where he was born in 1462. He

might reasonably be included among those earnest and enthusiastic souls who have persevered in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties; for his mother, marrying a second time, had no love for the offspring of her first marriage. The young Trithemius was ill-fed, ill-clothed, and over-worked. All day he toiled in the vineyards; but the nights he was able to devote to the acquisition of knowledge, and when he stole away from his miserable home, and perused what books he could beg or borrow, by the light of the moon. As his mind expanded he became sensible of the vast stores of learning to which his circumstances denied him access. He could not rest content with the few grains of sand he had picked up on the seashore. Extorting his small share of the patrimony bequeathed by his father, he wandered away to Trêves, entered himself a student of its celebrated University, and assumed the name of Trithemius. His progress was now as rapid as might be inferred probable from the intensity of his aspirations and the keenness of his intellect. At the age of twenty he had acquired the reputation of a scholar,—a reputation which was of greater advantage in the 15th than it is in the 19th century.

He was now desirous of once more seeing

the mother whom he did not love the less because she had ill-used him, and in the winter of 1482 he quitted the cloistered shade of Trêves on a solitary journey to Tritheim. It was a dark day, ending in a gloomy, fast-snowing night, and the good student, on his arrival near Spannheim, found the roads impassable. He sought refuge in the neighbouring monastery. There the weather imprisoned him for several days. The imprisonment proved so much to the liking of Trithemius, that he voluntarily took the monastic vows, and retired from the world. In the course of two years he was elected abbot, and devoting all his little fortune to the repair and improvement of the monastery, he gained the love and reverence of the brotherhood, whom he inspired with his own love of learning. But after a rule of one-and-twenty years, the monks forgot all his benefits, and remembered only the severity of his discipline. They broke out in revolt, and elected another abbot. The deposed Trithemius quitted Spannheim, and wandered from place to place, until finally elected Abbot of St. James of Wurzburg, where he died in 1516.

His fame as a magician rests on very innocent foundations. He devised a species of

short-hand called *steoganographia*, which the ignorant stigmatized as a cabalistical and necromantic writing, concealing the most fearful secrets. He wrote a treatise on the subject; another upon the supposed administration of the world by its guardian angels—a revival of the good and evil geniuses of the Ancients—which William Lilly translated into English in 1647; a third upon Geomancy, or divination by means of lines and circles on the ground; a fourth upon Sorcery; and a fifth upon Alchymy. In his work upon Sorcery he makes the earliest mention of the popular story of Dr. Faustus, and records the torments he himself occasionally suffered from the malice of a spirit named Hudekin. He is said to have gratified the Emperor Maximilian with a vision of his deceased wife, the beautiful Mary of Burgundy, and was reputed to have defrayed the expenses of his monastic establishment at Spannheim by the resources which the Philosopher's Stone put at his disposal. His writings show him to have been an amiable and credulous enthusiast, but his sincere and ardent passion for knowledge may well incline us to forgive the follies which he only shared with most of the scholars and wise men of his age.

In concluding the history of alchymy, we must not altogether forget the patrons of the magic art, and our sketches would be sadly incomplete if we neglected all reference to the curious narratives of Pierre d'Estaing' and Gilles de Retz; they throw a vivid light on the features of the time.

§ 2. THE STORY OF PIERRE D'ESTAING.

This cursed craft who so wol exercise,
 He shal no good have, that him may suffice :
 For al the goode he spendeth thereabout,
 He lesen shal, thereof have I no doute.—CHAUCER.

In compiling the following narrative, we shall closely follow the account condensed by Mr. Wright,* from the "Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes."

It was one November day in the year 1455 that the tranquillity of the Jacobin monks of Dijon was suddenly perturbed by the arrival of a man, travel-worn and exhausted, who stated that he was Pierre d'Estaing, a chirurgion, and attached to the household of the Duc de Bourbon, and that he claimed from the monks the privilege of sanctuary. It was freely accorded, but the protection did not long avail

* "Narratives of Sorcery and Magic," by Thomas Wright.

the unhappy man. On the 7th of the same month, between eight and nine in the morning, the streets of Dijon were aroused by a clattering of hoofs, and the startled citizens looking forth, descried a procession of armed retainers escorting the powerful lord of Mirebeau and Bourbonne, Jean de Beaufremont, and two of his bastard children. The cavalcade paused at the gate of the Jacobin convent, and placing their horses secretly in the stables of a neighbouring inn, demanded admittance on the pretext that they had come to hear mass. Pouring into the echoing cloisters, they found Pierre d'Estaing sitting and trembling under the arcade, and immediately seizing him, in spite of the resistance and solemn menaces of the monks, dragged him forth from his asylum, and fetching a horse, bound him tightly to the horse's back. On his struggling with his captors, the lord of Mirebeau drew his dagger, and wounded him in the head. The unscrupulous band then mounted their steeds, galloped through the streets of Dijon, and passing through the gate before its terrified warders could summon the resolution to close it, rode hastily away to the castle of Mirebeau, where D'Estaing was flung into the lowest dungeon.

This daring violation of the right of sanctuary

and encroachment upon the privileges of the town of Dijon, necessarily excited great indignation in the popular mind. The mayor and échevins of the town met in solemn conclave, and determined to demand reparation of the lord of Mirebeau for the outrage he had committed. Their lieutenants were sent to the castle to intimate the intentions of the magistracy, but were received with pretended courtesy and evasive answers; and at length, on the 13th of November, the sergeant and crier of the town went forth into all its streets and public places, and with sound of trumpet summoned the Lord Jean de Beaufremont and his accomplices to appear before the mayor on Monday, the 24th of November, at two o'clock in the afternoon, on pain of confiscation of all the goods he possessed in Dijon, and of perpetual banishment from the town and its jurisdiction.

Jean de Beaufremont sat in his castle of Mirebeau, and regarded with contemptuous indifference the summons of the crier and the threats of the magistracy. As he possessed no goods within their jurisdiction, he knew that the strong measure of confiscation would fall harmlessly to the ground. Baffled by their contumacious opponent, the citizens of Dijon

were not, however, beaten, and they resolved upon applying to the sovran chief of the lord of Mirebeau, the Duke of Burgundy. Jean de Beaufremont, it was true, had rendered eminent military services to his chief, and had been one of his most devoted partisans. This was a difficulty, it is true, but the citizens of Dijon proved themselves equal to the occasion. They voted a loan of sixty thousand francs to the Duke, and discreetly and liberally distributed gifts among his principal councillors. The result was that the Duke took up their cause with characteristic warmth, and issued, on the 9th of December, a peremptory mandate to the bailiff of Dijon to repair immediately to the castle of Mirebeau, rescue the prisoner, and restore him to his monastic asylum; and moreover to arrest all who had been implicated in the outrage, and commit them to prison in the Duke's strong castle of Talant, situated in the vicinity of Dijon.

Jean de Beaufremont did not dare to brave the power of the Duke of Burgundy, and after some hesitation, surrendered himself on the 10th of January a prisoner in the castle of Talant. His trial was immediately begun, and prosecuted with great vigour, but the lord of Mirebeau could not be induced to confess the

causes of his hostility to Pierre d'Estaing, nor could the prosecution arrive at any satisfactory result until the accomplices were arrested, which took place in the month of March, and confronted with their master. He then revealed the full extent of his transactions with the chirurgien.

Pierre d'Estaing had been introduced to the lord of Mirebeau by a certain Jacobin monk named Olivier, as a gentleman by birth, who had a *ligue* with the Evil One that enabled him to raise every year a sum of forty or fifty thousand crowns. Pierre d'Estaing agreed to instruct the lord of Mirebeau in all the science of his *ligue*, upon condition that the said lord deposited the moderate sum of a thousand golden crowns in the hands of a merchant, to be paid to the alchemist as soon as he had fulfilled his promise. These terms were ratified between the two at Moulins, where Jean d'Estaing then resided.

“Before Jean de Beaufremont departed from Moulins,” says Mr. Wright, “Pierre d'Estaing gave him one of his servants to accompany him back to Mirebeau, there to commence operations, which he said would take three months before it would be necessary for him to interfere. He was then to bring

the preparation to Moulins, and to pay two hundred écus into the hands of the alchymist, upon which the latter would enter upon the more secret parts of the process, which his servant was incapable of performing.

“Jean de Beaufremont accordingly returned to his castle of Mirebeau with Pierre d’Estaing’s servant, to whom he gave money to defray his expenses. At Mirebeau the servant began to work assiduously on his ‘operations,’ in the course of which he was sent several times to consult his master, always at Jean de Beaufremont’s expense, who also gave him daily a Rhenish florin for his wages. In the sequel Pierre d’Estaing himself came to Mirebeau, and renewed his promises to its lord, who in return assured him that he should be liberally rewarded. Master Pierre, with three assistants, had remained in the castle a considerable time at Jean de Beaufremont’s expense, when the latter received a letter from the Count of Clermont, son of the Duke of Bourbon and Auvergne, to whose household the alchymist had been attached. The Count congratulated the lord of Mirebeau on the acquisition he had made in the person of Master Pierre d’Estaing, who, he said, was quite capable of performing what he had pro-

mised, adding that he would not have permitted him to leave his service for that of any person; he recommended him to keep a sharp watch upon the alchymist, and if he did not perform his work to his satisfaction to shut him up in a place where he could work only by candlelight, and to keep him there till it was done; and concluded by expressing a hope that Jean de Beaufremont would not object to share with him the great treasure which he was to gain by the labours of Master Pierre.

“Jean de Beaufremont immediately showed the Count's letter to Pierre d'Estaing, who was much abashed when he heard its contents, and bursting into tears, fell on his knees before him, and begged that he would have pity upon him. Jean de Beaufremont told him to lay aside his fears, assured him that no one should injure him, and promised to treat him as he would his own child. It appears, however, that he led him into the chapel of the castle, and made him swear, with his hand upon the altar, that he would not go beyond the castle walls until he had entirely completed his task. Upon this Pierre d'Estaing obtained from his employer a hundred and fifty francs to give to his first servant, a horse worth twelve écus, and a mantle of four écus; six écus to distri-

bute among his other servants, twenty écus to send to his house at Moulins, and ten écus to send to his *chambrière*. It is probable that the alchemist was now treated with rigour, and that he considered his life in danger; for these last transactions occurred about the feast of All Saints, two or three days after which, while Jean de Beaufremont was absent on a visit to Villers-les-Pots, he let himself down from one of the castle windows by means of his bed-clothes, about eleven o'clock at night, passed the outer watch of the castle unperceived, and wandering till morning, reached the town of Dijon, where, as we have already seen, he sought shelter in the convent of the Jacobins."

Jean de Beaufremont now perceived that he had been duped, and that his hopes of immense wealth had fallen to the ground. He resolved upon revenge, and for this purpose hazarded the daring violation of the right of sanctuary which had aroused the wrath of the good citizens of Dijon. The offence was not denied by the lord of Mirebeau, and the court accordingly proceeded to pass sentence. His accomplices were to be brought on a Sunday, barefoot and clothed only in their shirts, each with a lighted taper in his hands

weighing three pounds, before the same gate of the town through which Pierre d'Estaing had been carried away, and there they were to cry "Mercy" on their knees before the mayor and échevins, and make a public confession of their crime. Then they were to recite the *amende honorable*, after which each was to have one of his hands cut off; next they were to carry their tapers to the Jacobin convent, and offer them at the high altar; and finally to pay a pecuniary fine proportionate to their means, and be banished from the town and jurisdiction of Dijon for ever.

As was too often the case in the feudal days, the instigator of the outrage—the lord of Mirebeau himself—suffered far less than his unfortunate followers. He remained in prison until the 26th of March, 1457, when he was pardoned by Duke Philip of Burgundy, whose mercy he had implored in the most abject terms. He died soon afterwards, in the midst of some civil proceedings which had been commenced against him by the imperturbable magistracy of Dijon. The litigation was continued against his heirs, and was not finally settled until August, 1472, when the Parliament of Burgundy condemned them to a fine of four thousand livres.

§ 3. THE STORY OF GILLES DE RETZ.

Before this event he had won much fame as a very valiant knight-at-arms.—MONSTRELET.

Such a noise arose
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
As loud, and to as many tunes.—SHAKSPEARE.

Gilles de Laval, lord of Retz and Marshal of France—the “Blue Beard” of our old nursery legends—was born about the year 1420, of one of the most famous families of Brittany.*

His father died when the young Gilles was in his twentieth year, and the impetuous lad found himself possessed of unlimited power and wealth. By birth he was connected with the Roceys, the Craons, and the Montmorencys. Through his father's decease he became the lord of fifteen princely domains, yielding a revenue of three hundred thousand livres. He was handsome, lithe, well-limbed, but distinguished by the appendage of a beard of bluish black. His address was fascinating, his erudition extensive, his courage unimpeachable.

* The following singular narrative is based upon Sismondi's “Histoire des François,” Lobineau's “Nouvelle Histoire de Bretagne,” De Barante's “Histoire des Ducs de Bourgignon,” Monstrelet's “Chronicles,” T. A. Trollope's “Western France,” &c.

Everything seemed to promise a splendid and illustrious career, instead of that dark and miserable history which has associated the name of the Blue Beard with so many traditions of horror and legends of atrocious crimes.

At the outset he did nothing to justify an evil augury. He served with zeal and gallantry in the wars of Charles VI. against the English, and had fought under Joan of Arc in the ever memorable siege of Orléans. His exploits procured him from a grateful king the reward of the high dignity of Marshal of France. From this point his career tended downwards. He retired to his castle of Champtocé, and indulged in the display of the most luxurious state. Two hundred horsemen accompanied him on his travels, and his train, when he went hawking or hunting, exceeded in magnificence that of the king himself. His retainers wore the most sumptuous dresses; his horses were caparisoned with the richest trappings; his castle-gates were thrown open day and night to every comer, for whom an ox was daily roasted whole, and sheep, and pigs, and poultry, wine, mead, and hippocras provided in sufficient quantities for five hundred persons. He carried the same love of pomp

into his devotion. His principal chaplain, whom he called a bishop, a dean, a chanter, two archdeacons, four vicars, a schoolmaster, twelve assistant chaplains, and eight choristers composed his ecclesiastical establishment. Each of these had his horse and his servant; all were dressed in robes of scarlet and furs, and had costly appointments. Chandeliers, censers, crosses, patines, sacred vessels, crucifixes, all of gold and silver, were transported with them wherever their lord went, together with many organs, each carried by six men. He was exceedingly desirous that all the priests of his chapel should be entitled to wear the mitre, and he sent many embassies to Rome to obtain this privilege, but without success. He maintained a choir of twenty-five young children of both sexes, and these he caused to be instructed in singing by the best masters of the day. He had also his comedians, his morris-dancers, and his jugglers, and every hour was crowned with some sensual gratification or voluptuous pleasure.

In 1443 this magnificent young seigneur wedded Catherine, the heiress of the noble house of Thouars,—an event which afforded him fresh occasions of displaying his insane passion for luxurious pomp. He gave the most

splendid banquets; he figured in the most chivalric tournaments. His guests, who came from all parts to share in the revels of Champtocé, knew not which to admire the most—his skill in all knightly exercises, or his profound erudition. But his diseased intellect now began to betray its guilty aberrations. He gradually shrank from the pleasures that had once amused him, from the wine-cup and the liberal dancing-girl. His brow grew dark and ominous; his eyes shone with a strange and fatal glitter; and terrible rumours were now bruited through all the country side. It was noticed that many young girls and boys had recently disappeared. Some had been traced to the castle of Champtocé, and not beyond. The public voice accused him of murder, and of crimes even worse than murder,—of lust in its foulest and most disgusting shapes. It was true that no one dared openly accuse a baron so powerful as the lord of Retz. It was true that whenever the circumstances of the disappearance of so many children were alluded to in his presence he always manifested the greatest astonishment. But the suspicions of the people once aroused are not easily allayed; and the castle of Champtocé and its lord soon acquired a fearful

reputation, and were surrounded with an appalling mystery.

The regal state maintained by the lord of Retz was ordered on so extensive a scale that it even exhausted *his* apparently inexhaustible revenues; and to procure the funds for his pleasures and his extravagance, he was compelled to sell several of his baronies. But the needs of a profuse voluptuary are as a gulf which swallows everything that can be thrown into it, and still cries aloud for more. Then the marshal attempted to dispose of his seignory of Ingrande. But his heirs-at-law, indisposed to see their valuable inheritance gradually pared away into nothing, solicited the interference of the king, and a royal edict prohibited him from selling his paternal estates. In this predicament most men would have curtailed their profusion and endeavoured to economize their income, but Gilles de Retz was unable to live in diminished splendour. The luxuries that surrounded him were all that for him made life. To have shorn him of his magnificence would have been to strike a death-blow at his heart. Money, therefore, became the principal object of his desires, and to obtain money it seemed to his excited imagination only necessary that he should turn alchymist.

He sent accordingly into Italy, Spain, and Germany, and invited the adepts in the great science to repair from every land to the splendours of Champtocé. Amongst those who obeyed the summons, and continued attached to him during the remainder of his career, were Prelati, an alchemist of Padua, and a physician of Poitou, whose name is not given. At their instigation he built a stately laboratory, and joined by other adepts, eagerly began the search for the Philosopher's Stone. For a twelvemonth the furnaces blazed away right merrily, and a thousand chemical combinations disposed of the Marshal's gold and silver. Meanwhile, the alchemists feasted on the most luxurious viands, and quaffed the rarest wines; and so admirable were their quarters that, as far as they were concerned, they would have prosecuted the quest of the *elixir vitæ* or the Philosopher's Stone until death cut short their labours.

The impetuosity of the lord of Retz could not abide such lingering processes. He wanted wealth, and he wanted it immediately. If the grand secret could not be discovered by any quicker method he would have none of it, nor, indeed, as his resources were fast melting away, would it avail him much if the search occupied

several years. At this juncture the Poitousan physician and the Paduan alchymist whispered to him of quicker and bolder methods of attaining the desired alkahest, if he had the courage to adopt them. Gilles de Retz immediately dismissed the inferior adepts, and put himself in the hands of the two abler and subtler masters. These persuaded him that the Evil One could at once reveal to them the secret, and offered to summon him *ex tenebris*, for the Marshal to conclude with him whatever arrangement he thought best. As long as he saved his soul, the lord of Retz professed himself willing to do anything the devil might command.

In this frame of mind he went with the physician at midnight to a solitary recess in the neighbouring wood, where the physician drew the magic circle and made the customary conjurations. Gilles listened to the invocation with wonder; and expectant that every moment the Spirit of Darkness would burst upon the startled silence, breathing the blasts of hell. After the lapse of some thirty minutes, the physician manifested signs of the greatest alarm; his hair seemed to stand on end, his eyes glared with unutterable horror; he talked wildly, his knees shook, a deadly pallor

overspread his countenance, and he sank to the ground. Gilles was a man of dauntless bravery, and gazed upon the strange scene unmoved. After awhile the physician pretended to recover consciousness. He arose, and turning to his master, inquired if he had not remarked the wrathful countenance of the devil. De Retz replied that he had seen no devil. Whereupon the physician declared he had appeared in the fashion of a wild leopard, and had growled at him horribly. "You," he said to his lord, "would have seen the same, and heard the same, but for your want of faith. You could not determine to give yourself up wholly to his service, and therefore he spread a mist before your eyes." De Retz acknowledged that his resolution had somewhat faltered, but that now his choice was made, if indeed the Evil One could be coerced into speaking, and revealing the secret of the universal alkahest. The physician said that there grew certain herbs in Spain and Africa which possessed the necessary power, and offered to go in search of them himself if the lord of Laval would supply the funds. As no one else would be able to detect the herbs so miraculously gifted, De Retz thanked the physician for his voluntary self-denial, and

loaded him with all the gold he could spare. The physician then took leave of his credulous patron, who never saw him again. The Poitousan knave at least had learned the secret; for he knew how to transmute his own brass into good sterling gold.

De Retz, as soon as the physician had quitted Champtocé, was once more seized with the fever of unrest. His days and nights were consumed in ceaseless visions of gold; gold, without which he must abandon his gilded pomp and unholy pleasures; gold, without which he could not hope to brave his enemies or procure exemption from the just punishment of his crimes. He now turned for help to the alchemist Prelati, who agreed to undertake the enterprise if De Retz furnished him with the charms and talismans necessary in so troublesome a work. He was to sign with his blood a contract that he would obey the devil in all things, and to offer up a sacrifice of the hands, eyes, blood, heart, and lungs of a young child. The madman having willingly consented to these terms, Prelati went out alone on the following night, and after an absence of three hours returned to his impatient lord. His tale was a monstrously extravagant one, but De Retz swallowed it greedily. The devil had

appeared in the shape of a comely young man of twenty, who desired to be called Barron, and had pointed out to him a store of ingots of pure gold, buried under an oak in the neighbouring wood, which was to become the property of the lord of Laval if he fulfilled the conditions of his contract. But this bright prospect was overclouded by the devil's injunction that the gold was not to be searched for until a period of seven times seven weeks had elapsed, or it would turn to slates and dust. De Retz was by no means willing to wait so many months for the realization of his wishes, and desired Prelati to intimate to the devil that he should decline any further correspondence with him if matters could not be expedited. Prelati persuaded him to wait for seven times seven days, and then, the two repaired with pickaxe and shovel to dig up the treasure. After some hard work they lighted upon a load of slates inscribed with hieroglyphical characters. Prelati broke out into a fit of rage, and calumniated the Evil One as a liar, a knave, a rogue,—De Retz heartily joining in his fierce denunciations. He persuaded his master, however, to give the devil a further trial, and led him on from day to day with dark oracular hints and pretended

demoniac intimations, until he had obtained nearly all the valuables remaining to his unhappy dupe. He was then preparing to escape with his plunder, when a catastrophe occurred which rightly involved him in his lord's ruin.

The continued disappearance of young boys and girls had caused so bitter a feeling in the neighbourhood that the Church had felt constrained to intervene, and on the earnest representations of the Bishop of Nantes, the Duke of Brittany ordered De Retz and his accomplice to be arrested. Their trial took place before a commission composed of the Bishop of Nantes, Chancellor of Brittany, the Vicar of the Inquisition, and Pierre l'Hôpital, the President of the Provincial Parliament.

De Retz was accused of sorcery, sodomy, and murder. At first he displayed the most consummate coolness, denounced his judges as worthless and impure characters, and declared that rather than plead before such shameless knaves he would be hung like a dog, without trial. But the overwhelming evidence brought against him—the terrible revelations made by Prelati and his servants of his abandoned lust, of his sacrifices of young children for the

supposed gratification of the devil, and the ferocious pleasure with which he gloated over the throbbing limbs and glazing eyes of those who were equally the victims of his sensuality and his cruelty,—this horrible tale, as it unfolded day by day the black record of his enormities, shook even *his* imperturbable courage, and he confessed everything. The blood-stained chronicle showed that nearly one hundred children had fallen victims to this madman's lecherous iniquity, and his insane greed of the Philosopher's Stone.

Both De Retz and Prelati were doomed to be burned alive, but in consideration of his rank, the punishment of the Marshal was somewhat mitigated. He was strangled before he was given over to the flames. On the scaffold he exclaimed to Prelati, with a hideous assumption of religious confidence, "Farewell, friend Francis! In this world we shall never meet again; but let us rest our hopes in God—we shall see each other in Paradise!" The sentence was executed at Nantes on the 23rd of February, 1440. "Notwithstanding his many and atrocious cruelties," says the old chronicler, Monstrelet, "he made a very devout end, full of penitence, most humbly imploring his Creator to have mercy on his manifold sins

and wickednesses. When his body was partly burnt, some ladies and damsels of his family requested his remains of the Duke of Brittany, that they might be interred in holy ground; which was granted. The greater part of the nobles of Brittany, more especially those of his kindred, were in the utmost grief and confusion at his shameful death."

The castle of Champtocé still stands in its beautiful valley, and many a romantic legend flowers about its gray old walls. "The hideous, half-burnt body of the monster himself, circled with flames,—pale, indeed, and faint in colour, but more lasting than those the hangman kindled around his mortal form in the meadow under the walls of Nantes,—is seen on bright moonlight nights, standing now on one topmost point of craggy wall, now on another, and is heard mingling his moan with the sough of the night-wind. Pale, bloodless forms, too, of youthful growth and mien, the restless, unsepulchred ghosts of the unfortunates who perished in these dungeons unassoiled, may at similar times be seen flitting backwards and forwards in numerous groups across the space enclosed by the ruined walls, with more than mortal speed, or glancing hurriedly from window to window of the fabric,

as still seeking to escape from its hateful confinement.”*

Gilles de Retz exceeded in the enormity of his crimes the majority of his compatriots. We may even conclude that his conduct was in a great measure influenced by a diseased mind, and that only the feverish restlessness of the maniac could have stimulated a career so horribly foul. But there were hundreds of great lords and opulent merchants, who, yielding to the delusion of the alchemists, and becoming the prey of subtle dupes,—as unlike as possible to the pure and simple enthusiasts actuated in their study of the occult sciences by a sincere, if misdirected, love of knowledge,—were guilty of the darkest deeds of injustice and cruelty in their frenzied desire to gain the secret of inexhaustible wealth. Such is the difference between the true knowledge and the false; while the one excites the worst passions of human nature, and awakens our most sordid and earthly impulses, the other points steadily to the elevation of the soul, the expansion of the mind, and the general good of the brotherhood of man as the objects of a generous aspiration and a noble ambition.

* T. A. Trollope, “Western France,” vol. ii.

§ 3. LATER ALCHEMISTS, AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSY CROSS.

If I told thee that I could initiate thee into the secrets of that magic which the philosophy of the whole existing world treats as a chimera, or imposture—if I promised to show thee how to command the beings of air and ocean, how to accumulate wealth more easily than a child can gather pebbles on the shore, to place in thy hands the essence of the herbs which prolong life from age to age, the mystery of that attraction by which to awe all danger, and disarm all violence, and subdue man as the serpent charms the bird; if I told thee that all these it was mine to possess and to communicate, thou wouldst listen to me then and obey me without a doubt.

BULWER LYTTON, *Zanoni*.

Our limits will not permit us to enumerate all the great alchemists of the Middle Ages. Nearly every scholar with any pretensions to scientific knowledge was fascinated by the splendid delusion. Even the erudite theologian, PETER OF LOMBARDY, the author of "The Sentences," composed a "Complete Treatise upon the Hermetic Science." Not a student but indulged in dreams of the great "magistry" which was to ward off the attacks of death, and place at man's disposal the resources of inexhaustible wealth. The madness seized upon monk and baron, physician, prince, and philosopher. JOHN DE RUPECISSA, a Franciscan, obtained great celebrity as a master in the hermetic science, and as an

utterer of bold prophecies. The latter aroused the indignation of Pope Innocent VI., who shut up the prophet in the dungeons of the Vatican, where he died. He wrote a remarkable treatise, "De Confectione Lapidis," which may be intelligible to adepts, but not to ordinary nineteenth-century readers. Isaac Hollandus was another distinguished teacher: his principal works are, "Mineralia Opera," and "De Triplici Ordine Elixiris et Lapidis Theoria." ANGURELLO, who was born at Rimini in 1441, devoted his whole life to the study of chemistry, and is the hero of a pleasant anecdote in connexion with Leo X. He had dedicated his poetical treatise of the "Chrysopeia" to that splendid pontiff, in the hope he should receive a munificent reward; but the able Medici approved neither of the bad rhymes nor the extravagant doctrines they embodied, and presenting him with an empty purse, remarked that since he was able to make gold, no present could be more appropriate than a purse to hold it. Angurello died, in extreme want, in 1524, aged 83, and was indebted to the charity of the public for a grave. How keen a satire on the inordinate pretensions of these would-be thaumaturgists!

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA and PARACELSUS are persons too important to be disposed of in half-dozen lines. The reader will find their histories sketched in succeeding chapters.

GEORGE BAUER, who Latinized his name (a poor or husbandman) into Agricola, was born in the province of Misnia in 1494. An able and industrious man, he acquired a considerable knowledge of the principles of medicine, which led him, as it led his contemporaries, to search for the *elixir vitæ* and the Philosopher's Stone. A treatise on these interesting subjects, which he published at Cologne in 1531, secured him the favour of Duke Maurice of Saxony, who appointed him the superintendent of his silver-mines at Chemnitz. In this post he obtained a practical acquaintance with the properties of metals which dissipated his wild notions of their possible transmutation into gold; but if he abandoned one superstition he adopted another, and from the legends of the miners imbued a belief in the existence of good and evil spirits in the bowels of the earth, and in the creation of explosive gases and fire-damp by the malicious agency of the latter. Bauer died in 1555.

Another persevering but deluded student,

who, if he had bestowed upon practical science the thought and labour he gave to the visionary conceptions of the hermetic philosophers, must have secured an enduring renown as a benefactor to mankind, was DENIS ZACHAIRE, born in 1510, of an ancient family in Guienne. Provided with a private tutor, he was despatched at an early age to the University of Bordeaux; but his tutor being "an adept," he was soon inoculated with the grand passion, and abandoned Homer and Virgil for Geber and Raymond Lulli. Master and pupil shut themselves up in their laboratory until the former was killed by its poisonous fumes and stifling heat, and the latter seriously injured. His parents then reduced his allowance so as to restrict him to the sum necessary for his board and lodging, but Zachaire mortgaged his little property, and at the age of twenty-five gave himself up to the worship of alchemy. At Toulouse, at Cahors, at Paris, he prosecuted his researches, now with the help of one adept, and now with the instructions of another; transmuting nothing but his own solid gold into fume and vapour, but toiling with an indefatigable perseverance worthy of a better cause. He studied the works of Bernard of Trêves, Jean de Meung, and Arnold de

Villeneuve with exemplary ardour. He tried the process of cementation, of congelation; he experimented with spirits of wine, essence of emery, and all the drugs and minerals with which chemists were then familiar; he even boasted that he had discovered the Philosopher's Stone, and obtained great celebrity as a skilful manipulator; but he grew poorer and poorer, and at length acknowledged the utter vanity of the dreams upon which he had wasted the best years of his life. He left behind him a work on the "Natural Philosophy of Metals." The place and year of his death, and even his real name, are unknown. He appears to have been so ashamed of the futility of his boasts and the uselessness of his labours, as gladly to have secluded himself from the world, and passed his latter years in the most complete obscurity.

A burning and a shining light in the world of alchemy was the mysterious personage known as the COSMOPOLITE, reputed by some authorities to have been a Scotchman named Seaton; by others believed to be identical with Michael Sandivogius. The latter became acquainted with the Cosmopolite, and was made by him a confidant of his secrets. Happy

Sandivogius ! Those secrets included "a small packet of black powder," which was, in effect, the Philosopher's Stone ; the mighty talisman that transmuted metals into gold ! Seaton, or the Cosmopolite, died at Cracow in 1603, bequeathing to an ungrateful posterity a long list of Hermetic treatises, and to the fortunate Sandivogius the "open sesame" of boundless wealth. Sandivogius was not contented with one secret, he wanted all ; and hoped to secure them by marrying the Cosmopolite's widow. He forgot that the alchemist was too prudent a man to confide them to a woman !

Sandivog, or Sandivogius, was a man of astonishing impudence and great natural powers of cheating. With his black powder he converted great quantities of quicksilver into gold, and performed the trick with so much adroitness that he actually imposed upon the Emperor Rudolph II., before whom the exploit was accomplished in the palace at Prague. The Emperor commemorated the circumstance by causing a marble tablet to be affixed to the wall of the chamber where the grand process had been performed ; it was inscribed, "*Faciât hoc quispiam alius, quod fecit Sandivogius Polonius.*" Desnoyers the Frenchman, who was secretary to the Queen of Poland in 1651, relates that he had often seen this tablet.

This clever impostor, whose amusing adventures have been fully detailed by Lenglet du Fresnoy, lived to the ripe age of eighty-one; died in 1636; and was buried at his own chapel in Gravarna.

As the principles of the Lutheran Reformation gradually spread over Europe, and a broader and a purer science occupied the intellects of philosophers, the follies of the Hermetic writers ceased to attract attention. The grand discoveries which rewarded the persevering researches of the chemist and the astronomer extinguished the delusive speculations of hot and credulous visionaries; and men perceived that if the Philosopher's Stone were actually a possibility, it must at least be utterly useless.* Occasionally the delusion was revived by some astrological quack or enthusiastic student. It even amused the large intellects of such men as Van Helmont, Kircher, Boerhaave, and Helvetius; but the last pretenders to the great secret were clever but splendid impostors—charlatans who were not contented with vulgar tricks, but aimed at the most audacious designs—the Count de St. Germain, who boasted of his possession of the *elixir*

* Such was the opinion of Sir Humphry Davy, as expressed to the elder D'Israeli.

vitæ; and Cagliostro the well-known hero of the drama of Marie Antoinette's "Diamond Necklace."

THE ROSICRUCIANS; OR THE BROTHERHOOD OF
THE ROSY CROSS.

It is fit that we who endeavour to rise to an elevation so sublime, should study first to leave behind carnal affections, the frailty of the senses, the passions that belong to matter; secondly, to learn by what means we may ascend to the climax of pure intellect, united with the powers above, without which never can we gain the lore of secret things, nor the magic that effects true wonders.

TRITHEMIUS, *De Occultis Rebus*.

The origin of the famous sect of the Rosicrucians cannot be determined with any certainty, but it is generally agreed that they derived their name from Christian Rosencreutz, or "Rose-Cross," a German philosopher, who, while travelling in the Holy Land, fell ill at a place called Damear; and being tended by some Arabian philosophers, obtained from them the germ of the new philosophy. He returned to Europe in 1401, and gathering around him a chosen number of disciples, initiated them into the sublime mystery, binding them by oath not to reveal it for one hundred years. Rosencreutz died, it is said, in 1484. The principal tenets of this strange

brotherhood would appear, however, to be the natural development of the doctrines of Paracelsus, who taught the existence of a race of invisible beings, subordinate to the angels, but superior to man, and only controllable by those who possessed the Philosopher's Stone. The Rosicrucians, by whomsoever founded, deserve our respect in a much greater degree than the Alchymists. They aimed at higher things than the mere accumulation of money, and they insisted upon the utmost purity of life and morals as essential to the success of the student who sought initiation into their mysteries. They sublimed and spiritualized the theories of the earlier alchymists into a poetical philosophy, and the literary student will at least remember that to their graceful visions is due the machinery of gnomes and sylphs, which lends so peculiar a charm to Pope's exquisite poem, "The Rape of the Lock."

The existence of this mysterious fraternity was first made known to the outside world by the writings of one Johann Valentine Andrea, German scholar, born at Herrenberg, in the duchy of Würtemberg, in 1586. In his *Fama Fraternitatis des löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreuzes*," published at Frankfort in

1617, he relates the story of Christian Rosencreutz, and in his second work, "*Confessio Fraternitatis Roseæ Crucis ad Eruditos Europæ*," he enunciates their principles, and defends them from the suspicion of having a political or religious character. Nevertheless, many writers,—but, as it appears to us, on no good grounds,—have sought to identify them with the revolutionary orders of the Illuminati, the Carbonari, and the Freemasons, formerly so powerful on the European continent. Böhle, a learned writer on their origin and polity, speaks of them as a branch, or offshoot of the Freemasons, one of whose degrees or dignities is called in some countries the Order of the Red Cross. For upwards of a century the brotherhood has possessed no collective importance, but it is not utterly extinct, and you will still occasionally meet with an amiable enthusiast whose boast it is that "I, too, am a Rosicrucian!"*

The announcement of the existence of the Rosicrucians and the proclamation of their leading tenets excited a singular commotion in Germany and England, and numerous neophytes professed themselves anxious to be

* See "*The Rosicrucian*," by Hargrave Jennings, 1863.

enrolled in so illustrious an order. Michael Mayer, a German physician of celebrity, published a species of manifesto in which he claimed for his fraternity the most extraordinary pretensions. They were gifted, he said, with all the graces of nature, which, at their pleasure, they could bestow upon the rest of mankind :— They were indifferent to the claims of hunger and thirst, impenetrable to the attacks of old age and disease, and unaffected by the usual afflictions of humanity :—The sublime contemplations of their founders surpassed all that had been conceived since the creation of the world, and even exceeded the revelations of the Deity :—It was their glorious destiny to effect the general peace and regeneration of man before the end of the world arrived :— They were endowed with wisdom and virtue in an extraordinary degree :— They could recognise, instinctively and at a glance, the neophyte who was worthy of admission into their fraternity :—They possessed a volume wherein could be read all that had been, or ever would be, written :—They held sway over the most potent spirits and demons :—They could render themselves invisible to the eyes of mortals.

Such were some of the more extravagant

pretensions put forward by the most enthusiastic Rosicrucians, of whom Mayer was well worthy to be the mouthpiece; but there were among them able and sincere men, who were simply the disciples of a new kind of mysticism, and concealed their theories under the garb of an allegorical and symbolic language. They sought to revive the doctrines of the Platonists,—of such men as Psellus, Plotinus, and Iamblicus,—and to approximate as nearly as might be to the secrets of Universal Nature. The professors of what may be termed the Magnetic Philosophy, they lost themselves in vain but splendid dreams of regenerated humanity. To hold converse with the spirits of the unseen,—to conquer the obstacles of time and space,—to penetrate to a knowledge of the mysterious operations of nature,—to repress the sensual in man and develop the psychical, so that the Intelligence might aspire to a comprehension of the things of heaven,—these were the grand aims of the higher and wiser Rosicrucians. Thus they were led to exaggerate the importance of certain physical conditions, such as trance, and to elevate the influence of the will upon the imagination into a mysterious and divine power; and as a necessity to that deification of humanity which

was the real object of their system, they inculcated the utmost purity of life, the subjection of the carnal affections, the putting aside of mere mundane ambitions. Above the world of love and hatred, hope and fear, the true Rosicrucians professed to rise into a sphere of pure intellect—pure, passionless intellect—

Fliehet aus dem engen dumpfen Leben
In des Ideales Reich.—SCHILLER.

Out of this dwarf'd and sordid life to soar
Into the realm of the Ideal!

The Order of the Rose-Cross enjoined upon its members obedience to six disciplinary laws, which they professed to have found written in a golden book in the tomb of Rosencreutz:—

“1.—That in their travels they should gratuitously cure all diseases. [It may be noted that the Rosicrucians laid great stress upon the study and practice of medicine.]

“2.—That they should always adopt the costume of the country in which they resided.

“3.—That they should, once every year, meet together at some place appointed by the brotherhood, unless they forwarded, in writing, a satisfactory excuse.

“4.—That every brother who grew weary of life, and inclined to die, should appoint a suitable successor.

“ 5.—That the pass-words by which they recognised one another should be ‘Rose-Cross.’

“ 6.—That their fraternity should be kept secret for six times twenty years.” [Reckoning from the supposed date of the death of Rosencreutz, this period expired in 1604.]

After making many additions to their Order in Germany, the Rosicrucians extended their operations to Paris, announcing their arrival in March, 1623, by an *affiche* to the walls:—

“ We, the Deputies of the principal College of the Brethren of the Rose-Cross, have taken up our residence, visibly and invisibly, in this city of Paris, by the grace of the Most High, towards whom are turned the hearts of the just. We show and teach, without books or signs, and speak all kinds of languages in the countries where we dwell, to draw mankind, our fellows, from error and from death.”

This announcement excited general curiosity, and Parisian society was soon divided into Anti- and Pro-Rosicrucians. Some violent attacks were made upon them through the press, and the wildest and most baseless rumours were circulated concerning their deeds and theories. They were accused of making use of their invisibility for purposes of lust—of

renouncing the blessed promises of the Christian religion—of working their prodigies by the help of demons—of rendering service to the devil—of blaspheming the Church, and proclaiming hostility to the Pope. Of these charges the last was true, and it was sufficient to excite against the hapless fraternity the wrath of the priesthood. But the days of the stake and the gibbet had passed by. Men had not only grown more humane, but more sceptical, and only laughed while infuriated priests accused the Rosicrucians of the foulest crimes and the most wonderful achievements.

The Rosicrucians themselves protested that they esteemed chastity as the highest of all virtues, that they abhorred sorcery and witchcraft, and disbelieved the existence of imps and demons, fiends and succubi; that man was surrounded by genial and beneficent beings, whose pleasure it was to help, serve, and befriend him; that the air was peopled with sylphs, the water with naiads or undines, the fire with salamanders, the depths of the earth with gnomes; that these were inferior to man because they possessed no immortal soul, but were spirits of great power whom no material obstacles could check or affright; that man could arrive at a knowledge of them

by subduing his carnal passions, and that they might become possessed of immortality if they could inspire with mutual love any of man's immortal race, whereupon the lover and the loved would enter in happy communion into the eternal heaven; finally, that day and night they watched over mankind, and warned them of approaching danger by means of omens, dreams, and presentiments.

After a time Rosicrucianism sunk into oblivion. In Germany its greatest professor was Jacob Böhmen; in England, Robert Fludd; and these had numerous disciples, *Fratres Roseæ Crucis*, who devoted themselves to the wonders of earth; *Fratres Aureæ Crucis*, who aspired to the sole contemplation of things divine. But Science went on her way enlightening, expanding, and elevating; Literature grew wider in its teachings and more practical; the times quickened with new and mighty impulses—the premonitory symptoms of mighty changes; and except in the visionary solitude of some secluded student, gnomes, and sylphs, and salamanders lived only for the fancy of the poet. The best exposition of the tenets of this remarkable sect will be found in Borri's "Key of the Cabinet," first published about 1680, and the

amusing fiction of "The Comte de Gabalis," by the Abbé de Villars, of which an English summary was prefixed to the first edition of Pope's "Rape of the Lock." Rosicrucianism has been of great service to imaginative literature. It suggested the sylphs and gnomes of Pope's admirable poem; the beautiful Undine of La Motte Fouqué; the White Lady of Avenel of Sir Walter Scott; much of the imagery of Goethe's "Faust," and the "Zanoni" of Sir Bulwer Lytton; while to the poets of France, Germany, and England generally, it has supplied a new source of airy creations, and replaced the worn-out machinery of the gods and goddesses of classic Greece.

ROBERT FLUDD.

Robert Fludd, the son of Sir Thomas Fludd, Treasurer of War to Queen Elizabeth, was born at Milgate, in Kent, in the year 1574. He displayed at an early age a marked partiality for the study of medicine, and at the age of twenty-five travelled on the Continent to complete his researches and extend his experience. His youthful predisposition to the marvellous and mystic here found ample food in the writings of Paracelsus and his fol-

lowers, and Fludd soon became a Paracelsian of the deepest dye. Returning to England, he received the diploma of M.D. from the University of Oxford (A.D. 1605), settled in London, Latinized his name into Robertus à Fluctibus, and began to advocate the singular doctrines he had imbibed in the course of his continental tour. He preached the great efficacy of the magnet, of sympathetic cures, of the weapon-salve;* he declared his belief in the Philosopher's Stone, the universal alkahest or solvent, the *elixir vitæ*; he maintained that all things were animated by two principles—*condensation*, the Boreal, or northern virtue; and *rarefaction*, the Austral, or southern virtue. He asserted that the human body was controlled by a number of demons, that each disease had its peculiar demon, each

* The "weapon-salve" was originated by Paracelsus, and cured any wound inflicted by a sharp instrument except in the heart, brain, or arteries. "Take of moss growing on the head of a thief who has been hanged and left in the air, of real mummy, of human blood still warm, of each one ounce; two ounces of human suet, and two drachms each of Armenian bole, turpentine, and linseed oil. Mix thoroughly in a mortar, and keep in a narrow oblong urn." With this salve the weapon was anointed and laid by in a cool place. Meanwhile the wound was to be washed daily with clean cold water, covered with a soft rag, and opened once a day to be cleansed of any fecal matter. An excellent plan! Who knows but that it might succeed even without the *weapon-salve*?

demon his particular place in the frame of humanity, and that to conquer a disease—say in the right leg—you must call in the aid of the demon who ruled the left, always proceeding by this rule of contraries.

As soon as the doctrines of the Rose-Cross Brotherhood were promulgated, Fludd embraced them with all the eagerness of which his dreamy intellect was capable; and several German writers having made an attack upon them, he published a defence in 1616, under the title of “*Apologia Compendiaria Fraternitatem de Rosea-Cruce Suspicionis et Infamiae Maculis Aspersionem Abluens,*” which procured him a wide-spread reputation as one of the apostles of the new fraternity. He met with the usual fate of prophets, and was lustily belaboured by a host of enemies—by Mersenne, Gassendi, and Kepler. Fludd was by no means discomfited, and retorted upon his opponents in an elaborate treatise, “*Summum Bonum, quod est Magiæ, Cabalæ, Alchimie, Fratrum Roseæ-Crucis Verorum, et adversus Mersenum Calumniatorem.*”

He made at a later period an adventurous attempt to identify the doctrines of the Rosicrucians with what he was pleased to call the Philosophy of Moses (*Philosophia Mosaica, in*

quâ sapientia et scientia Creationis explicantur, published at Ghent, 1638), and wrote numerous treatises on alchymy and medical science. After founding an English school of Rosicrucians, Fludd died in peace and honour in 1637, at the comparatively early age (for a Rosicrucian) of sixty-three.

Fludd is one of the high priests of the Magnetic Philosophy, and learnedly expounds the laws of astral medicine, the doctrines of sympathies and antipathies, and the fine powers and marvellous effects of the magnet. When two men approach each other—such was his theory—their magnetism is either active or passive; that is, positive or negative. If the emanations which they send out are broken or thrown back, there arises antipathy, or *Magnetismus negativus*: but when the emanations pass through each other, the positive magnetism is produced, for the magnetic rays proceed from the centre to the circumference. Man, like the earth, has his poles, or two main streams of magnetic influence. Like a little world, he is endowed with a magnetic virtue, which, however, is subjected to the same laws as, on a larger scale, the magnetic power of the universe. How these principles may be developed in the cure or prevention of disease, the

reader must learn from the mystic pages of Robertus à Fluctibus himself.

Fludd had his followers, of whom JOHN HEYDON was the most notorious. His principal work is entitled "A New Method of Rosicrucian Physic, by John Heydon, the Servant of God, and the Secretary of Nature." Every page is filled with the most extravagant conceptions. In Germany the great apostle of the new creed was JACOB BÖHME, born at Görlitz, in Upper Lusatia, in 1575; a shoemaker for thirty years—for the remainder of his life a dreamy mystic. He adopted the Paracelsian or Rosicrucian philosophy, heating and inflaming it with the fires of his own fervid imagination, and mixing up with it a strange interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies and revelations. He wrote—"Aurora, or the Rising of the Sun," "Metalurgia," "The Temporal Mirror of Eternity," and "Theosophy Revealed." In these, amidst a vast quantity of refuse, glimmer a few precious pearls of thought and fancy, for Böhme was a singular compound of saint and mystic, of alchemist and theosophist, and pored over the pages of Holy Writ quite as often as over the theurgic writings of the Hermetic philosophers. He was a remarkable

instance of the enthusiasm of a vague and dreamy mind, influenced by, and in its turn reacting upon, a frail and unhealthy body. He believed in all the extravagances of the Rosicrucians—in gnomes and salamanders, sylphs and ondines—in the almost divine power of the magnet, in the Philosopher's Stone, and the life-giving *elixir*, but he justified his belief from the Bible, and found therein (as other theosophic enthusiasts have done) a warranty for his wildest fancies. There was a certain elevation and sublimity in his most recondite conceptions, for he looked too seldom upon the earth to be attracted by it. A man whose eyes are always fixed on the stars will have very vague ideas, but they will probably be ideas of rare and astonishing purity. Böhme would not have life to be life for the body, but for the soul, and was constantly endeavouring to realize in man man's original condition as the image of God.

Here are some fantastic passages from his sermons :—

“The image of God does not sleep; that which is eternal knows no time. But by sleep Time was revealed to man; he slept away the angelic and awoke in the external world.”

“Eve was not miscreated, but quite lovely ; but the signs of destruction were already about her, and she could only be the wife of Adam. But both were still in Paradise, and had they not eaten of the tree, but directed their imaginations to God, had remained in Paradise.”

“Adam and Eve had the torment of Paradise, but mingled (or combined) with temporal disease. They were naked, and possessed of bodily organization, but knew it not, and were not ashamed, for the spirit of the great world had yet no influence over them, until they partook of the earthly fruit.”

“In the soul of the external world (and by its means) hath God created and crowned a king, or, so to speak, a god of nature, with six councillors as his help, . . . namely, the sun, with the other six planets, which are declared out of the seven qualities *ex loco Solis*. This sun derives its brilliancy from the essence of the world of fire and light, and stands like an open point opposite to it.”

“God of His infinite wisdom created on the fourth day, in the visible world, the sun and stars. Here, for the first time, we can appreciate the divinity and external wisdom of God as in a translucent glass. But the Being

visible to the mortal eye is not God himself, but only 'a goddess in the third principle,' (!) who finally returns to her ether, and has an end."

"The sun is the heart of all the powers of this world, and is conglomerated from all the powers of the stars, and in return kindles and enlivens all stars and all powers of this world."

"In the same way that the sun is the heart of life and a source of all spirits in the body of this world, is Saturn the commencement of all corporeality and comprehensibility. Thus he does not derive his beginning and his origin from the sun, but his source is the earnest, harsh, and severe anxiety of the whole body of this world."

"When the light was kindled there resulted from the conquered power and harshness—Mercury. Mercury is an agitator, a sounder, a musician, but has not yet the right life whose primitive condition is in fire. Thus he desires the terrific and stormy being which opens up fire; and this is Mars."

"When the sun was kindled the terrible fire-fright arose out of the *loco* of the sun, like a cruel, violent lightning, and from that proceeded Mars. He now stands as a fury, a

blusterer, and a mover of the whole body of this world, so that from him all life takes its source."

"But as soon as the spirits of motion and of life had arisen from the *loco* of the sun by the kindling of the water, gentleness penetrated as the ground of the water, infected under itself with the power of light, in the manner of humility, and from this resulted the planet Venus."

"When the fire impetus was imprisoned by light, the latter penetrated, in its own power, as a gentle heaving life, still further into the depth, till it reached the hard, cold seat of nature. There it remained stationary, and out of the same power proceeded the planet Jupiter."

"The seventh form is Luna, in which lay the qualities of all these seven forms. She is also the bodily essence of the other forms, who all, through *Sol*, cast their desires into her. What *Sol* is and does in himself spiritually, that is and does Luna in herself bodily."

"The firmament of heaven is made out of the middle of the water; this birth penetrates through the outward torpid birth, through death, and bears here sidereal life, such as animals and men, birds, fishes, and reptiles."

“When God had opened his stars and the four elements, there were creatures in all the four elements, as birds in the constellation of the air, fishes in the constellation of the water, animals and four-footed creatures on the constellation of the earth, spirits in the constellation of fire.”*

* The reader, for a fuller view of Böhme's doctrines, is referred to Ennemoser's "History of Magic," translated by William Howitt.

CHAPTER V.

PARACELSUS: A BIOGRAPHY.

[A.D. 1493—1541.]

PART I.

§ I. HIS LIFE.

His present mind
 Was under fascination ; he beheld
 A vision, and adored the thing he saw.
 Arabian fiction never filled the world
 With half the wonders that were wrought for him !
 WORDSWORTH.

FOR the thoughtful observer, as an acute French writer remarks, there exists a class of individuals fully as worthy of investigation as those great men whose genius revolutionizes science, and promotes the unresting progress of humanity. We refer to the illustrious order of Charlatans: of men who delight to throw dust in the eyes of the world ; who impose upon us—with equal impudence and good faith, for he is a sorry quack who has no belief in his

own quackery!—their sophistry for knowledge, their speculations for facts, their dreams for discoveries. But mankind often derives a large amount of benefit from their very errors; their falsehoods often put us in the road to truth. The misadventures of the pioneer in the wilderness direct the unerring steps of the settlers who follow in his track. In our strange wanderings through deserts and morasses we are beguiled by the *ignis fatuus* into what proves to be the securest highway. So the delusions of our morning dreams are not seldom realized in our actual life; and the guesses of our excited fancy fulfilled by positive facts. And such an intimate relationship exists between man and man that the errors and follies, the sufferings and sorrows of our fellows have more than an individual importance; they affect *us*, and they will influence our successors—

Striking the electric chain with which we're darkly bound.

Of some of those splendid charlatans, those magnificent impostors to whom I have alluded, it may be said that they came into the world too early or too late. Had they figured in earlier ages we should have gazed upon their superb proportions with admiration. Looking

back through the mists of the past we should have seen them exaggerated into gigantic phantoms. They would have been invested with that air of mystery and solemnity which surrounds the Egyptian Magi or the Persian Verdushts. On the other hand, had they lived at a later time, when knowledge became more exact, and an inductive philosophy trained the judgment and guided the imagination, their chimerical speculations would have been reduced to scientific theories. They would have imagined less ; they would have investigated more. In the one case the world would have regarded them as prophets—seers—the inheritors of a mysterious wisdom ; in the other, humanity might have blessed them as great inventors, or remarkable discoverers, to whose labours it owed increased happiness and additional appliances of good.

Notwithstanding, then, their extravagances, their follies, their errors, their deceptions, no thoughtful critic will treat with an affectation of contempt such men as the prophet Nostradamus ; the adventurous Raymond Lulli, alchymist and missionary, who believed himself able to transmute souls as well as metals, and at the age of eighty was stoned to death by the incredulous ; Jerome Cardan, who

died of starvation rather than falsify his horoscope; Cornelius Agrippa; Albertus Magnus, who figures in the sublime epic of Dante side by side with St. Thomas Aquinas,—

Alberto

È di Cologna, ed io Thomas d'Aquina;

the monk Gerbert, who was sorcerer enough to exchange his augur's cap for the papal tiara; or Emanuel Swedenborg, mystic and enthusiast, who belonged to the present day by the accident of his birth, to the past by the delusions of his fancy and the idealism of his creed. Unless we carefully analyse characters so eccentric, and intellects so erratic, we cannot hope to arrive at a full comprehension of the depths and shallows of the human mind. The mental and moral phases which they display must not be neglected by the student. We estimate the magnitude of the solar sphere by the spots which obscure the splendour of its disk. And the glory, power, and dignity of Genius are best understood by contrasting its occasional follies and extravagant little-nesses.

One of the most remarkable of that sacred order of semi-charlatans, semi-heroes—men who were the Dwellers on the Threshold of Science, had a glimpse of its marvels, but never

penetrated into its arcana—to which we have dedicated these pages, was the “profound philosopher and physician, Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombast von Hohenheim,” born at Einsiedeln, near Zurich, in the year 1493. The true name of this “zenith and rising sun of all the alchemists,” as Naudé reverently calls him, was therefore Hohenheim, but he chose the prefix of PARACELSUS for his common designation, and by that name is renowned in the annals of human error and imposture. His father was a physician, and a man of good family—in fact, the illegitimate son of a prince—and he bred up the young Paracelsus to enter his own profession. He received the education taught by the learned of his age; a farrago of old wives’ fables and absurd traditions, in which nature was held of no account, and the utmost value was placed upon split straws! His intellect, naturally predisposed to promote fancy at the expense of reason, was thus directed in an unhealthy channel; and it was further his misfortune to have for his first master the Abbé Trithemius, one of the obscurest teachers of the Hermetic philosophy. He also lighted upon the abstruse dissertations of Isaac Hollandus, and at an age when most lads are busy with the mysteries of

hexameters and pentameters, was already seized with a mad longing after the philosopher's stone. Alas, for that wild hot dream of boundless wealth! When once it had taken possession of the youthful soul, farewell to the calm delights of assiduous study, the tranquil pleasures of accumulated knowledge! The unhappy enthusiast was dead to the concerns of everyday life; passed on from delusion to delusion; saw all things through a bewildering mirage; revelled in the intoxicating visions of inexhaustible treasures; and beginning by deceiving himself, too often ended by deceiving others!

Thus, after he quitted the Abbé Trithemius, Paracelsus abandoned himself to a nomadic life. He wandered from city to city—from village to village—like the peripatetic scholars of his generation; selling prophecies, drawing horoscopes, fabricating destinies, dining and supping upon the past and future! A true Bohemian life—a life of continual chance and change—of sudden pleasures and frequent anxieties—of alternations between the banquet at the rich man's table and the dry crust in the solitary garret! But where dupes are so numerous it is not often that men like Paracelsus starve, and for his quick imagination the

rapid succession of incidents common to such a life had an infinite attraction. He not only told fortunes and interpreted dreams, but even ventured upon summoning spirits from the vasty deep. The dead, however, have a will of their own, and could not always be induced to obey the commands or gratify the curiosity of the living. Sometimes, therefore, the ambitious student was mortified by an inconvenient *éclaircissement*, and finding that little could be gained by raising the dead, resolved to resume his practice of the noble art which aims at preserving the living.

He took for his second master in the "Ars Medicinæ"—medicine was "an art" then; it is "a science" now—the worshipful Sigismond Fugger, of Schwatz, who sought the healing power in chemistry, and practised in metallurgy; who had remedies for every disease, and, alas! diseases for every remedy. He enjoyed an immense reputation; due, we think, to the extreme obscurity of his teaching, for men usually admire what they cannot understand. He astonished his disciples without instructing them—a result which even now-a-days is occasionally perceptible!

Paracelsus remained with his second master no longer than with his first; and his eager

intellect, unsatisfied with the arid dogmas of the ancients, sought on every side for fresher and more nourishing food. He travelled from country to country—from the mountains of Sweden to the hills of Bohemia—closely questioning the miners on all metallurgical difficulties, and in Poland and Transylvania investigating the properties of salt, minerals, and metals. He then set out for the East to gather if he could from its treasury of precious things; in his researches omitting nothing which had a bearing upon his favourite studies. In the dusky catacombs of dead Egypt he interrogated the dust of the mysterious Isis and the tables of the immortal Hermes. He conversed—or said he did—with the mummies of the Pyramids. He pretended to collect the secret instructions of the Gymnosophists of Ethiopia and the priests of Zoroaster. At the same time he could sink at will to the ordinary level of humanity. He could talk with gipsies and strollers, players and musicians, merchants, beggars, wizards, witches, and quacks. From them, he said, he learned more than from the doctors of the schools. But he not only learned; he taught, or, at least, rewarded. He cured the diseases of his new friends, and instructed them how to cure the maladies

of others. Thus his fame as an erudite and generous physician preceded him at every stage of his journey, for Paracelsus—wise in his generation—had enlisted the services of the most indefatigable and enthusiastic of trumpeters.

His long travels (A.D. 1513—1524) were terminated by a walking-tour through Spain and Portugal, and into Basle. Having amassed sufficient stores of recondite information, he resolved to settle down into a permanent practice at the latter town. Among the learned pundits for whom it was famous he hoped to find companions; among its opulent citizens he looked for patrons. His nomadic career had enlarged his views, ripened his judgment, and augmented his experience, but it had left him poor; and even the genius of Paracelsus was willing to exchange its divine utterances for earthly rix dollars!

Basle, which in this 19th century is a town of stirring trade and bustling commerce—where the din of labour, and the chink of the gold which labour earns, sound and resound through each toiling street—was in the 16th century the rendezvous of science and learning, the gathering-place of a host of men of letters, scholars, empirics, professors, astrologers, and fools. Paracelsus, whose repu-

tation had been his herald, was warmly welcomed within its walls. For the learned of that age formed a compact, freemason-like guild, whose sympathies were not with the world, and whom the vulgar world hated as well as feared. They existed as an independent community, with laws and lawgivers, priests and shibboleths of their own—a world within a world—a secret and exclusive society, whose members were attached to their own craft by the bonds of mutual peril, and which, torn by jealousies and internal commotions, presented nevertheless an unbroken front to a hostile attack. Not as now, distributed promiscuously through the various social classes, but a class *sui generis*, which regarded every other class as hostile or subservient—as a source of danger or a means of profit—men of letters eagerly extended the hand of fellowship to a new-comer, and if they feared or despised his genius, acknowledged his claims on their order. At first, therefore, the much-travelled philosopher—who shook off the dust of Italy and Denmark, Hungary and Muscovy, at the gates of Basle; who had visited the myrtle-groves of Persia, fallen a prisoner to the Tartars, and been despatched by their Cham on a mission to Constantinople—was well received

by the illuminati of the famous city which he proposed to honour with his presence. But the new-comer soon showed himself a man of aggressive and bellicose genius. Almost immediately on his arrival he disgusted and angered his brother-leeches by a bold stroke of practice. And then, as now, the faculty was eminently conservative, and much opposed to every means of saving life which had not the odour of antiquity about it!

There was a printer at Basle, named Jacob Froben, suffering from an intense agony in the right foot which not all the doctors of Basle could relieve, and which permitted its victim neither to sleep nor eat. He summoned to his aid the strange physician as a last resource, for Paracelsus boasted of having "turned over the leaves of Europe, Asia, and Africa," and it might be presumed that he had discovered some valuable knowledge in so vast a volume.

Paracelsus attended: prescribed fomentations, and administered a specific which he had brought back from the East in the shape of three black pills, *tres pilulas nigras*—the said specific being opium. Froben quickly tasted that luxury of repose which had so long

been denied to him ; sleep restored strength and energy to exhausted nature ; he speedily recovered ; and everywhere extolled the wonderful merits of the healer. The cure raised Paracelsus to the very apex of professional reputation, and he was unanimously elected to fill the Chair of Medicine at the Basle University (A.D. 1526).

Never had Basle known so popular a professor ! Paracelsus, with all his charlatanism and extravagances, was a man of genius ; a man of bold and original genius, despising conventionalities, treating the most venerable traditions with terrible irreverence, stripping the mask off every sham and pretension, and infusing into his teaching the ardour of his free and vehement spirit. Here was a scholar who had seen something more than the interior of his study, and learned something more than was to be learned in books. Here was a layman who laughed at the solemn hypocrisies of priestcraft, and had drunken of that fiery enthusiasm which was preparing the minds of men for the Lutheran Reformation. Here was a lecturer who had not forgotten his youth, but poured it into his dreamy, mystical, bewildering eloquence. What wonder that his lectures were frequented by admiring

crowds? They flocked to him from every country—the studious brains of Germany, the quick, hot minds of France, the passionate and yet subtle souls of Italy! Layman and monk, physician and poet, soldier and scholar; all who were weary of the eternal platitudes of the schools; who longed for more wholesome food than the elaborate quiddities of Saint Thomas Aquinas; who partook of the indefinable emotion that seizes the world on the eve of a great revolution; repaired to the Gamaliel of Basle. They listened and wondered. Paracelsus did not fetter his eloquence in rigid Latin; did not pour the new wine into old bottles; he spoke in German, and he spoke too with that self-assertion which strikes the multitude, with that arrogance which seems the inalienable privilege of genius. He delighted the youthful and enthusiastic by his attacks on the venerable leaders of the schools. Youth has little sympathy with the *laudatores temporis acti*. It is all for the present and the future. He beguiled the old and experienced by the brilliancy of his mysticism, the dazzling incomprehensibility of his dogmatism. His philosophy was a *mirage* of purple and green and gold—an evening mist, bright with the gorgeous colours of the sunset; and men, unable to gaze steadily

on so glorious a vision, accepted it perforce as a very true and beautiful reality.

“There is more knowledge,” he was accustomed to assert, “in my shoe-strings than in the writings of all the physicians who have preceded me! I am the reformer of medicine! You will all follow my new system, you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhazis, Montagnana, Méseré, —you will all follow me, gentlemen of Paris, of Montpellier, of Vienna and Cologne! All you who dwell on the banks of the Danube or the Rhine—who inhabit the islands of the sea—you also, Italians, Turks, Sarmatians; Greeks, Arabians, Jews; you shall follow ME! If you do not freely take service under my banner it is because you are but as the stones that the very dogs defile! Rally, then, unto me, for the kingdom shall be mine, and sooner or later you must swallow the bitter draught of obedience!” Then this splendid charlatan-enthusiast brought forward a vase of fire, upon which he flung handfuls of nitre and sulphur. And as the lurid flames shot upwards he flung into them the ponderous tomes of Galen and Avicenna, and while his audience gazed astonished at this novel *auto-da-fé*, he exclaimed—“Thus, O ye doctors, shall ye burn in everlasting fire! Get ye behind me, Sathanas!

Get ye behind me, Greek, Latin, Arab! Ye have taught nothing but absurdities—the secret of nature is known only to myself!”

A philosopher who dealt so fiercely with his predecessors was sure to incur the hatred of many of his contemporaries. A physician who had had the sagacity to discover the value of mercury and opium—drugs abhorred by the timid and bigoted practitioners of his time—was certain, by the success as well as the originality of his treatment, to arouse the jealousy of his brethren. His manner of life peculiarly laid him open to their animadversions. He was addicted to the wine-cup, according to the testimony of his pupil and friend Oporinus:—*“Adeo erat totis diebus et noctibus, dum ego familiariter per biennium fore convixi, ebrietati deditus.”** He was sober for scarcely an hour at a time, says his disciple, while he fared from Basle to Alsatia amongst the noble rustics and the rustic nobles, healing them and instructing them, and everywhere welcomed like a second Æsculapius. He was the marvel and admiration of everybody. Meanwhile, in his most turbulent moments, he would return home and dictate to Oporinus

* While I lived with him familiarly for about two years he was drinking day and night.

his extravagant philosophy. "Nor," says the disciple of this mad, bibulous, clever, fantastical philosopher, "did he ever put off his clothes at night during the two years I remained with him; but, with his sword belted round him, would fling himself on his bed, filled with wine, towards the hour of dawn. Then he would start up in the depth of the darkness, and deal blows on every side with his naked sword; now striking the floor, the bed, the doorposts, and that so furiously that I often trembled lest he should smite off my head."

This sword had formerly belonged to a headsman; Paracelsus pretended that its pommel was the hiding-place of Azoth his familiar, who lay there imprisoned in a jewel. He often embraced it, and held mad converse with it, and gave out that it had in its charge the famous *elixir vitæ* by which he could prolong the lives of men to the protracted date of the antediluvian fathers. He boasted that his word controlled an entire legion of spirits. Another of his attendants, named Wetterus, relates that he frequently threatened to summon a vast host of demons, and show him how his lightest breath directed their movements. But amidst all these follies and excesses—the follies and excesses of an enthusiast who half believed,

half doubted his possession of the powers to which he pretended—his medical ability asserted itself. He effected numerous cures, and especially one of a certain canon residentiary, which cut short his career at Basle.

The canon lay at the point of death, having been abandoned as past cure or recovery by all the physicians of the town. In this extremity he had recourse to Paracelsus, promising him a magnificent recompense if his treatment should be successful. The doctor administered his favourite three small pills—*tres murini stercoris pilulas*—which the canon swallowed, and—recovered! But with monstrous ingratitude he then refused to pay the fee. What! a “magnificent recompense” for three small black pellets! The canon, like many a modern invalid, estimated the value of the cure by the quantity of the medicine. Paracelsus summoned him before the magistrates, who decided that he could only recover the customary fee. In an access of the most violent rage the discomfited philosopher poured out a torrent of abuse on the hapless heads of the unjust purveyors of the law; and, the next morning, stealthily quitted Basle to avoid their wrath, leaving his laboratory and his chemical treasures in the charge of his pupil Oporinus. With

whom he also left his *magistrale arcanum*—laudanum, so called from *laudandum*, on account of its praiseworthy qualities, which some time after saved the pupil's life.

Paracelsus now resumed his erratic course; wandering from town to town and village to village, traversing Hungary and Germany, and living upon the credulity and ignorance of all classes of society. To such mean ends was this man of genius reduced, who, had his judgment been equal to his imagination might have accomplished many things worthy of a world's gratitude! He cast nativities; he told fortunes; he beguiled dupes into fruitless but expensive search for the Philosopher's Stone; he effected wonderful cures; but he did not accumulate wealth. Nothing so surely beggars a man as an unholy greed of gold. At length he came into collision with the Church, as he had already battled with law and physic. Summoned to the bedside of a moribund peasant, he observed that a priest was holding something to his lips. "Has the patient taken anything?" he inquired. "Nothing," replied the priest; "but I was about to give him the *Corpus Christi*." "Then," quoth the profane Paracelsus, "since he has called in another physician, he does not need me," and he strode out

of the room. This irreverent speech provoked the fierce wrath of the priesthood, and fatal murmurs of "heresy" and "sorcery" warned Paracelsus of the danger he had incurred. He fled to Bavaria, taking with him his drugs and his self-confidence. Oporinus, who had previously rejoined his master, now finally abandoned him, stole what he could of his secrets, and swelled the outcry raised against him.

The itinerant leech, after working some extraordinary cures in Bavaria, passed into Poland, where he healed a sick nobleman. Many opportunities of permanent distinction and wealth presented themselves, but there was a Bohemian taint in his blood which rendered him incapable of steady application or regular habits. He loved to wander from country to country, speculating on the follies of mankind, and giving up his great intellect to vague speculations and confused dreams. He was infected by the restlessness which pervaded all European society; by the spirit of an age which saw the old order breaking up, and was not prepared for the establishment of the new. Something of success gilded the last days of his wild and romantic career. In 1536 he established his claim to his patrimonial inheritance, dedicated his "Chirur-

gia Major" to the Emperor of Germany, and having secured a patron and a believer in the Archbishop of Salzburg, prepared to settle quietly in that city. But when seemingly bent on doing work worthy of his genius, he succumbed to the malice of his enemies or the effects of his own vices.

He was poisoned, it is said, at a debauch of wine; and while labouring in the lethargy of intoxication was deprived of the antidotes which he usually carried about him. When he awoke to a consciousness of his position, the poison had so mastered his enfeebled constitution that remedies were no longer useful.

Such is the vulgar tale, but it lacks authenticity. As Paracelsus at the time of his death, was patronized by an archbishop, it is not likely that he was poisoned by any emissary of the Church. And why introduce the agency of poison at all? A frame shaken by loose living and constant trial would easily give way to an excessive fit of drinking. Howbeit, Paracelsus after his debauch was removed to the Hospital of San Sebastian, where he speedily expired, on the 24th of September, 1541, in the forty-eighth year of his age. By his will he bequeathed most of his property for charitable

purposes, and the hospital wherein he died was rebuilt by his executors. A tablet on its wall thus preserves the name and memory of the charlatan-enthusiast :—

Conditur hic

PHILIPPUS THEOPHRASTUS,

Insignis Medicinæ Doctor,

Qui dira illa vulnera, lepram, podagram, hydropem,

Aliaque insanabilia corporis contagia,

Mirifica arte sustulit,

Ac bona sua in pauperes distribuenda

Collocandaque honoravit :

Anno MDXLI die XXIV Septembris

Vitam cum morte commutavit.

Aurea pax vivis, requies æterna sepultis.

With this brief outline of the career of a remarkable man we are fain to be satisfied, from the absence of fuller details upon any authentic authority. We now proceed to offer a summary of the extravagant speculations and fanciful theories which may be called the Paracelsian Philosophy.

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PARACELSUS: A BIOGRAPHY (*continued*).

[A.D. 1493—1541.]

§ 2. HIS PHILOSOPHY—§ 3. THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE—§ 4. VAGUE SPECULATIONS—§ 5. THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

§ 2. HIS PHILOSOPHY.

AFTER having demolished the systems constructed by the philosophers of antiquity, Paracelsus felt that he owed to humanity a code of his own, which he professed to found upon the Bible. And, first, with respect to the physical ills of man, he thought that he had found in its sublime pages a key to every malady. A novel but fantastic idea! To transform the Holy Scripture into a hand-book upon health, and elevate Moses or St. Paul into the place of Æsculapius! As far, indeed, as those general laws of sobriety and cleanliness are concerned, which so largely influence the health of man, the Bible sets them forth in clear and emphatic

language. But Paracelsus soared above so simple and obvious an application.

According to this whimsical theorist, the whole of the Old Testament was not endowed with equal powers of healing. The most salutary and efficacious portions were the Pentateuch of Moses, who spent so many years in solitude, only to plumb to its depths the sacred art of the transformation of metals; and the Apocalypse of St. John, who was—as everybody knows—well versed in the occult sciences; who, the apostle of Hermes as well as the Evangelist, gave a proof of his two-fold mission by issuing, alive and uninjured, from the boiling cauldron of Domitian. The Apocalypse, indeed, is the book whose leaves we must read and re-read, if we would fathom the mysteries of medicinal magic; and of a truth the theories of Paracelsus are enveloped in an infinitely deeper cloud of obscurity than the revelations of the solitary seer of Patmos.

Having discovered the secret of disease in the Bible, which comes from Heaven, Paracelsus naturally sought in Heaven the source or germ of that disease. He perceived that every malady originated in the planetary spheres and the constellations, and that it follows as a consequence that, when a patient presents himself before a physician, the first thing the latter

has to do is, not to investigate his symptoms, but—to take counsel of the stars! Yes: a skilful leech will scrutinize the face of heaven, and not the physiognomy of the invalid; will listen to the throbbing of the spheres, and not to the pulsation of the overloaded heart!

So prone are mankind to submit to the marvellous, and to place implicit credence in the truth and beauty of everything that is incomprehensible, that the wildest theory, whether suggested by knave or madman, has a chance of duration. This “astral medicine,” these “planetary cures” of Paracelsus outlived their creator, and were reproduced by successive dupes or dupers. His theory forms the basis of that of Mesmer, who, in 1766, took for the subject of his prelections—“The Influence of the Planets upon the Human Body.” What mysterious spell exists in yonder beautiful stars that so overmasters our reason and imagination as to impel us to connect our existence with theirs by any tie, however fanciful—now ascribing to them an influence over our fortunes, and now a power over our frail and feeble bodies?—

. . . . Ye are
 A beauty and a mystery, and create
 In us such love and reverence from afar,
 That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star!

Mesmer, it is true, speedily abandoned this doctrine to adopt another, whose germ was also furnished by the inventor of the cabalistic and sidereal medicine. But the inventor himself, as was fitting, showed himself more persevering, and despite of all the scientific vagaries which incessantly cropped up in his prolific and heated brain, long continued to consult, in reference to the ailments of his patients, the stars whose responses it is not easy to contradict. For it is with them as with the dead—they never falsify the oracles which they are made to pronounce, or the decrees which they are supposed to utter.

If a woman consulted him, Paracelsus, whatever might be her disease, began his treatment by examining the moon, because, said he, the moon is the adequate expression and embodiment, as it were, of the female nature. He was so persuaded that but for the existence of the earth's satellite, there would not be found in the one sex the variations of health from which the other is exempt, that he saw a something divine and celestial in the periodical proofs of their different organization.

From such reveries as these it was easy to proceed to the establishment of an astral physiology. An idea which, born in Greece, but afterwards overlaid by the cumbrous philo-

sophy of Rome, continued to be cherished by the Fathers of the Church and the sophists of Alexandria, represented man as a world—a microcosm—the likeness in little of the world which he inhabits. This elegant and prolific idea has inspired many a page of lofty eloquence. It was now adopted by Paracelsus, and pushed to an absurd extreme. Accustomed to read, or, at least, to *mis-spell*, the heavens, he now pretended to discover them in man; to establish the theory that not only “our life is but a drop of the celestial quintessence,” but to sketch in every individual an abridgment, or compendium, of the heavenly sphere. How consoling, remarks a French writer, to our vain and weak humanity! Let us when we suffer, sigh, “I am a heaven; my trouble cannot endure!” Here is a rude contrast, certainly, between “lepram, podagram, et hydropem,” and the serenely beautiful skies. But the recollections of our infirmity need not long perturb us, and we could speedily lull ourselves to sleep in dreams of a beatific purity.

A physician named Joyand, who wrote, about a century ago, a book entitled “Précis du Siècle de Paracelse,” runs riot in praise of this grand idea of a human microcosm, and ascribes the honour of its conception entirely

to our great philosopher. From the eulogistic pages of the disciple we may gather some idea of the teachings of the master.

“Man is a miniature world: not indeed as regards his corporeal substance, but as he includes all the virtues and operations of the great world. In him are all the celestial movements, the nature of earth, the properties of water, the quality of air, the character of every fruit, every mineral, every constellation. He likewise combines in himself the qualities of animals. His body is a fine assemblage of the elements. The organs by which he perceives all the objects which surround him are of an entirely celestial nature. The emotions and agitations of his soul resemble the winds, the whirlpools, the lightnings, the thunders, and the meteors which ferment in the region of the air and the wind. They perturb his heart and his blood. This is why man is a little world, and wholly the image of the universe.”

But as if the vagueness of the above would not be sufficient for ordinary mortals, Paracelsus proceeds to define more distinctly his astral man, and to show how he presents a complete exposition of the solar system.

“We have, like our universe, seven principal powers. The heart, source of vitality, is the sun, whence issues the vivifying heat; the

brain may be compared to the moon ; it obeys her phases, grows and wanes as she does. These two organs have in the human body the same importance as those two great luminaries in the celestial order. The heart, which is the centre of movement, the brain, whence radiate our ideas, are most intimately connected, like the sun and the moon, which follow and approach one another to recommence their course together and yet separately. The liver, where the blood is prepared which makes life, is subject to Jupiter, a planet essentially sanguine and vitalic. The reins, which contain the reservoir of reproduction, depend upon Venus, a prolific planet and the mother of generations. The spleen, the depository of the bile, submits to the law of Saturn, a sombre and melancholy star ; and the vessel of the gall, the domicile of passion, is under the influence of Mars, an impetuous and wrathful planet. There remain the lungs, which, agile as Mercury, are subject to the same vicissitudes. Placed in continual agitation in the midst of the chest, where they wrap round the heart, they raise the air to reanimate it, like Mercury, who presides over the winds, and who, wandering round the sun, appears to tremble on his verge but to execute his orders."

Such was the singular mixture of ancient myths, astronomical signs, and fanciful speculations which the followers of Paracelsus admire as his philosophy! The discoveries of modern astronomers have unfortunately spoiled its completeness. The number seven no longer limits the planetary system, and it would be necessary now-a-days for Paracelsus to determine the share of the human body possessed by Neptune and the Georgium Sidus, to say nothing of Juno, Pallas, Vesta, Themis, and Astrea! The researches of Herschel and others have greatly augmented the complications of anatomy!

But Paracelsus was not without nobler and purer ideas. The Dwellers on the Threshold catch some faint glimpse of the light and glory that pervade the Beyond. And one of his ideas was afterwards propounded by a philosopher, who, unlike the would-be magician, was an exact reasoner—the learned and sagacious Descartes. Afflicted by the brevity of life, which prevents the accomplishment of so many noble works; which does not permit to so many promises of glory the time needful for ripening into fulfilment; which interrupts so many grand chains of thought, whose links succeeding generations are not able to take

up; Descartes persuaded himself that it was possible to remedy this evil, and protract existence far beyond its usual limit. He conceived that if there were a more complete equilibrium between us and the multitude of beings and objects which surround us—if the elements of our bodies were more certainly in equilibrium with the air, the fire, the light, the earth—if we would better seize the astral or solar influences to which man is subjected—establish a greater harmony between him and the elements which he assimilates—prepare, as it were, a sort of “hygienic breastplate” against the accidents which strike and the circumstances which fatigue him—we might finish by rendering the processes of time tardier and more gentle and by keeping back almost indefinitely those *wrinkles of the mind* which are surer signs of old age than the furrows of the brow.

Such was the grand chimera which dazzled the brain of Descartes! Alas, he did not live long enough to learn how to extend his own life, and men must still suffer, and sorrow, and die, as the necessary preparation to that glorious immortality which shall infinitely surpass the visionary earthly existence of these unhappy dreamers!

The dream of Descartes, however, had been

anticipated by Paracelsus. He also had longed to oppose an impenetrable rampart to death, or to prolong human life through many generations. And he, too, failed to discover the secret, to find that *elixir* of immortality which has been the vision of so many hot imaginations. But he has left on record the principal points of the philosophy on which he founded his researches in his "Archidoxa Medicinæ." It contains the leading rules of the art of healing, as he practised and preached them. "I had resolved," he says, "to give ten books of the 'Archidoxa,' but I have reserved the tenth in my head. It is a treasure which men are not worthy to possess, and shall only be given to the world when they shall have abjured Aristotle, Avicenna, and Galen, and promised a perfect submission to Paracelsus." The world did not recant, but Paracelsus relented, and at the entreaty of his disciples published this tenth book, the key to the nine others, but a key which might pass for a lock, and for a lock which we cannot even pick. It is entitled the "Tenth Book of the Arch-Doctrines; or, On the Secret Mysteries of Nature." Here is a brief summary of it:—

He begins by supposing and ends by establishing that there is a universal spirit infused into the veins of man, forming within us a

species of invisible body, of which our visible body, which it directs and governs at its will, is but the wrapping—the casket. This universal spirit is not simple—not more simple, for instance, than the number 100, which is a collection of units. Where, then, are the spiritual units of which our complex spirit is composed? Scattered in plants and minerals, but principally in metals. There exists in these inferior productions of the earth a host of sub-spirits which sum themselves up in us, as the universe does in God. So the science of the philosopher has simply to unite them to the body—to disengage them from the grosser matter which clogs and confines them, and to separate the pure from the impure.

To separate the pure from the impure is, in other words, to seize upon the soul of the heterogeneous bodies—to evolve their “predestined element,” “the seminal essence of beings,” “the first being, or quintessence.”

To understand this latter word “quintessence,” it is needful for the reader to know that every body, whatever it may be, is composed of four elements, and that the essence compounded of these elements forms a fifth, which is the soul of the mixed bodies, or, in other words, its “mercury.” “I have shown,” says Paracelsus, “in my book of ‘Elements,’

that the quintessence is the same thing as mercury. There is in mercury whatever wise men seek." That is, not the mercury of modern chemists, but a philosophical mercury of which every body has its own. "There are as many mercuries as there are things. The mercury of a vegetable, a mineral, or an animal of the same kind, although strongly resembling each other, does not precisely resemble another mercury, and it is for this reason that vegetables, minerals, and animals of the same species are not exactly alike. . . . The true mercury of philosophers is the radical humidity of each body, and its veritable *semen*, or essence."

The explanation does not appear very intelligible to us, but our readers may be more fortunate. Paracelsus, however, understood himself, and strong in the principles which he had enounced, he next aspired to extract the soul from all these impure substances, and to fashion out of it an universal spirit, in case the first should fail him. He thought that if he could succeed in extracting from every substance the essence which it enclosed, whether under the form of a salt or a fluid, he should infallibly procure, by the chemical combination of these liquids and salts in the "vase of art and nature," a duplicate of man's universal

spirit, so that he might rejuvenate himself when there was need. His deductions were sufficiently logical; but logic does not materially assist us in practical matters, and Paracelsus felt this so keenly that he resolved without delay to do something more than reason.

However headstrong he may have been under the continual influence of pride and drink, he was not slow to perceive that his plan of regeneration exceeded the limits of man's life, and that Death would not halt until he had pilfered from every substance the juice or the poison which was to dethrone him. Paracelsus, therefore, resolved to classify the plants and minerals by the order of their nobility and power, and to work only upon their types. These preliminaries achieved, he began to operate upon the poppy, and having seized its "predestined element," reduced it to the state of *laudanum*.

The reader, however, must not believe that this species of Theban mucilage, named also the *specific anodyne* of Paracelsus, was the mean and unambitious drug now employed in medicine. A thaumaturgist like him could not content himself with a balm so unsophisticated. To render it more efficacious, he mixed, says Nicholas Lefiore, with his extract of poppy, the juice of orange, cinnamon, musk, ambergris,

saffron, the essence of coral, and salts of pearls, digested together at several operations, and incorporated by a delicate manipulation! This, truly, might be called an electuary poetically combined. How far more prosaic are our modern pharmacopolists! We shall utterly humiliate them when we record, as the conclusion of the above recipe, the final recommendation of Paracelsus: it is simply to add—after the trituration of all these curative substances—a sample and a half of the quintessence of gold. You perceive, says the anonymous author of the abridgment of his doctrines, that the secret consists in the quintessence of gold, and the *magistry* of pearls and coral. The rest, the artist will do well.

The scholar is as simple as the master is enigmatic! “The rest, the artist will do well!” But it is precisely that which we cannot do which fails us. To say nothing of the “essence of corals” and the “magistry of pearls,” which are perhaps but bagatelles, how shall we procure the quintessence—that is, the mercurial element—of gold? This would be neither more nor less than the Philosopher’s Stone, which it is evident Paracelsus wished us to believe he possessed. But as according to his own avowal the stone cured everything, what need had he, when having at his disposal

the remedies for all diseases, to compose one which should only cure a portion of them?

However, the philosopher had accomplished something. He had begun by discovering the secret of sleep. Sleep cannot restore to us our youth: but it beguiles us sometimes with the phantom of it. To dream that we have is half having! He was so pleased with this result that he went no further. He stopped short in his scientific enterprise, and it mattered not what was the malady—even for a broken leg—he administered his narcotic. This preparation of opium constitutes the first *arcanum*, or the first *magistry*, of which he treats in the fifth book of his “Archidoxa.” It was, perhaps, his Azoth—the spirit which he carried in the pommel of his sword—the demon which arouses a myriad other demons, some bright and beautiful, some horrent and diabolical, for the dreams of the opium-eater are not all lighted with sunshine, but frequently plunge into the depths of darkness and despair!

Opium flavoured—upon paper, at least—with the quintessence of gold and the magistry of pearls, played for some time a wonderful part. Then this specific grew weary of curing, and, it is said, even poisoned several persons—a not uncommon accident with your universal remedies! Paracelsus was therefore con-

strained to summon new genii to his aid. He returned to his retorts and alembics, but in order to restrict his analysis and gain time, sought for a plant worthy of holding in the vegetable kingdom the same rank as gold in the metallic—a plant whose “predestined element” should unite in itself the virtues of nearly all the vegetable essences. Although this was not easy to distinguish, he recognised at a glance—we know not by what signs—the supremacy of excellence in the *melissa*, and first decreed to it that pharmaceutical crown which at a later period the Carmelites ought to have consecrated. How he obtained this new specific may be seen in the “Life of Paracelsus,” by Savarien:—

“He took some balm-mint in flower, which he had taken care to collect before the rising of the sun. He pounded it in a mortar, reduced it to an impalpable dust, poured it into a long-necked vial which he sealed hermetically, and placed it to digest (or settle) for forty hours in a heap of horse-dung. This time expired, he opened the vial, and found there a matter which he reduced into a fluid by pressing it, separating it from its impurities by exposure to the slow heat of a *bain-marie*. The grosser parts sunk to the bottom, and he drew off the liqueur which floated on the top,

filtering it through some cotton. This liqueur having been poured into a bottle he added to it the fixed salt, which he had drawn from the same plant when dried. There remained nothing more but to extract from this liqueur the first life or being of the plant. For this purpose Paracelsus mixed the liqueur with so much 'water of salt' (understand by this the mercurial element or radical humidity of the salt), put it in a matrass, exposed it for six weeks to the sun, and finally, at the expiration of this term, discovered a last residuum which was decidedly, according to him, the first life or supreme essence of the plant."

How did he recognise it, or assure himself that it was what he sought? We know not: that internal voice which for ever vibrates in the ear of conquerors might warn him; and moreover, the operation had reached its utmost limit, and nature had nothing more to surrender. But at all events, it is certain that what he found in his matrass was the genie or spirit he required; and with the surplus, if there were any, we need not concern ourselves.

Those who may wish to know what this *genie* was like, are informed that it as exactly resembled, as two drops of water, the spirit of aromatic wine known to-day as *absinthe suisse*. It was a liquid green as emerald—green, the

bright *riante* colour of hope and spring time. Unfortunately, it failed as a specific in the conditions indispensable for an elixir of immortality; but it was a preparation more than half-celestial, which almost rendered old age impossible. This assuredly is not all that dreamers and philosophers hope for, but unless you are greedy of an immeasurable life, you may well be content with gaining so much, and Paracelsus *was* contented.

We remember that our philosopher was not only a chymist, but a magician. So he had no need to demonstrate by experiments that his essence of melissa could renew man's happy years of youth, or prevent them from gliding away. He was so sure of his fact, that before revealing for whom this *bottle of youth* was destined, he wrote his book "De Renovatione et Restauratione Hominis." The amateurs of literary singularities may consult it; it has the merit of not being more lucid than his other works. Here and there, however, a few phrases seem decipherable, which is more than can be said for the works of some modern philosophers! And those among our readers who do not wish to grow old will find therein, if any skilful operator will procure for them the essence already described, the manner of using it, and of rejuvenating themselves as

often as they may wish. Nothing can be more easy. When once you have obtained your flacon of youthfulness, you have only to pour a few spoonfuls into good white wine until the wine assumes the same colour as the essence, and then to drink it fasting every morning.

Here we must own a formidable difficulty presents itself. Of what wine does Paracelsus speak? Is it the ordinary juice of the vine, or the philosopher's wine, which is only an infusion of the "green lion" into the "milk of the virgin"—which is nothing more than the "blood of the red lion dissolved in the vinegar of the philosophers"—which again is the "mercury of vitriol"? I feel all the force of the objection. But it is not insuperable. After mature reflection and an attentive examination of the text, we have convinced ourselves that Paracelsus only refers to good *Rhenish* wine, which is easier to procure than a "green lion" diluted in the blood of the "red lion."

Now that we know to what wine we must confine ourselves, we must determine in what doses we ought to administer it. It is this which Paracelsus does not say; but remembering his habits of intemperance, we may presume that no very limited measure is necessary. Persons who may fear, by adopting

this counsel, only to arrive reeling and staggering at their resurrection, will do well to drink but a glass; this ought to produce the same effect. The worst that can happen to them is to grow young a few days later. But a little more or less of winter, what matters it, if one is sure of a return of the happy spring?

You must drink of it conformably to the prescriptions of the master, until this fluid has interpenetrated all the economy of the body, and restored it to youthful life, energy, and vigour. Without giving oneself the trouble of experimentalizing on this return of the vital forces, it will be easy to perceive when the reparative potion has infiltrated itself into all the tissues, and the median transformation approaches. Our corporeal springtime will announce itself by a *general verdure*, which fortunately is but fugitive, since it is not agreeable to the eye. The exhausted hairs fall off, the nails and the teeth drop, the skin shrivels, dries, and passes away like the rest. We must confess that these preliminaries to adolescence are not reassuring, and those even who have nothing to lose may be afraid to risk—*themselves*. So much the worse for them! He who risks nothing gains nothing.

Since the days of Paracelsus no one has had the courage to perform the miracle, no one has had the strength thus to strip himself of his old age. Well, let us be content to bear the fardel of our years, and deposit it only in the grave. A fairer youth than even the green essence of Paracelsus promised, awaits beyond it the soul which has kept itself free from stain and pollution in passing through the fierce struggle of the world; and we may always be young if the memory of our youth brings with it no darkening traces of grievous follies, but lights up the time with the lustre of a true love or a noble ambition!

§ 3. THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

By means of manipulations as subtle and ingenious as those which he employed upon the melissa, our philosopher did not draw, but learned to extract, the "predestined element" of plants which ranked much higher in the vegetable aristocracy,—the "first life" of the gillyflower, the cinnamon, the myrrh, the scammony, the celandine. All these supreme essences which, according to the 5th book of "Archidoxa," unite with a mass of "magisteries" as precious as they are rude, are the

base of so many specifics, equally reparative and regenerative. This depends upon the relationship which exists between the temperament of a privileged plant and the temperament of the individual who asks of it his rejuvenescence.

However brilliant were the results of his discoveries, those he had obtained or those he thought he *might* obtain, they were for Paracelsus but the *a b c* of Magic. To the eyes of so consummate an alchemist vegetable life is nothing; it is the mineral—the metallic life—which is all! So we may assure ourselves that it was in his power to seize the first life-principle of the moon, the sun, Mars, or Saturn; that is, of silver, gold, iron, or lead. It was equally facile for him to grasp the life of the precious stones, the bitumens, the sulphurs, and even that of animals.

Paracelsus, who had no time to lose, did not think it necessary to make himself the conquests which he points out, but he was solicitous to indicate in his works the means of attaining one particular object, which it was useless for him, as far as he was concerned, to reach to be materially convinced of his genius. It is unfortunate that we can profit in nothing by his good intentions. If he has been generous

enough to bequeath to us his arcana, he has not been sufficiently so to render his testament intelligible. "Some perhaps will say," he remarks, "that the mode in which I have written will not much assist the reader who desires to penetrate these great secrets. I reply that we must not cast pearls before swine. God will give the rest—will give intelligence to whomsoever He will. I write this but as a beginning. The artist must seek the rest and find it."

We are willing that he should seek, but as for finding! "We must accept what he shall tell us"—it is written in the "Philalethes"—"not like one who leads a blind man by the hand, but like a person who puts a clear, acute intellect in the road that will conduct him whither he wishes to go." Assuming that we are all persons of clear, acute intellect, and carefully watching the indications of Paracelsus, let us endeavour to arrive promptly at the supreme excellences of alchymy. Let us see how we may procure for ourselves the Philosopher's Stone.

Paracelsus sets forth several methods of obtaining this great arcanum. Here is the shortest and most simple, as recorded by Incola Francus:—

“Take some mercury, or at least the element of mercury, separating the pure from the impure, and afterwards pounding it to perfect whiteness. Then you shall sublimate it with *sal-armoniac*, and this so many times as may be necessary to resolve it into a fluid. Calcine it, coagulate it, and again dissolve it, and let it strain in a *pelican* during a philosophic month, until it thickens and assumes the form of a hard substance. Thereafter this form of stone is incombustible, and nothing can change or alter it; the metallic bodies which it penetrates become fixed and incombustible, for this material is incombustible, and changes the imperfect metals into metal perfect. Although I have given the process in few words, the thing itself demands a long toil and *many difficult circumstances*, which I have expressly omitted, not to weary the reader, who ought to be very diligent and intelligent if he wishes to arrive at the accomplishment of this great work.”

It is true, adds this apologetic follower of the charlatan-enthusiast, that if Paracelsus has not told us *all*, he has told at least a very important part. We ask nothing better; but confess we should like to know the part that is not revealed to us: and above all, we are utterly

unable to divine what are the "difficult circumstances" which, it appears, must be overcome before we can attain a successful result. For those of our readers who may think that we have taken one word for another, in speaking of the *sal-armoniac*, we beg to assure them that we are not in error, and that there is here no question of *ammoniac* as might at first be supposed. The salt alluded to is the mercurial salt armoniac discovered by Raymond Lulli, and "so named on account of the agreement and harmony which the quintessence of quick-silver appears to have with the essence of every metal." An explanation which surely ought to satisfy the most inquisitive!

The "spagyric philosophers" (a term used by Paracelsus) are not agreed upon the method of composing the stone. The most distinguished have all obtained it, but all by different processes. So Paracelsus himself tells us in his "Archidoxa" (book x. c. vi.), when explaining his own recipe for the completion of it, and profiting by the occasion to criticize his fellow-workers.

"I omit," he writes, "what I have said in different places on the theory of the stone; I will say only that this *arcanum* does not consist in the blast (*rouille*) or flowers of anti-

mony. It must be sought in the mercury of antimony, which, when it is carried to perfection, is nothing else than *the heaven of metals*; for even as the heaven gives life to plants and minerals, so does the pure quintessence of antimony vitrify everything. This is why the Deluge was not able to deprive any substance of its virtue or properties, for the heaven being the life of all beings, there is nothing superior to it which can modify or destroy it.

“Take the antimony, purge it of its arsenical impurities in an iron vessel until the coagulated mercury of the antimony appears quite white, and is distinguishable by the star which appears in the superficies of the regulus or semi-metal. But although this regulus, which is the element of mercury, has in itself a veritable hidden life, nevertheless these things are in virtue, and not actually.

“Therefore, if you wish to reduce the power to action, you must disengage the life which is concealed in it by a living fire like to itself, or with a metallic vinegar. To discover this fire many philosophers have proceeded differently, but agreeing in the foundations of the art, have arrived at the desired end. For some with great labour have drawn forth the quintessence of the thickened mercury of the

regulus of antimony, and by this means have reduced to action the mercury of the antimony : others have considered that there was an uniform quintessence in the other minerals, as for example in the fixed sulphur of the vitriol, or the stone of the magnet, and having extracted the quintessence, have afterwards matured and exalted their *heaven* with it, and reduced it to action. Their process is good, and has had its result. Meanwhile this fire—this corporeal life—which they seek with toil, is found much more easily and in much greater perfection in the ordinary mercury, which appears through its perpetual fluidity—a proof that it possesses a very powerful fire and a celestial life similar to that which lies hidden in the regulus of the antimony. Therefore, he who would wish to exalt our *metallic heaven*, starved, to its great completeness, and to reduce into action its potential virtues, he must first extract from ordinary mercury its corporeal life, which is a celestial fire; that is to say the quintessence of quicksilver, or, in other words, the metallic vinegar, that has resulted from its dissolution in the water which originally produced it (!), and which is its own mother; that is to say, he must dissolve it in the arcanum of the salt I have described, and mingle it

with the 'stomach of Anthion,' which is the spirit of vinegar, and in this menstruum melt and filter the consistent mercury of the antimony, strain it in the said liquor, and finally reduce it into crystals of a yellowish green, of which we have spoken in our manual."

Who could have imagined that a recipe so short, and with so apparent a simplicity, could be at the bottom so terribly abstruse and complicated? And yet we have not nearly attained to the end of our problem; but having begun to enter into the details which may lead to its solution, we feel constrained to place before our readers the whole. It is, perhaps, somewhat lengthy, but then we shall derive the benefit of those *flashes of lucidity* which gush on all sides from the aphorisms of our great philosopher. It is the *ne plus ultra* of the Hermetic eloquence. Extremes meet; and it may be that this excess of light has upon profane minds absolutely the same effect as the clouds of darkness. Paracelsus having referred us to his Manual, to his Manual it is necessary that we should have recourse, if we would be in a condition to discuss, with fulness of knowledge, the question of the great work. It is a slight sacrifice of patience, but the reward perhaps so splendid as fully to justify our

exertions. It has long been pretended that we can only find the diamond in the heads of toads. It is the same with the Philosopher's Stone; we can find it only in the head of an alchemist. Let us resolve to seek it there.

"Take," said he, "the electric mineral not yet mature (antimony), put it in its sphere, in the fire with the iron, to remove its ordures and other superfluities, and purge it as much as you can, following the rules of chymistry, so that it may not suffer by the aforesaid impurities. Make, in a word, the regulus with the mark. This done, cause it to dissolve in the 'stomach of the ostrich' (vitriol), which springs from the earth and is fortified in its virtue by the 'sharpness of the eagle' (the metallic vinegar or essence of mercury). As soon as the essence is perfected, and when after its dissolution it has taken the colour of the herb called *calendule*, do not forget to reduce it into a spiritual luminous essence, which resembles amber. After this, add to it of the 'spread eagle' one half the weight of the election before its preparation, and frequently distil the 'stomach of the ostrich' into the matter, and thus the election will become much more spiritualized. When the 'stomach of the ostrich' is weakened by the labour of digestion, we must

strengthen it and frequently distil it. Finally, when it has lost all its impurity, add as much tartarized quintessence as will rest upon your fingers, until it throws off its impurity and rises with it. Repeat this process until the preparation becomes white, and this will suffice; for you shall see yourself as gradually it rises in the form of the 'exalted eagle,' and with little trouble converts itself in its form (like sublimated mercury); and that is what we are seeking.

"I tell you in truth that there is no greater remedy in medicine than that which lies in this election, and that there is nothing like it in the whole world. But not to digress from my purpose, and not to leave this work imperfect, observe the manner in which you ought to operate."

We do not know if the reader will pardon us for continuing our quotations. We confess that we do not very well understand this masonic phraseology of the *patres conscripti* of the Hermetic philosophy; but ought we to measure the intelligence of others by our own? Nature, as Fontenelle has said, when speaking of these mysteries, has not made everybody capable of understanding everything, and it may be very true that my neighbour has perfectly compre-

hended what has escaped me. Because we do not feel in our head a "stomach of an ostrich" able to digest these marvels, and to give birth, while digesting them, to an eagle, is it a reason why these birds shall not nestle and lay eggs in some cage less narrow? This would be an inexcusable presumption. We firmly believe for the rest that there is no one now-a-days, or hardly any one, who has seen what remains for us to show you.

"The election then being destroyed, as I have said, to arrive at the desired end (which is, to make of it an universal medicine for human as well as metallic bodies), take your election, rendered light and volatile by the method above described.

"Take of it as much as you would wish to reduce it to its perfection, and put it in a philosophical egg of glass, and seal it very tightly, that nothing of it may respire; put it into an athanor until of itself it resolves into a liquid, in such a manner that in the middle of this sea there may appear a small island, which daily diminishes, and finally, all shall be changed to a colour black as ink. This colour is the raven, or bird which flies at night without wings, and which, through the celestial dew, that rising, continually falls back by a

constant circulation, changes into what is called 'the head of the raven,' and afterwards resolves into 'the tail of the peacock;' then it assumes the hue of the 'tail of a peacock,' and afterwards the colour of the 'feathers of a swan;' finally acquiring an extreme redness, which marks its fiery nature, and in virtue of which it expels all kinds of impurities, and strengthens feeble members. This preparation, according to all philosophers, is made in a single vessel, over a single furnace, with an equal and continual fire, and this medicine, which is more than celestial, cures all kinds of infirmities, as well in human as metallic bodies; wherefore no one can understand or attain such an arcanum without the help of God: for its virtue is ineffable and divine."

Directions so categorical appear to us of a nature to destroy the long-existing belief that the philosopher's stone is a chimera! If each of us has not a portion of it in his pocket, the reason can only be that in two hundred years no one has cared to hunt out the secret. It has remained overwhelmed in works whose ocean-like immensity has deterred the student from plunging into them. But now that our researches have drawn it like a pearl from

the depths of the sea, if we continue to drag about an infirm body and to lament over an empty purse, the fault must be our own. There is no longer any need to enter into unholy and dangerous compacts with the Evil Spirit in order to secure the bloom of youth, prolonged life, or boundless wealth. Paracelsus shows us the process: alas! our ignorance is so dense that even now we do not comprehend it, and whatever may be the good fortune of our readers, we at least must be content with a feeble frame, a limited span of life, and too often—an empty purse!

§ 4. VAGUE SPECULATIONS.

“If Paracelsus,” says one of his scholiasts, “had composed nothing but this book of the quintessence of which we have just given a specimen, and which is the fifth of the Archidoxa, we might conclude that his mind was semi-divine, and clearly perceive that his writings are not those of a fool, of a man who writes at hazard and under the influence of wine, as the envious have dared to say.”

“If,” says Monsieur Deumier, “it will give pleasure to any of his partisans, I will gladly admit that he has not written under the

inspiration of inebriety; but I shall never believe that he has written under the inspiration of light." We often have a glimpse, however, of *something* through the thick wrappings in which he envelopes his thoughts; it is his pride. Some chymical experiments, made with sufficient adroitness, had so filled him with confidence in his strength that he believed nothing impossible. Of this we shall bring together a few proofs.

Not being able to create a world in the block, because he did not know where to place it, and disdaining to create it in detail, he attempted to supply the deficiency by explaining the present and the formation of all which it contained. He affirmed that the seeds of things existed from all eternity, that they were spread through the universe, and that they developed themselves, at their day and at their hour, under the influence of natural combinations identically similar to the operations which he had imagined.

Extending his system soon to its farthest limits, he maintained that he could propagate mankind without the intercourse of the two sexes. You had but to procure the needful spagyric substances (he unfortunately omits to tell us what,) and shutting them up in a glass

phial, to place them to digest in horse-dung for the space of forty days. At the end of this time, there will be something which will begin to move and live in your bottle. This something is a man! but a man who has no body and is transparent. How easy it must be to recognise a man whom one cannot see! Nevertheless, he exists, and nothing remains but to bring him up—which is not more difficult to do than to make him. You may accomplish it by daily feeding him—during forty weeks, and without extricating him from his dunghill—with the arcanum of the human blood! At the end of this time you shall have a veritable living child, having every member as well-proportioned as any infant born of a woman. He will only be much smaller than an ordinary child, and his physical education will require more care and attention. This is what we alchemists call an *homunculus*, or artificial man.

At the bottom of all these hyperbolic aberrations, expressed with the utmost certainty, there is, however, a something of power and genius which influences the imagination, and we must not marvel that in the last century, men of learning and wisdom, who did not think it necessary to be charlatans, seriously

applied themselves to whatever these dreams of inventions appeared to offer of the ingenious. There is more of Paracelsus than one thinks in the considerations of Leeuwenoeck and Spallanzani upon the nature of certain infusoria, and in those of Needham upon spontaneous generation—a subject which even occupied the fancies of Sir Thomas Browne.

Needham is the English physician whom Voltaire ridiculed, who thought he had discovered, not precisely men, but eel-like animalcules—the beginnings of human beings—in the farina of fermented barley, and who profited by this discovery to announce that we all of us were completed and perfected eels. It even appears that he thought it possible to procreate beings by an entirely novel method. It was only necessary, in order to solve this problem, to infuse the flour of farina into distilled water, to enclose the infusion in a small pouch of goldbeaters' skin, and to shut up the whole for nine months in a dunghill. At the end of this term, the dunghill could not do otherwise than be delivered of a child. This was said and written more than two hundred years after the death of Paracelsus. Who will pretend after this that it is only truth which never changes?

A man superior to Needham, the Genevese, Charles Bonnet, who had no pretensions to be a magician, also resuscitated—not so many years ago, and although he probably had never read them—some of the errors of our alchymist. He restores to honour, in his “Contemplations upon Nature” and his “Palingenesis,” the system of the eternity of germs. This certainly does not prove that Paracelsus was right; but it denotes that his philosophy had a certain depth, and may induce us to think that, under better influences, he might have originated something else than extravagances and paradoxes.

We find, too, in the most impenetrable abysses of his works, many other ideas which have risen to the surface, and which float there a long time before giving place to newer resurrections from some other gulf. Such is the entire system of magnetism, which is but a new and last transformation of the system of life-principles.

“All the beings dependent upon matter,” says M. Deslandes, “have an internal and constraining form, to which Paracelsus gives the general name of the olympic or astral spirit, and it is this form which constitutes the essence of each body, and which is the

cause, by its universal and universally extended harmony, that they all entertain anything analogous and sympathetic the one for the other. In effect, although all beings have a proper and distinctive character, although all live in their own peculiar manner, there exists between them a mutual and reciprocal correspondence, an intimate relationship which cannot but be regarded as the masterpiece of the wisdom of God."

It is now no longer necessary, in order to assure us of the sympathy that prevails between us and such or such a thing, such or such an individual, to seize its first principle chemically, and having seized it, to put our spiritual nature in correspondence with its own: it is best to establish these relations by the single fact of the will; and Paracelsus had the secret of it.

If he does not teach us how to obtain it, he assures us at least that *he* succeeded, and it was thus that he contrived to discourse with the dead, and to converse intelligibly with persons separated by more than two hundred leagues. This is absolutely what we are professing to do to-day; what our spirit-rappers and mediums assert that they accomplish. They are the same miracles, produced with the same mystery and explained with the same

clearness—that is to say, showing little and explaining less.

Paracelsus in another part of his work ventures much further. He does not limit himself to saying that every substance contains in itself something of the nature of the loadstone which forces it to gravitate towards another; he affirms that we are all but organized magnets, having each our poles which attract and repel. Our thoughts are simply magnetic emanations, which in escaping from our brains penetrate into kindred heads, and carry thither, with a reflection of our life, the mirage of our secrets.

On this magnetic philosophy it may be advisable to dwell somewhat fully.

Paracelsus was the first to compare this sympathy between things animate and inanimate to the action of the loadstone, and originated the word *magnetism* in the sense in which it is now-a-days applied.

All things, according to him, emanated from a great first being, and there was a reciprocity of life in all things. In man, too, there exists a something astral, emanating from the stars. Whether precisely physical or not, it may, when compared with the grosser body, be considered a spirit. This life stands in

connexion with the stars from which it sprang, and draws to it their power, like a magnet. He calls this sidereal life the *magnes microcosmi*—the magnet of the little world, and makes use of it to explain many circumstances in nature. The magnetic power, he asserts, is diffused through the universe—glows in the flower, glides in the stream, seethes in the ocean, shines in the sky;—the human body draws the poisonous properties of natural objects towards itself, whilst on the other hand, those natural objects again attract poisonous exhalations to themselves, and impart them to others.

“We must know,” he says, “that man has something magnetic in him, without which he cannot live. But the magnet is made for the man, not the man for the magnet. This magnetic principle includes the human magnetism, and descends from the stars, and from nowhere else.

Man is taken out of the four elements, and nourished by them; but not merely so in a palpable manner, through the stomach, but also imperceptibly, through that magnetic power which informs all nature, and through which every individual member draws to itself its peculiar nourishment.

Upon this magnetic theory is founded the

sympathetic cure of disease. In the "mummy," or so-called magnet, all physical power resides, and a little dose draws all that is homogeneous in the whole body to itself. We may thus free ourselves in a most wonderful manner from the most tedious diseases, by converting ourselves, as it were, to iron; that is, when we apply a small part of the decayed mummy to another sound body. The magnet then attracts to itself the whole of the disease.

"The magnet," he says, "has long been exhibited to all eyes, and no person has ever thought whether it could be of any further use, or whether it possessed any other quality than that of attracting iron. The base and ignorant doctors object to me that I will not follow the ancients; but in what *should* I follow them? All that they have said of the magnet is really worthless. Compare it with what I have said, and judge! I should know no more than what every peasant knows—that it attracts iron, if I had blindly followed the footsteps of others and made no experiments for myself; but every wise man will search for himself, and by this independent course I have discovered that the magnet, in addition to its obvious and generally visible power possesses another and secret spell."

“In disease you must place the magnet in the centre whence the disease proceeds. The magnet has two poles, an attractive and a repelling one. It is not a trivial thing to which of these a man has recourse. For instance, in the falling sickness, or all kinds of epilepsy, where the malady more particularly affects the head, it is proper to lay four magnets on the lower part of the body, with the pole of attraction turned upwards, and on the head only one, with the repelling pole downwards; and then *you bring other agencies to their aid*. This paragraph,” says Paracelsus, “is of more value than all that the Galenic doctors have learned or have taught in the whole course of their lives. If, instead of vainly boasting, they had taken a magnet, they might have done more than they ever could with empty vaunts. For by this means I have cured defluxions of the eyes, ears, nose, and other members, as well as fistulas, cancers, and other maladies. Moreover, the magnet draws together ruptures and cures them; it expels jaundice and dropsy, as I have frequently experienced in my practice.”

“You must understand,” he says, in another place, “that the magnet is that spirit of life in man which the corrupted or diseased man

seeks, as both unite themselves with chaos from without. And thus the healthy are infected by the unhealthy through magnetic attraction. This fact may be illustrated by an example. When sound eyes look at bleared eyes, they immediately draw to themselves the chaos of the latter, and the ill or malady straightway passes into the sound eyes."

Reflecting upon all the marvels of his discoveries, he could not refrain from a burst of indignant vituperation:—

"Ye doctors of Paris, Padua, Montpelier, Salerno, Vienna, and Leipzig, ye are not teachers of the truth, but confessors of lies! Your philosophy is a lie! Would you know what magic is, seek it in the Apocalypse. All the trouble and unhappiness of the world proceeds from this, that your art is based upon the false. As you cannot prove the truth of your teaching from the Bible and the Apocalypse, let your sorry farces have an end. The Bible is the true key and interpreter. John, no less than Moses, Elias, Enoch, David, Solomon, Daniel, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, was a magician, a diviner, a cabalist. If all, or any of these were now living, I doubt not but that you would make an example of them in your miserable slaughterhouse, would annihilate

them there, and were it possible, the Creator of all things also.”

On the astral influence, or power of the stars, he expatiates with considerable force :—

“Time is the life of the stars ; the circling and working together of them. Not alone through the sun does the earth mete out its time. All that returns in cycles to the earth, to animals and to men, owns the royalty of the stars. The individual life of earth must harmonize with the general life of higher worlds, for God in love has created for us the sidereal system, and has informed it with sensibility, that we may feel and reveal the secrets of the stars.”

“Whether a fire burns or not,” he says, “may be discovered by a little water. Thus stands man in the centre of the world. He is received and surrounded like a pot placed in the midst of a tripod, and as the pot and all it contains must do what the fire will—boil, steam, etc.—so is it with the body. In like manner as fire passes through an iron stove do the stars pass through man with all their properties, and penetrate him as the rain penetrates the earth, which gives fruit in return for it. Now observe that the stars envelope the earth as a shell does the egg ;

through the shell comes the air, and strikes into the centre of the sphere. As the fish suffer in the lake when heat or cold affects it, so man submits to the vapour of the stars."

Somewhat more intelligible is his exposition of the force and power of the will:—

"It is possible that my spirit, without the help of the body, and through an ardent will alone, and without a sword, can stab and wound others. It is also possible that I can bring the spirit of my adversary into an image and then fold him up or lame him at my pleasure. You must understand that the exercise of the will is an important point in the art of medicine. Man can inflict disease upon man and beast by his curses; but it does not act through strength of character, virgin wax, and so on . . . it is the imagination alone that fulfils the desire. Every imagination of man springs from the heart, for that is the sum of the microcosm; and out of the microcosm shoots forth the imagination into the great world. So the imagination of a man is a seed, which is material. *Resolute imagination is the beginning of all magical operations.* Fixed, unswerving thought is also a means to an end. I cannot move my eye about with

my hand, but the firmly poised imagination directs it whithersoever it will. The imagination of another may be able to kill me. Imagination is the offspring of pleasure and desire ; thence result envy and hatred, for the desire is followed by the deed. A curse may be realized when it leaps from the heart ; and so from the heart issue the curses of fathers and mothers. And when any person would wound or stab another, he must first in imagination thrust the weapon into himself ; he must conceive the wound and it will be given through the thought, even as if it were wrought with the hands.

“The magical is a great hidden wisdom, and reason is a great open folly. No armour shields against magic, for it strikes at the inward spirit of life. Of this we may rest assured that, through faith and a powerful imagination only, can we bring the spirit of any man into an image. No conjuration, no rites are needful ; circle-making and scattering of incense are mere humbug and jugglery. The human spirit is so great a thing that no man can express it. Eternal and unchangeable as God himself is the mind of man ! And could we rightly comprehend the mind of man

nothing would be impossible to us upon earth. Through faith the imagination is invigorated and completed, for it really happens that every doubt mars its perfection. Faith must strengthen the imagination, for faith establishes the will. Because men do not perfectly believe and imagine, the result is, that arts are uncertain when they might be wholly certain."

Paracelsus was above the trickery of the contemporary necromancers and astrologers. He soared to loftier heights than they ever conceived of, and with all the extravagance and mystical absurdities of his philosophy mingled the fine conceptions of a powerful but erring imagination. In the dawn of philosophy shadows were often taken for substances, and men chased the morning mists as eagerly as if they were the forms of Divine things. Hence they were led to an undue exaltation of man, upon whom they considered the whole universe to be dependent; and the force of the will and the imagination they exaggerated into a victorious and all-conquering power. At bottom, however, lay a great truth; and what may be effected by a right exercise of the will or a judicious diversion of the imagination, the moderns are now prepared to recognise.

§ 5. THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

The possession of the Philosopher's Stone opened up to the magician visions of illimitable power and wealth, but with wonderful self-denial he sacrificed himself for the good of his fellows. Instead of erecting magnificent palaces, and filling them with the glow and glitter of luxurious splendour, he resolved to secure for mankind the gift of immortality by the conversion of the stone into the elixir of life, by reducing it, in a word, into fluid gold. This is what he accomplished. Hitherto he had only succeeded in perfecting combinations that restored the bloom of youth to the withered cheek, and the elasticity of seventeen to the paralysed limbs of seventy; but now, prosecuting his researches to a noble end, he learned to make that youth perpetual, and a new Prometheus discovered the fire of heaven—the veritable mercury of life, the true tincture of the sun, by whose agency the body of man becomes immortal as his soul!

“This arcanum,” he writes, “requires no explanation; its name alone suffices to describe it. It is a medicine so excellent and so useful, that even as the tincture of the dyers colours intimately every kind of cloth in its own hue,

so also this life-tincture converts all kinds of humours, however malignant they may be, into health, penetrating by its subtilty into every part, and transmuting the evil into the good, just as the flame transmutes wood and other combustible materials into fire and igneous vapour."

Although, like all alchymists, jealous of his secrets, and bound by his oath not to reveal them to the profane except under the cloak of a most apocalyptic style, Paracelsus has not disdained to communicate to us the recipe of this marvel. And such is its simplicity that we wonder any one consents to die! Is it that we all grow so weary of the burden of life, of the sorrows and follies and sins of this mundane world? Can no dread of the future tempt us to preserve the present? Here, at all events, is the secret of Paracelsus, and yet every cemetery is thickly studded with new graves!

"Take the spiritualized mercury, separated from all impurity, sublime it with antimony in such a manner that the two may refine themselves together and become a single inseparable substance; dissolve them upon marble, four times dissolving and four times solidifying them, after which the elixir is accomplished. The said elixir is a leaven which digests and

mingles with the radical principle of life, and has the power to maintain it in good condition, and to oppose all that is contrary to it. For just as arsenic changes into poison every aliment, this elixir converts everything into good, defends the body from evil, and even *after death* prevents the corpse from smelling, and preserves it from corruption."

It may appear extraordinary that Paracelsus relates, among the virtues of a potion which is to secure immortality, the faculty of preserving our dead bodies from stench and corruption. But we must not examine too critically the minutiae of contradictions that are probably due to the heat of the imagination—to the poetic fire and eloquent impetuosity of the writer. It may be that he wishes to intimate as a consolatory fact that if the physician charged with the glorious *elixir* should arrive too late by the bedside of the dying, he may at least communicate to the corpse the similitude of that life which he could not save. Definitions are rigid and precise; enigmas are elastic and transparent. A philosopher should always speak in riddles, for in case of a misadventure, he may thus accuse the ignorance of the interpreter. If he utters a definition he places himself in a pillory, and every wit will have his fling at him.

“Certissimum est hoc naturæ arcanum,” writes Jean Fabre, “omnium secretissimum, revelatum potius esse mortalibus ab ipsomet Deo, quam fuisse ab iisdem mortalibus excogitatum.” It is most certain, says this Paracelsian apostle, with amiable modesty, that this secret of the secrets of nature—this most secret of all secrets—was rather revealed to mortals by God himself than thought out by those same mortals.

It was the glory of Paracelsus that he was chosen to make known to earth so inestimable a revelation; and we think he might very well be content with the distinction of a prophet or a lawgiver—a Moses or an Elijah—without going further and claiming divine attributes. But what will surprise our readers, as it surprises us, is the extraordinary reticence of the great philosopher in never availing himself of the precious *elixir* which it was his good fortune to make known to humanity. He wrested the secret from heaven by hard study and the most subtle analyses, proclaimed it to the world, and abstained from using it. Methinks, I have known others, politicians and philosophers, who have in like manner shrank from essaying their own nostrums, or putting to the proof their own theories. It is so

much easier to legislate for others than for ourselves.

“Not being able,” says M. Deumier, “to live as long as we could wish, we owe at least some gratitude to Paracelsus for having taught us by what means our first fathers lived for ages, while we, degenerate ones, are foolish enough to grow old at eighty years or less. The learned have endeavoured to diminish the age of the patriarchs by assuring us that they did not calculate the year as we do, which is infinitely probable, and that the vital strength of the earth having decayed, it is natural that that of its children should decline in proportion. These are the arguments of the Academy to which a *true philosopher* will not subscribe. If Adam lived nine hundred years and more, he maintained it was because when Heaven expelled him from Paradise it revealed to him, by way of consolation, the secret of the Philosopher’s Stone and the supreme essence of the sun. Without this, unhappy Adam could not have extricated himself from his sorrows. ‘For Adam our first parent, when driven out of Paradise, and thrown miserable and naked into the calamities of human life, was not able so long to preserve himself from death.’

“Since he was immortal, you will ask me,

perhaps, why he died. Paracelsus does not tell us; but it is possible that after a sojourn of nine centuries on this earth—after prolonging life to an epoch when the world was torn with distractions—our first father was more than satisfied, and renounced through weariness his use of the liquid, which he must without doubt have employed from time to time for his preservation. If Abel was killed, it so happened because he was still in the flower of his youth—of youth which only sees the present, and lives from day to day; he had no thought of the accidents of the morrow. It is not less true that this secret passed from patriarch to patriarch, and that owing to its efficacy they dwelt so long upon the earth. They only quitted it when, like Adam, they grew weary. This satiety made no remarkable progress until after the Deluge.

“Paracelsus also explains, by the possession of this precious philter, the flourishing condition of the globe under its first inhabitants. Although this is not asserted by the Scriptures and traditions, it appears certain that the first possessors of the philosophical-stone-liquid did not content themselves with taking it at fixed intervals for their own benefit, but admitted to the privilege of their protracted

existence their beasts, their fowls, their vegetables, their trees. At a time when the arms of men were necessarily wanting for agriculture, one perceives how important it was to be spared the need of constantly renewing their orchards, their granaries, their farmyards. When our fathers planted a tree, they were assured that its shadow would never quit them. Life was shared in common by things animate and inanimate, and nature was very dear to her children. All this is much to be regretted."

But besides the gift of immortality, the Philosopher's Stone was endowed with so marvellous a lustre that it lighted up at night, like the moon, that which during the day it brightened and invigorated like the sun. The knowledge of this "phosphorescent power" opened to Paracelsus an important archæological discovery—that it was not a carbuncle, as some have supposed, but a true philosopher's stone, which in the Ark served as a lamp or torch for the patriarch Noah!

If the charlatan-enthusiast—how much of his own extravagances did he believe, how much disbelieve?—has not very lucidly explained to us the means of perfecting the elixir, he has been sufficiently explicit in

reference to its immediate effects. Just as he seemed under no restraint when labouring to initiate us into the prolegomena of our rejuvenescence by the spirit of melissa, so he has not been greedy of details upon the preliminaries of our immortality.

Scarcely has a drop of the glorious essence moistened our lips before we feel as if disengaged of matter! All the dust and moil of life vanish at the breath of endless youth! The shadows of death recoil—its clouds roll up before the rays of sunlight which interpenetrate your being—a sense of ineffable happiness pervades your soul—and all nature seems illuminated with a glorious radiance. But before we attempt to reach an elevation so sublime, and so to lustrate and beautify our corporeal nature, it were as well perhaps we should remember the wise counsel of another teacher of the Hermetic philosophy—the sage Trithemius—and “study first to leave behind us our carnal affections, the frailty of the senses, the passions that belong to matter; secondly, to learn by what means we may rise to the climax of pure intellect, united with the divinities above, without which we never can gain the lore of secret things, nor the magic that accomplishes true wonders!”

Here we close our brief examination into the Paracelsian philosophy. While amused by its extravagances, let us remember that its inventor was a bold and daring chemist, who introduced into medicine the science of experiment, and bequeathed to his successors the use of two invaluable drugs—mercury and laudanum. He was but a Dweller on the Threshold ; yet he caught some glimpses of the light and glory of a completer knowledge, of a more perfect science,—ay, even of a purer philosophy. He clomb the Pisgah-peak, and looked out afar upon the Promised Land. If in the cloudy vapours and uncertain mists of the morning his steps often wandered astray, and his brain grew dizzy with the boundlessness of its visions, let us acknowledge that his aspirations were those of an earnest soul, and his errors the errors of a splendid intellect!

CHAPTER VII.

HENRY CORNELIUS AGRIPPA.

[A.D. 1486-1534.]

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA VON NETTESHEIM: MAGICIAN,
DOCTOR, KNIGHT AND PHILOSOPHER.

In der Welt weit,
Aus der Einsamkeit,
Wollen sie Dich locken.

In the wide world,
Out of the solitude,
Will these attract thee.

GÖTTE. (*Faust.*)

Chè difesa miglior ch' usbergo e scudo
E la santa innocenza al petto ignudo!—TASSO.

Surer defence is sacred innocence
Than shield or cuirass to the naked breast.

§ 1. EARLY YEARS.

HENRY CORNELIUS AGRIPPA VON NETTESHEIM was born at Cologne on the 14th of September, 1486. The Romans gave the name of Agrippa* to a child who came into the world

* Compounded from *ægritudo*, in allusion to the mother's pain, and *pedes*, the infant's feet.

with his feet foremost, and probably the infant Von Nettesheim received his classical prænomens from a similar circumstance. His ancestors had been for generations attached to the service of the house of Hapsburgh, but when Cornelius grew up to manhood he discarded his feudal family name, and for literary purposes remained constant to the classical Agrippa.

Few details of his education have descended to our times, but it is certain that he displayed a peculiar aptitude for study, and Cologne in those days was the very nursery of learning and the favoured home of science. In every branch of human knowledge it is certain that he acquired some proficiency, and he also gained an intimate acquaintance with many languages.

While still very young his ancestral connections obtained him service in the Imperial Court, and he was attached to the Emperor of Germany for several years, first as a secretary, and afterwards as a soldier. His quick pregnant intellect and ambitious spirit did not escape the notice of the shrewd Maximilian, who often employed him upon missions of some political importance; and the first notable incident in his career springs out of

a service of this nature, undertaken at the age of twenty.

Cornelius, according to Naudé, could speak eight different languages, wherefore Paulus Jovius styled him a monstrous genius (*portentosum ingenium*), Jacques Gehory ranked him among the most splendid lights of his age, and Ludwig (Ludovick) named him the venerable Master Agrippa, a miracle of letters and of learned men. His skill as a linguist marked him out for a mission to Paris. The times were then out of joint. Philip of Castile had died suddenly. Ferdinand of Arragon was disputing with Philip's father, Maximilian, the regency of the kingdom. It was important for the latter to know the policy and wishes of France, and Agrippa was sent to observe, remember, and record.

He made the acquaintance at Paris of a young Catalonian, the Senor de Gerona, who had been placed by King Ferdinand as his lieutenant over the district of Tarragon. His representations fired the young German's spirit of enterprise, and the two resolved upon a daring adventure, probably with some indistinct idea that it would finally turn to the advantage of Maximilian. A third comrade was easily discovered, an Italian, who

studied medicine in Paris, one Blasius Cæsar Landulphus, and minor confederates were enlisted by various promises.

The enterprise opened successfully with the seizure of the Fuerte Negro, a port which entirely commands the town of Tarragon. After remaining there for a brief while, Cornelius was sent to garrison the mansion of Senor de Gerona at Villarodona, and protect it from an explosion of Catalonian wrath. There he learned that Landulphus had recrossed the Garonne on his way to Barcelona, and thither he dispatched Gerona to concert with his friend their further movements. He was to return by the festival of St. John, and a banquet was provided for the occasion, to which were bidden sundry of his friends, the prior of St. George's monastery, a Franciscan priest, and others. But Gerona did not return. "The day of the appointed dinner-party was at hand, and when the sun had set upon the eve of it, Cornelius, expecting still in vain the absent man, and pondering the cause of his delay; anxious, beset with terrible suspicions, uncertain how to act, with his brain, as he says, disturbed by presage of the coming ill and dread of the approaching night, revolved in his mind many conflicting counsels. At

last he retired to rest, but when all in the castle were asleep, night not being far advanced, the abbot's steward came, for whom, when he had given the password to the sentries, the drawbridge was let down and the gate opened. He summoned Cornelius Agrippa, Perotti the Franciscan, and two other of Gerona's relatives, to tell them that on his way home from Barcelona their chief had been waylaid by a savage crowd of rustics, and that two of his followers being killed, he with the others had been bound hand and foot, and carried up the mountains."

The messenger then warned them to take instant measures for their own defence, and was silent. But he counselled them either to escape by a bold and dexterous sortie, or to fortify their castle against the rustic insurgents.

The fort was too large and in too ruinous a condition to be defended by a handful of men against a large number of besiegers, but at three miles distance there was a tower, so girdled by crags and encircled by pools and bogs, that it seemed to offer a secure asylum. Thither repaired Agrippa and his scanty band, under the cover of night, and thither on the

following morning the rebels followed them, soon discovering that they had abandoned the Fuerte Negro. But a barricade of empty waggons blocked up the only pass to Agrippa's citadel, and when the peasantry attempted to storm it, they were driven back by a scathing fire, to which their slings and bows and arrows offered but an ineffectual resistance. They then resolved to reduce them by famine, and encircled the mountain-tower with a ring of armed men. Many lives had been lost in the assault of the Fuerte Negro, and the peasants accordingly sought for vengeance on "the German," whom they regarded as the principal author of the deed. So they maintained the blockade very rigorously, and the garrison speedily began to feel the anxieties of approaching famine.

In this strait the knowledge of the country possessed by the abbot's steward, and the quick conception of Agrippa, rescued them from certain destruction. The steward discovered a concealed pass that led by a devious and difficult route to the shore of a piece of water called the Black Lake. Across this lake rose the grey walls and towers of his master's abbey; once there they were saved. But how were they to cross the lake—it was four miles

wide—without a boat? Agrippa's invention now came to their aid. He knew the aversion—the superstitious awe—with which the peasants regarded the unfortunate leper. Taking a lad who was in the garrison, and disfiguring him with stains of milk-thistle and other herbs he painted his skin in imitation of the sickly hue of leprosy, hung round his neck the leper's bell, which warned every one of his dreaded approach, dressed him as a beggar, and gave him for his stick a crooked branch, within which a receptacle for a letter had been contrived. Mounted upon an ox, he left the tower under the shadow of the friendly night. As morning broke he appeared among the watch-posts of the besiegers, but the sentinels fled at his coming in a panic of terror, never paused to question him on his errand, and at a secure distance flung to him the alms which fear and not pity prompted.

The boy therefore executed his errand safely, and safely returned to the tower early on the following night, with an answer to Agrippa's missive.

The garrison then prepared for immediate departure, and firing several guns to make the besiegers believe in their continued presence, stealthily quitted the tower at early dawn, and

ascended the mountain gorge until they reached the summit. There they became visible to the inmates of the abbey, and displaying a white cloth as a signal, soon had the satisfaction of seeing a couple of fishermen's boats row swiftly across the lake. They descended to its marge with cheerful rapidity, entered the boats, and before evening were safely housed under the hospitable roof of the abbey. This was the 14th of August. For two months had Agrippa been shut up in his mountain fastness. Agrippa now settled down at Avignon, in company with one Antonius Xanthus, and his attendant Stephen, and applied himself to his studies with characteristic vigour. He had previously visited Valencia, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Naples, and Leghorn. His inquiring mind—like most of the inquiring minds of that age—stood aghast at the frauds, sensuality, errors, and crimes which disgraced the Roman priesthood, and began groping through the darkness in search of light. "Secret societies," says Mr. Morley, "chiefly composed of curious and learned youths, had by this time become numerous, and numerous especially among the Germans. Not only the search after the Philosopher's Stone, which was then worthy to be prosecuted

by enlightened persons, but also the new realms of thought laid open by the first glance at Greek literature, and by the still more recent introduction of a study of the Hebrew language, occupied the minds of these associated scholars. Such studies often carried those who followed them within the borders of forbidden ground, and therefore secrecy was a condition necessary to their freedom of inquiry. Towards the close of the sixteenth century such associations (the foundation of which had been a desire to keep thought out of fetters) were developed into the form of brotherhoods of Rosicrucians, physicians, theosophists, chemists, and now, by the mercy of God, Rosicrucian, became then the style in which a brother gloried. The brotherhoods of Rosicrucians are still commonly remembered, but in the social history of Europe they are less to be considered than those first confederations of theosophists, which nursed indeed mystical errors gathered from the Greeks and Jews, but out of whose theories there was developed much of a pure spiritualism that entered into strife with what was outwardly corrupt and sensual in the body of the Roman Church, and thus prepared the way for the more vital attacks of the Reformers."

When the night first broadens into morning one cannot but perceive how in the semi-obscure air which then gathers over the earth, every object assumes a weird and portentous aspect. The clouds on the distant hill hang like the shadows of mighty phantoms, the trees stretch out their misty branches like spectral arms, and the vapours roll along the river like the march of a goblin host. To these early inquirers—these Agrippas and Paracelsuses, these Reuchlins and De Bouelles—the dawning knowledge that broke slowly and hazily upon the deep darkness and ignorance of the feudal time presented things in the same unreal and fantastic character. Like children for the first time set free on the seashore, they were lost in wonder at the strangeness and grandeur of all they beheld, and regarded as mysteries what the examination of a wider and more advanced science has shown to be simple operations of nature. Yet at these pioneers of the truth it is not well for us to fling the arrows of a satiric wit. Later inquirers have profited by their very errors, have recognised in their follies the seeds of wisdom, have discerned from the vague indications scattered about their writings the way to many paths of philosophical research.

To us the marvels of chemistry and electricity are so familiar as to be the sport of children, but to the earlier votaries of philosophy they naturally appeared surprising. And if regarded by the inventor or the discoverer with admiration, consider with how great an awe they must have appalled the ignorant vulgar! An optical delusion, a chemical combination, an electric shock, could seem to them nothing but a miracle wrought by good or evil spirits. The Roman Church, averse to the spread of free inquiry—trembling at the advance of bold speculation and adventurous thought—eagerly launched its thunders at the wonder-workers, and discarding all reference to the possible agency of good, authoritatively pronounced them the tools and slaves of Satan. Hence they came to be looked upon with mingled abhorrence and apprehension, and fear exaggerated the circumstances which ignorance had already invested with marvellous attributes. Nor were the philosophers themselves without a certain vague belief that they possessed powers not commonly vouchsafed to man; and in the arrogance that springs from limited knowledge began to speak confidently of the performance of miracles which assuredly never existed but in their heated and dreamy imaginations.

But it must also be remembered that the hostility of the Roman Church and the superstition of the vulgar menacing these unhappy thaumaturgists with perils both to life and property, they were compelled to conceal their discoveries in a cloud of verbiage which later inquirers have too readily despised as jargon. They wrapped up their secrets in mystical phrases, and hinted at them in obscure allegories; partly because they feared to reveal them to enemies who would have profited by them to the disadvantage of the inventors, partly from an almost childish delight in their own wonders, and in the exaggerations with which they surrounded them. The elder D'Israeli has well remarked that "magical terms with talismanic figures may yet conceal many a secret; gunpowder came down to us in a sort of anagram, and the kaleidoscope, with all its interminable multiplications of forms, lay at hand for two centuries in Baptista Porta's 'Natural Magic.' The abbot Trithemius in a confidential letter happened to call himself a magician, perhaps at the moment he thought himself one, and sent three or four leaves stuffed with the names of devils and with their evocations. At the death of his friend these leaves fell into the unworthy

hands of the prior, who was so frightened by his first glance at the diabolical nomenclature, that he raised the country against the abbot, and Trithemius was nearly a lost man! Yet after all, this evocation of devils has reached us in his 'Steganographia,' and proves to be only one of this ingenious abbot's polygraphic attempts at *secret writing*; for he had flattered himself that he had invented a mode of concealing his thoughts from the world, while he communicated them to a friend. Roger Bacon promised to raise thunder and lightning and disperse clouds by dissolving them into rain. The first magical process has been obtained by Franklin; and the other, of far more use to our agriculturists, may perchance be found lurking in some corner which has been overlooked in the 'Opus Majus' of our Doctor Mirabilis." And even now-a-days, have not our philosophers a jargon of their own, and do they not often conceal their ignorance in a cloud of mystical phrases? Has medicine no secrets, no follies, no absurdities? And do not our theorists upon the brain and its diseases indulge in speculations of the wildest and most extravagant character?

It should be observed that these thaumaturgists, these servants of the devil, and pro-

fessors of the magical art, were mostly men of spotless character and blameless life. They deemed the utmost purity of morals and elevation of thought essential to a successful prosecution of their researches. Chastity, temperance, devoutness, were enjoined by the early philosophers upon their neophytes as the needful virtues of the seeker after knowledge. They represented its pursuit as a difficult and arduous enterprise, not to be accomplished without resolute self-denial and pure enthusiasm.

Ardua vallatur duris sapientia scrupis.

Wisdom, they taught, was fenced round with rugged rocks. He who was a slave to his passions could never hope to enter the *penetralia*, the holy of holies. It was only when "the soul was elevated to natures better than itself" and "purged of earthly desires," that it could partake of the glorious banquet which liberal Nature prepares for her wise and earnest worshippers. You must be "poor in spirit" if you "would penetrate that sacred night which environs truth." And yet it was upon the men who preached so high and sacred a doctrine that the Church of Rome poured out its bitter anathemas, and it is such

men that the indiscriminating arrogance of a later time has confused with the dabblers in magic, the charlatans and quacks, the astrologers and diviners, who picked up a few secrets of science and employed them to extract money from a credulous multitude!

But it is time we should return to Avignon and Cornelius Agrippa.

§ 2. HIS MAGICAL STUDIES.

At Avignon Cornelius Agrippa resumed his studies, and began to drink deep of that forbidden knowledge which was stored up by the numerous mysterious brotherhoods of Theosophists and Rosicrucians, and which in its love of spiritualism and theurgic purity militated strongly against the corruptions and vices of the Romish Church. And thus it was that Rome hated not only the alchymist, the Rosicrucian, the magician, but the *heretic*. These men who carried their speculations beyond the limits assigned by a pseudo-infallible priesthood were indeed the pioneers of the Reformation, awakening a spirit of inquiry, of criticism, of profound thought, which paved the way for the bold assertions and audacious logic of Luther. It was not then at their

Cabala and their magic signs, at their dreams and follies, that Rome launched her thunders. The *elixir vitæ* and the Philosopher's Stone were as nothing in themselves, but in searching after these delusive objects the inquirer was led into trains of thought which could not but prove fatal to the pretensions of the Church; and it was the bold freethinker, the daring inquirer, the uncontrolled "ideologist," not the pale-browed votary of the Rosy-Cross whom priestcraft sought to punish. That freer and more extended learning which the researches of the reputed magicians did so much to foster and promote, was regarded by the monks with the most poignant alarm. They looked with apprehension upon the sunrise that was slowly broadening over the distant hills. It was an age of expectation—an age of waiting; but with very different feelings did the servants of the Church mark the first gleams of light upon the long-clouded horizon to these earnest and hopeful watchers who hailed them as the promise—the assurance of a full tide of splendour wherein the whole earth should bask and be glad! We must remember, then, this hostility of the Church when seeking to grapple the true secret of the lives of such men as Paracelsus, Lulli, Cornelius Agrippa. The monks

flung dirt upon them while living, and ashes upon their graves. It is the duty of posterity to do their memory justice.

From Avignon Agrippa went to Lyons, conversing with such students of the occult sciences as came across his path, and collecting materials for a complete treatise upon the mysteries and profundities of magic. In pursuit of this new object he went from Lyons to Authun, for the sake of the teaching to be derived from the learned Campegius (*né Cham-pier*), and while under this philosopher's roof made his first appearance in the world of literature, in a series of orations upon Reuchlin's book on "The Mirific Word." Both book and orations were founded upon the traditions, or Cabala, of the Hebrew rabbis, by means of whose secrets the enthusiasts hoped to obtain communication with the spirits of the outer world. The "Mirific Word" was the Name—above all others mirific and beatific—which unveiled the mysteries of heaven to man.

His orations secured him the favour of Margaret of Burgundy, the governor of the Netherlands, and the degree of doctor of divinity, together with a stipend from the university of Dôle. Thus encouraged, Agrippa, as was natural to a young man of

three-and-twenty, began to look about for a wife, and as a preparatory step endeavoured to secure the sympathies of the "other sex" by the publication of a treatise "On the Nobility and pre-Excellence of the Female Sex,"* which he courteously dedicated to the Princess Margaret. In this curious little tractate he bursts into rhapsodies of panegyric which might satisfy the greediest of "strong-minded women." Man is altogether snubbed and humiliated in order to place woman on the loftiest imaginable pedestal. His very name furnishes an argument against him. What means *Adam* but *Earth*, while the significant and all-important interpretation of *Eve* is *Life*? As much, then, as life surpasses earth, does woman excel and outshine man. Woman, too, was the last work of creation; hence she was the best. Things animate and inanimate—stars, moon, and sun, earth and sea, animal and vegetable life, man himself—all had been called into being before woman arose—the crown, the glory, the consummate masterpiece of the creative power. Then, too, her personal charms, upon which Agrippa dwells like

* *Henrici Cornelii Agrippæ de Nobilitate et Præcellentia Fœminei Sexus, ad Margaretam Augustam Austriacorum et Burgundionum Principem, An. MDXXXII.*

an enamoured poet, sufficiently attest her pre-eminence. The light of heaven glows in her smile and kindles in her glance; her rounded form is perfect in its shapeliness; her luxuriant locks are her royal diadem; in every gesture beam dignity and grace. Even after death nature acknowledges her superiority. A woman who perishes by drowning floats upon her face; a man upon his back.

Agrippa then proceeds to borrow from Scripture and the Cabala—from anatomy and physiology—a thousand reasons to justify his assertion of woman's superiority. Many of these would shock the delicacy of modern readers; all are such as only a student of the sixteenth century, and a student very much in love, could possibly have adduced. But with these credentials in his hand he threw himself at the feet of Jane Louisa Tyssie, a Genevese maiden, whose beauty and worth almost seemed to justify his extravagant eulogiums on her sex. So flattering a lover could not be denied, and in 1509 Cornelius Agrippa was married. Life at this epoch seemed to open upon him with unclouded sunniness. Fame was his, and the repute attaching to the scion of a noble race, and a young, lovely, and loving wife. Friends were his, and admirers who

prophesied warmly of the great things to be accomplished by a man of such erudition and ability. When the heaven is serenest, however, the wise will most dread the hidden thunderbolt.

The year 1510 was distinguished by the preparation of those works on magic which have caused Agrippa to appear before posterity as a credulous and fanatical professor of the occult sciences, instead of receiving the credit justly due to him as a pure-minded, liberal enthusiast, and earnest, energetic scholar. Agrippa's treatise is known, in English, as "Three Books of Occult Philosophy, written by Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, Counsellor to Charles V., Emperor of Germany, and Judge of the Prerogative Court; translated by J. F. London, 1651."* Though written in 1510, it was not printed until 1531; but it is essential to notice it here to obtain an insight into the character of Agrippa's studies, and the growth and expansion of his intellect. Our *résumé* of it must necessarily be very brief and unsatisfactory. A fuller outline is given by Mr. Morley, and the reader desirous of knowing

* Mr. Morley speaks of this as the best—it is not, however, the only good translation of Agrippa's "System of Occult Philosophy."

yet more may consult the English translation already indicated.

Agrippa begins by setting forth the excellencies of magic, which he describes as the very completeness and perfection of all true philosophy, and the sum and compendium of all human knowledge. It is well known that Pythagoras and Plato resorted to the seers of Memphis to learn their doctrines, and travelled through almost all Syria, Egypt, Judæa, and the schools of the Chaldeans, that they might not be ignorant of the sacred memorials and holy records, and might become imbued with the lore of things divine. What zealous and hopeful student but would wish to follow in the steps of those great philosophers!

Agrippa next proceeds to expound the qualities of the four elements—fire, air, earth, and water—which enter into the composition of all inferior bodies. They have their points of similarity and contrast, of attraction and antipathy; are more or less mixed, and more or less convertible into one another. Each, according to Plato, has these special properties:—

Fire—Brightness, tenuity, movement.

Earth—Darkness, density, inertia.

Air—Lucidity, compressibility, movement.

Water—Weight, transparency, motion.

Respecting the "power" of each element : FIRE permeates the heaven and the earth ; is one in itself, but manifold in its capability of reception, is the soul and secret principle of life. The fire infernal dries up, scorches, blights and withers : the fire celestial drives away the spirits of evil, and so does the ordinary fire of the household hearth, because it is the medium and symbol of the celestial fire. Therefore the early prophets of religion decreed that in all ceremonies of worship there should be present lighted candles or torches—to which Pythagoras alludes in his famous saying, " You must not speak of God without a light." Fires, too, were kindled around the corpses of the dead to free them from the persecution of evil spirits, and with fire every sacrifice was performed.

The EARTH contains *semina rerum*—the seeds of all things, and produces vegetation, worms and animals, stones and metallic ores. Purify it by fire, reduce it by washing to its primitive simplicity, and it becomes the truest medicine for man's restoration or cure.

Great are the virtues of WATER ! It is a needful element in religious worship and spiritual regeneration ; and without it earth

cannot teem with life. Earth and water are the creative powers.

AIR is the ubiquitous and all-penetrative spirit of vitality, or rather, a medium connecting all things, receiving the impressions of objects, transmitting the sounds and rays of heaven; carrying the images of things into the bodies of men and animals, and filling them with surprising sensations. And as earth and water are creative, so air is preservative. The life engendered by earth and water would perish without air, would corrupt and putrify, would become death. Not without air can the flame be kindled, or when kindled preserved alight.

There are four elements, and so are there four compounds generated by them: stones, which are mainly of the earth—metals, which contain or are generated by an aqueous quicksilver—plants, which have an affinity with air—and fire, which is natural to animals. This external division has its counterpart in the human soul, which, according to Augustine, exhibits understanding, reason, imagination, and the senses: that is, fire, air, water, and earth. The elements, moreover, are to be discovered in the outer world; in fiery, airy,

earthy, and watery demons; in fiery, airy, earthy, and watery angels; in the stars, the planets—everywhere, even in the creative principle itself.

Now, in all things, according to the Neo-Platonists, there is an occult virtue, a hidden mysterious power—not springing from any element, but a sequel of its species and form—which transforms or modifies, dissolves or resolves; is of divine origin; and the source of the phenomena of the actual and natural world. So the secret power of the magnet attracts iron, and yet the secret power of a diamond neutralizes the magnet. This occult virtue lies in every stone and plant, but chiefly in the stars. It is a quintessence—a fifth element—or rather, something superior to the other elements—the *primum mobile*, and universal soul of nature. “Influences only go forth through the help of the spirit; but the spirit is diffused through the whole universe, and is in full accord with the human spirit.” The object of the true magic is to acquire an intimate sympathy with, and perfect knowledge of, this soul or spirit; a sympathy and a knowledge only to be acquired by the man who soars above carnal and earthly things, and possesses faith, love, and hope.

Agrippa devotes several chapters to the means by which the occult virtue may be discerned. Experience and conjecture are the two bases of his system ("Quæ a nobis non aliter quam experientia et conjectura indagari possunt"); and Agrippa assuredly makes good use of the latter. Virtues, he says, may come by way of likeness or affinity. Fire turns to fire, water to water, brain to brain, lung to lung. Therefore, if the magician requires any particular property or virtue, he must seek some animal or thing which contains it largely, and of that make use. For love take the dove, and take it when love is strongest in that symbolic bird, sacred in the old myths to Venus and Cupid. Take the lion's heart for courage; the eagle's eye for quickness; the swallow's wing for swiftness. For garrulity take a frog or a screech-owl! Hence the heart of the nocturnal gossip—which everybody knows a screech-owl *is*—if placed over the heart of a sleeping woman will impel her to reveal all her secrets (hear that, ye jealous husbands!) Long-lived animals, such as the snake and viper, promote longevity. Sir Kenelm Digby, however, who administered them to his wife, the beautiful Venetia, did not find the prescription successful.

The occult virtue of one thing can be transferred to another. The mirror used by an unchaste woman will deprive of her chastity a Lucretia, if she often looks into it!

Turn next to the antipathies existing between bodies, as between fire and water, air and earth; as between Mars and Venus, and Saturn; though, on the other hand it is consolatory to know that Saturn is on the best of terms with Jupiter, Mercury, the sun and the moon. Mars and Mercury are foes of the sun; Jupiter and Venus are his loving friends. Saturn alone is the enemy of Venus: that is, Time is the unchangeable foe of Beauty. Similar harmonies and antipathies pervade all nature. The dog is opposed to the cat; the hawk to the dove. The dove loves the parrot, the vine clings to the "barky fingers" of the elm. The agate attracts eloquence; the emerald wealth. This theory has a medicinal application. Rhubarb acts against bile; amethyst is an antidote for drunkenness; mercury attacks the liver; topaz protests against sensuality.

Agrippa indulges in a variety of similar fancies, with which our limits forbid us to meddle. Let us pass to the important point of the influences of the sidereal bodies. These may be divided into solary, lunary, jovial,

saturnine, martial, or mercurial, according to the character of the impressions they produce. Certain parts of the body, as the Arabians have taught, are influenced by each planet. So are the characters of men; their trades; plants, animals; indeed everything is amenable to the planetary power. It is difficult to determine what particular planet influences any particular object, and we must be guided by the imitation of the superior by the inferior figure. Thus, the baboon is solary, because he barks every hour, and marks the divisions of time just as the sun does. Among lunar things are the earth, water, silver, crystal; animals that delight in man's company, amphibious animals, and those which spring from an equivocal generation.

Saturnine are earth and water, heavy metals, plants with stupifying juices, dull, gross, lethargic animals, and harsh-voiced birds. To Jupiter, or Jove, belong the air, blood, and spirit; bright translucent jewels; fortunate trees; mild and sagacious animals; the eagle, and other birds of a towering disposition.

Mars exercises supremacy over everything hot, passionate, and pungent; over brass and iron, the diamond and loadstone, poisonous or

dangerous plants, biting and noxious insects, venomous reptiles, and ominous birds.

Venus sways the fairest jewels, the most fragrant flowers, the blood and the spirit, air and water, and all things or animals that inspire or acknowledge love.

To Mercury are subject the lighter and more inconstant animals; quick, many-flowered plants; artificial stones, glass, quicksilver, tin; and generally bodies of a shifting and variable nature.

Having mastered the planetary influences, we must next investigate the powers of the fixed stars and the zodiacal signs. Here again like rules like; Aries rules the earthly ram, Taurus the mundane ox; Virgo governs virgins, and Ursa bears.

Such are the principles upon which the system of the occult philosophy is founded. Let us see how they are to be applied by the would-be magician.

Each star or planet has its character and seal—its *mark*—which it impresses through its rays upon the substances or bodies subordinated to it. These marks may be discovered in the limbs of animals, in plants, in the knots or joints of boughs. It will be sufficient for us to state that certain *sigilla*, or marks, have

been imprinted upon the human hand, which the student will find set forth in the 33rd chapter of Agrippa's elaborate Treatise.*

Now, whoso desireth "from any particular part of the world to receive the power of a particular star, must use the means which stand in a particular relation to that star. If thou wilt, for example, draw the power of the sun to thee, use what is of a solar nature—metals, stones, or animals; but always, and best of all, such things as stand in a higher rank. Wonderful effects are produced by the union of sympathetic bodies, divine powers being thus drawn down, for Nature is the arch-magician. When Nature, for instance, has fashioned the body of the infant, she deduces the spirit from the universe by this very preparation. This spirit then becomes the instrument to obtain of God the understanding and mind in the soul and body, as in wood the dryness is fitted for the reception of oil, and the oil when absorbed becomes the nutriment of the fire, and the fire the medium of light. From these examples you may learn how by certain natural and artificial preparations we may fit ourselves to receive certain

* And on the last page of the present volume.

heavenly gifts from above. For stones and metals correspond with herbs, herbs with animals, animals with the skies, the skies with celestial intelligences, and these with the divine properties and attributes, and with God himself, after whose image and likeness all things are created."

An image correctly made of certain proper things, appropriated to any one certain angel, will quickly be inspired by that angel. Thus, by men of a pure soul and unselfish spirit, who are lowly in thought, and pray fervently and in secret, the celestial intelligences may be invoked. And by wicked men who employ such arts for evil ends it is well known that evil spirits have been raised.

Other enchantments may be wrought by divers means. Of some of these we may find space to speak. The sword with which a man is killed; the blood and bones of a civet cat; the axe with which a criminal has been beheaded are gifted with mysterious power. But vapours and perfumes are still more influential. The inhalation of the odours of linseed and fleabane seed, and roots of violets and parsley, will endow one with the power of foreseeing the future. The smoke from a chameleon's liver burnt on the house-roof will

excite rain and lightning. The fume of the burnt hoof of a horse drives away mice; the gall of a cuttle-fish confectioned with roses, red styrax, and aloe wood, will fill a house with blood. According to Trismegistus, the fume of spermaceti hath a sovereign virtue as a stimulant for the nerves; while, if thou wouldst raise the spirits of the dead, go thou into a graveyard, and make there a smoke of spermaceti and aloes-wood, musk, saffron, peppermint, red styrax, and the blood of a lapwing.

Eye-waters, or collyria, unguents, love-charms, and philtres—upon all these the young magician dilates with evident relish. By the application of suitable ointments the witch gave an intense depth and brilliancy to her eyes; or by employing Martial eye-waters, struck the spectator with fear, with Saturnine produced the most abject woe. On the same principle magical charms may be constructed, either solary, saturnine, jovial, or mercurial; and rings which, prepared under a fortunate star, cannot fail to be auspicious for their owners.

Other branches of the occult art—physiognomy, metoposcopy, and chiromancy—are passed in review by the philosopher, and then he addresses himself to divination by

means of auguries and auspices, lightning and prodigies. Consider Michael Scot's division of bird-auguries:—Six on the right hand, which he calls Fernova, Fervetus, Sonnasar-nova, Sonnasarvatus, Confert, Emponenthem; and six on the left hand, Confernova, Confervetus, Scassarnova, Scassarvetus, Viarum, Herrenam. If a bird in its flight should perch on your right-hand side, it is Confernova, an auspicious omen; if on the left-hand side, it is Scassarvetus, an evil sign. Prognostications may also be derived from the movements of animals; from the colours, forms, and motions of the elements; the latter originating the four ancient and world-famous kinds of divination. Geomancy (the earth-prophecy), hydromancy (the water-prophecy), Aeromancy (the air-prophecy), and pyromancy (the fire-prophecy).

Finally, let every one who would aspire to a command of the celestial intelligences so conform himself to the external universe, as that he shall harmoniously combine in his own soul the powers he desires, and sympathize with heavenly minds and the minds of other men. Above all, it is necessary that the student should know the virtue, property, degree, measure, and order of his own soul among the

powers in the universe. The superior controls the inferior; the inferior bows to the superior. It is, in fact, the doctrines of the new Platonists, of Iamblichus, Plotinus, and Proclus, that Agrippa sets forth in language deeply tinged with mysticism, and occasionally elevated with the spirit of poetry. The influence of spirit over matter, of the immortal over the mortal; the endeavour to attain to an intimate communion with the beings of the unseen world—to aspire through nature up to nature's God;—the belief that by intense contemplation of the Divine man may o'erleap his mortal state; these are the principles which inform and illuminate the occult philosophy of Cornelius Agrippa. The music of the fountain must be heard in the soul *within*. The glory of the star must be felt in the innermost core of the heart. Heaven must be realized in our own mind and imagination and spirit, before we can soar upon a vigorous wing towards its radiant gates!

Agrippa concludes the first book of his philosophy with an exposition of the forms of words and letters, and the magical uses of sentences and phrases. The letters of the Hebrews are especially sacred. They divide into twelve simple, seven double, and three mothers; that is, the twelve zodiacal signs, the seven planets,

and the three elements—fire, earth, and water ; air being regarded as the spirit and combining power of the others. Into these extravagant fancies it is unnecessary to follow the enthusiastic student.

Agrippa's second and third books of Occult Philosophy appeared in 1533. In the second book his principal object is to show the magical properties of arithmetic and geometry.

First he discourses upon *numbers*, by whose proportion (as Severinus Boethius says) all things were formed. The virtues of numbers are great and occult, and have been expounded by the patristic philosophers, from Jerome and Origen to Hilary and Bede. They are exhibited by nature in the herb cinquefoil, which, by reason of the number five, expels devils, resists poison, and cures fevers. Every seventh son—if the order of succession has not been interrupted by the birth of a daughter—can heal the king's evil. The mysterious value of the number Three is shown in the trinal division of time—past, present, and future ; and of space—length, breadth, and thickness. In the three celestial virtues—faith, hope, and charity ; in the three worlds of man—brain (the intellectual), heart (the celestial), and body (the elemental).

Of the number ONE, what shall we say but

that it is the origin and common measure of numbers; indivisible; not to be multiplied; the fount and result of all things. There is one God in the universe; one supreme intelligence in the intellectual world; one king—the sun—in the sidereal world; one potent instrument and agency—the philosopher's stone—in the elemental world; in the human world one chief member—the heart; and in the nether world one sovereign prince, Lucifer.

Two is the number of marriage, charity, and social communion. Solomon teaches it is better that two should be together, and woe be to him that is alone, because when he falls he hath not another to help him. Two is sometimes regarded as an unwholesome number: unclean beasts went into the Ark by twos. Unity, say the Pythagoreans, was God; duality the devil.

Of the number THREE we have spoken already. Of FOUR it may be said that it was the favourite number—the true ἀρρήτόν—of the Pythagoreans, their τετράκτυς, and solemn oath. It signifies solidness, and the foundations of things are laid square—that is, by fours. There are four seasons, four elements, four cardinal points, four evangelists, and in the Apocalypse four

beasts are spoken of as full of eyes, and standing round the throne.

The number FIVE is composed of two and three: of an even, or female, and an odd, or male, wherefore, as the Pythagoreans teach, it is the number of marriage. And as it divides ten, the number which includes all others, in an even scale, it is also the number of justice. There were five wounds (the Stigmata); there are five senses; of five letters is composed the name of the Deity, the Pentagram; and in this number we find an antidote for poison, and a protection against beasts of prey.

SIX is the perfect number, because it alone, by the addition of its half, its third, and its sixth, makes up itself ($3 + 2 + 1 = 6$). It is the sign of creation, because in six days the world was rendered complete. It is the number of servitude, because the Divine injunction runs, that "six days shalt thou labour;" six years shalt thou till the earth; and for six years the Hebrew slave obeyed his master.

SEVEN is another remarkable, and, indeed, mirific number; for it consists of unity and six, of two and five, of three and four, and attracts to itself their several powers and properties. It is the number of life, because con-

taining body = four elements, spirit, flesh, bone, and humour; and soul = three elements, passion, desire, and reason. All the stages of man's life are reckoned by seven years; *i.e.*, 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, 49, 56, 63, 70. The utmost height to which he can attain is seven feet. On the seventh day God rested from the toil of creation. In disease the seventh day always produces a crisis. There are [or were, for astronomy has in this instance confuted the philosophers,] seven planets, of which the seventh, the moon, is nearest to earth, and counts her changes by periods of seven days. Seven angels minister at the foot of God's throne,—Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Zadkiel, Zaphkiel, Camael, and Haniel. Much more might be said about the number Seven, but our limits forbid.

EIGHT is the number of justice and fulness. Divided, its halves are equal; twice divided, the division is still even. Eight is the number of those who share in the Beatitudes—the peace-makers, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, the pure in heart, the merciful, the poor in spirit, and they that mourn.

NINE, as everybody knows, is the number of the Muses, and of the moving spheres that chime together in unutterable harmony. Calliope represents the outer sphere, or *primum mobile*; Urania, the sidereal heavens; Polyhymnia, Saturn; Terpsichore is attached to Jupiter; Clio to Mars; Melpomene to the sun; Erato to Venus; Euterpe to Mercury; and Thalia to the moon. There are nine orders of holy angels.

TEN is the complete number ($\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$), because you cannot count beyond it, except by combinations formed with other numbers. Previous to the sacred mysteries of the ancients ten days of initiation were necessary. There were ten chords to the psalter. In all tens there exist evident signs of a Divine principle.*

ELEVEN is the number of the commandments, and has sometimes been specially favoured by God, as in the case of him who was summoned to the vineyard at the eleventh hour. TWELVE is the number of the signs in the Zodiac, of the apostles, of the tribes of Israel, of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Other numbers are described by Agrippa in reference

* See Diogenes Laertius "On the Life and Teachings of Celebrated Philosophers."

to their supposed properties and peculiar powers. Those who would see of what fantastic speculations a clear and acute intellect may be capable, when betrayed by the gleam and glitter of a false philosophy, will do well to consult Agrippa's elaborate treatise.

Now for the application of this theory of numbers. If you would discover the horoscope of friend or foe, compute his name and the names of his parents, add them and divide by twelve. If the remainder be one, he was born under Leo; if two, under Aquarius; if three, under Virgo, &c. Agrippa advises us not to marvel at these mysteries, because the Most High created all things by number, weight, and measure; but we cannot repress our surprise and admiration!

The Pythagoreans have attributed certain numbers to each god, planet, and element; one to the sun, two to the moon; five to fire, six to earth, eight to air, twelve to water, &c. Each of the seven planets has also a sacred table, gifted with surpassing properties, and these tables are given by Agrippa, together with their sacred seals or signs, their intelligences, and demons (*δαίμονες*). Engrave these, those of Mars, for instance, at a time when the

planet is auspicious, upon your sword, or a plate of iron, and you will become a terrible and successful warrior; engrave them upon cornelian, and you possess an admirable styptic. Venus in like manner will secure you love and beauty; Jupiter counsel, judgment, and worldly rule.

Agrippa next proceeds to an exposition of the power of geometrical figures; the marvellous influence of harmonious sounds, describing the tones and harmonies peculiar to each planet; the correspondence between the stars and the members of the human body; the harmonies of the celestial spheres; the images by which power may be deduced from stars and planets, the houses of the moon, and zodiacal signs. The image of any particular planet—say Saturn, “a man with a stag’s face, and camel’s feet, carrying a scythe in his right hand, a dart in his left, and sitting on a dragon”—engraved upon a stone, would represent and exercise its particular power or virtue. Astrology occupies a considerable portion of Agrippa’s speculations, and the Second Book concludes with an eloquent exposition of a man’s capacity of ascending heavenward, by his aspiration towards, and invocation

of, intelligences and spirits superior to himself. He teaches, in mystical language, the beautiful doctrine enunciated by the poet,—

Learn by a mortal yearning to ascend
Towards a higher object.

The invisible world with man

hath sympathized ;
Be his affections raised and solemnized,

Let us, therefore, elevate our thoughts from star to star, from sphere to sphere, until, purified and sublimed, they may fitly mingle with the glorious harmonies that sweep around the throne of God ; remembering that, above all, we must seek the Divine aid and counsel, and pray, not only with the mouth, but with an earnest soul and a suppliant heart ; pray without ceasing and in all fervency of spirit, that the light of heaven may penetrate the gloom and darkness with which the body envelopes and obscures the mind !

The Third and Last Book of the Occult Philosophy begins with an impassioned eulogium upon the all-sufficiency and exquisite blissfulness of religion, distinguishing with a boldness worthy of the pioneers of the Reformation between religion and superstition, the

spirit and the form, and setting forth as the three guides and helpmates of devotion, love, hope, and faith. Herein, like the Rosicrucians, Agrippa insists upon the student's abandonment of all sensual pleasures if he would rise to a comprehension of the mysteries of heaven. And it is noticeable that it was against the professors of so pure a philosophy and so simple a faith that the Church of Rome fulminated its heaviest anathemas. Agrippa and his brother philosophers were men of blameless lives, and deep religious aspirations. Their magic was a mystical but innocent idealization of the material universe; and their real crime, in the eyes of monk and priest, was not their speculative philosophy, but their exertions to enlarge the boundaries of human learning, their denunciation of superstitious and ritualistic subversions of religion, and their endeavours to elevate the spirit of man above the gross atmosphere of earth.

There are some curious fancies in the Third Book respecting the Hebrew Cabala and the Orphic hymns, and a learned dissertation on the divine names, and on the sacred words of the Pythagoreans. The well-known magical sign *Abacadabra*, if inscribed upon paper or parchment, and hung round the neck of

the diseased will cure every kind of fever. Agrippa writes it in this wise:—

a	b	r	a	c	a	d	a	b	r	a
a	b	r	a	c	a	d	a	b	r	
a	b	r	a	c	a	d	a	b		
a	b	r	a	c	a	d	a			
a	b	r	a	c	a	d				
a	b	r	a	c	a					
a	b	r	a	c						
a	b	r	a							
a	b	r								
a	b									
a										

The influence of divine names flowing through certain media into inferior bodies is also discussed; and then Agrippa enters into a discussion of the different orders of intelligence, angels, and infernal or subterranean spirits. There are angels super-celestial, who minister to the Most High himself; angels celestial, who control the spheres; and angels inferior, who are the good geniuses and ministering spirits of man. Of the infernal angels

there are various classes. They are usually arrayed by theologians in nine companies; their prince and sovereign—the meridian spirit—is Merim. Every man has a triple demon, a holy angel, to inspire and exalt, the angel of his nativity, who takes charge of him from his birth, and the angel of his calling, belonging to his peculiar sect or profession, and changing when he changes his sect or profession.

Of sacred characters containing divine knowledge and power, of the invocation of spirits, especially those who frequent the grove, the stream, the bower, of adjurations, of the creation of man in the divine image, of the microcosm, or world of man, of the origin of evil, of the future of the soul, in which Agrippa plainly denounces as false and futile a literal interpretation of the fires of hell; on the different channels of prophetic power, and on the various rites and ministries of the Church, the Third Book of the "Occult Philosophy" treats largely, liberally, and with a certain earnest eloquence very pleasant to the reader. Our limits forbid any further exposition, but the little we have said will serve to show the reader how much of interest and even of value, apart from certain scholastic

absurdities, the celebrated treatise of Cornelius Agrippa embodies.

As yet this Occult Philosophy, which has given to its author the ill-repute of a necromancer, was not published, but Agrippa had promulgated some of its speculations in his orations on the "Mirific Word" of Reuchlin before the University of Dôle, of which he had been appointed rector. Before giving to the world the "Occult Philosophy," he consulted the famous scholar and enthusiast, the Abbot Trithemius, with whom he maintained a regular correspondence, and with whom he had held many interesting conversations upon "chemical matters, magic, cabalism, and other things then lying concealed as occult sciences and arts." Trithemius spoke in high terms of the young philosopher's labours and enthusiasm, but warned him not to expose himself to the malice of the ignorant by publication. "This one thing," he said, "we warn you to remember: speak of things public to the public, of things lofty and secret only to the loftiest and most confidential of your friends." But before this wise counsel could be acted upon, Agrippa had already experienced the fatal consequences of being wiser than his generation. A Franciscan monk named Cati-

linet, lecturing at Ghent (in Lent time, 1510), before the Princess Margaret, denounced the Orations on the "Mirific Word" as impious and blasphemous, and the orator as a schismatic and an atheist. The princess was convinced—a loud voice is more powerful with many minds than the nicest logic—and dismissed Agrippa from his rectorship at Dôle.

§ 3. YEARS OF TRIAL.

Agrippa now repaired to the court of the Emperor Maximilian, and was immediately attached to an embassy which that astute prince was on the point of sending to London, ostensibly to congratulate Henry VIII. on his accession to the throne. While a visitor to the English capital, the young philosopher lodged at Stepney with the learned and pious Dr. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, and the friend of Erasmus, under whose direction he studied the Epistles of St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and a favourite hero, so to speak, of the erudite and large-hearted dean. While a resident under the dean's most honoured roof, he wrote an expostulation on his condemned Orations to the orthodox Catilinet, which is chiefly remarkable for its gentle and

liberal spirit. "To spread abroad contempt," he says, "to spread abroad contempt, cursing, and hatred is not the work of a sincere man speaking in the name of Christ, but (I make use of the words of St. Paul) to handle the Word of God deceitfully, which that great Apostle set apart for the Gentiles, says that he had never done, and which certainly ought never to be done by one who seeks to be a Christian teacher.

The business of the embassy being concluded, Agrippa returned to Germany to his wife and home at Cologne. Here he amused himself by delivering some Quodlibetal (or discursive) lectures upon theological questions. From a pursuit so scholastic and peaceful he was summoned by the Emperor to join the Imperial army in Italy, and the young doctor of divinity saw some service in the field, which appears to have been rewarded with a knighthood. The pen, however, was more congenial to his right hand than the sword, and the solitude of his study to the clash and clangour of the fight. He was very glad, then, when invited by the Cardinal di Santa Croce to act upon the Council then about to meet at Pisa—a schismatic Council—called for the purpose of reforming ecclesiastical

abuses, and opposing the encroachments of the papacy. Agrippa, with his heterodox notions of a religion unfettered by form or ritual, willingly accepted the post of theological adviser to the Council, though incurring the perils of excommunication and the persistent hostility of the orthodox party in the Romish Church. Faith in the truth—hope in the truth—will thus nerve and stimulate an aspiring soul to brave the worst dangers of the world, that God's will may be done.

The Council met at Pisa in September, 1511, but was soon compelled by the preponderant power of the papal faction in the town to remove to Milan, from whence its members were afterwards glad to escape to France. Their projects snapped asunder, but the courage with which they had faced the Papacy remained to their credit, and the sense of freedom and liberal thought which they had cherished was not too dearly purchased by a decree of excommunication.

Excommunicated and accursed, Cornelius Agrippa, Knight and Doctor of Divinity, returned to the Imperial army, which was carrying on the war in Italy with variable fortune. In the summer of 1512 we find him stationed at Pavia, where he was taken

prisoner by the Swiss on their capture of that city. He soon regained his liberty, and repaired to Milan. He now attached himself to the party of the Marquis of Monferrat, and towards the close of the year 1512, settled with his family in the Marquis's chief town of Casale.

In the following year Pope Julius died, and the triple tiara shone upon the brow of the able and magnificent Medici, Leo X. With his customary benevolence to men of letters, Leo revoked the censure which his predecessor had hurled upon Agrippa's head, and the philosopher was left free to pursue his literary schemes. He still wore the garb of a knight, and acted as captain of a troop of soldiers, but Bellona was no goddess for him! While her harsh and noisy strains echoed in his ears he was secretly sighing for that sublimer harmony, that more glorious spherical music with which Minerva rewards her votaries.

In 1515 his wishes were gratified. Powerful friends introduced him to the University of Pavia; and having lectured there upon the wisdom of Mercury or Hermes Trismegistus, the mythic philosopher and founder of the Hermetic art, he was admitted to the degree of Doctor in each faculty. Doctor of Divinity before, he now became Doctor of Law and

Divinity, and a bright and brilliant career seemed to open before the ambitious scholar. With his wife and children he settled at Pavia, and began teaching and lecturing with great assiduity, and not without success. But fate appears to have been especially hostile to Cornelius Agrippa. These splendid prospects were suddenly clouded. Francis I. of France won the battle of Marignano, and took possession of Milan. The Marquis of Monferrat espoused his cause. But Agrippa, a German knight and noble, could not forswear his allegiance to the Emperor, and dismissed by the Marquis, was constrained to discontinue his labour at Pavia. His fortunes fell into the sear and withered leaf. His household goods were torn from him; he was without resources present or prospective; ruin and beggary brooded on his threshold. His brave heart, however, did not succumb, and in his deepest agony he would still bless the Hand that chastened him. He retired to his study, and toiled zealously; the result—a treatise on Man, and another on the Threefold Method of knowing God, which, being dedicated to the Marquis of Monferrat, brought him some temporary help.

Passing over the next three years, we find Agrippa in 1518 officiating as advocate and



orator to the free town of Metz,—as its syndic and public prosecutor,—in which new capacity he showed much earnestness, skill, and vigour of intellect. He also practised as a physician, and rendered good service to the townsmen when Metz was visited by the terrible plague. In his published works is contained an account of the treatment he adopted in this disorder. It is more to be commended for the preventatives it enforces than the remedies it prescribes.

But fortune could not let Agrippa rest in Metz. Or rather, his bold, frank spirit of free inquiry would not suffer him to enjoy a lethargic tranquillity. A popular legend at Metz related to the Three Husbands of St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary. Now Faber d'Etapes had published a book in which he asserted that the saint had contented herself with one husband. The theory and the reasoning that supported it were adopted by Agrippa, but being assailed by certain violent Dominican monks, he could not content himself with nursing his belief in secret, but proclaimed it abroad against all comers. Hot and bitter grew the denunciations of the Dominicans; fierce and unsparing was the eloquence of Agrippa, who did not hesitate to

speak of the monkish fraternity with a freedom that was anything but orthodox. So his combative spirit made him many enemies, and his attack upon the popular tradition diminished his influence in Metz. The priests waited in silence for an opportunity of revenge. Agrippa's hot and generous spirit soon afforded it. At Vúoypy, a neighbouring village, a young woman was accused of witchcraft, was flung into prison, and subjected to the cruellest tortures. Agrippa boldly stepped forward as her defender, and acted with such vigour, spoke with such noble eloquence, that he saved her from the dreadful fate which menaced her, and overwhelmed her judges with shame and confusion. But the issue was fatal to his own prospects. The Dominicans slandered him as a sorcerer, as a heretic, or at least a very dubious Christian, and excited against him so fearful a storm of popular fury that he was compelled to fly Metz towards the close of January, 1520.

He now took refuge at Cologne, but the people of Cologne were scarcely more enlightened or liberal than those of Metz, and he was regarded with cold suspicion. While waiting here in hope of employment from the Duke of Savoy, he had the misfortune to

lose his wife Louisa, who was removed to Metz for interment in the Church of the Holy Cross. A pauper and a widower he then retired to Geneva, whose tolerant citizens received the famous scholar with a kindly welcome. Here he drew nearer and nearer to the Lutheran Church; like Erasmus, not actually breaking off the ties and old associations which bound him to Rome, but denouncing its iniquities, and aspiring towards the purer creed enunciated by the great German Reformer.

His skill in medicine soon procured him a practice which raised him above the pangs of want: and he somewhat bettered his fortunes by a second marriage. The departed Louisa was replaced by a worthy successor—a Swiss maiden of noble birth, aged nineteen, who proved a prolific mother, and a faithful and devoted wife. A few weeks afterwards he accepted the salary offered him by the town of Friburg, and settled therein as its physician and “medical adviser” (A.D. 1523). The Swiss treated him with generosity and respect, and among their snow-capped mountains he might have lived a peaceful life, but tempted by the brilliant offers of the Duke of Bourbon, he accepted office in France as physician to the

queen-mother, Louise of Savoy, and repaired to Lyons.

He had better have remained among the mountains! Honours and panegyrics were freely lavished upon him, but no money was paid; and his salary remained a promise, and—nothing more. The court of Louise of Savoy was orthodox, and Agrippa was known to be tinctured with the Lutheran heresy. The queen-mother employed him, therefore, but could not reconcile it with her conscience to pay him.

It was at this time that he wrote, and dedicated to the king's sister, Margaret of Valois,—the author of "the Heptameron,"—his tractate on the Sacrament of Marriage. This was another of Agrippa's ill-advised proceedings. The tone of his tractate was severely moral, and could not be acceptable to a lady notorious for the freedom of her life and the liberality of her wit. Ovid's Epistles or the lyrics of Catullus would better have pleased the light and lively princess. If the moralist had hoped either to amend her ways, or secure his salary through her intercession, his sanguine credulity must have been equal to his honest candour. Finally he ruined his prospects—such as they were—at the queen-

mother's court by another act of indiscreet boldness, but admirable sincerity. Ah me, we cannot serve two masters—Heaven and the world! Agrippa was requested to assist the queen-mother's political combinations by studying the stars. The scholar, the divine, and the physician was to turn astrologer! He had dabbled in astrology in his early years, as we have already seen; but his strong mind had shaken off the pleasant delusion. He still pursued the science of the stars, but not for unworthy purposes; not to gratify a worldly and vulgar curiosity. He was therefore dismissed by the queen-mother, and left to console himself in the midst of his sorrows with the composition of his fervid "Declamation on the Vanity of the Sciences and Arts," and the "Excellence of the Word of God." Like the *Faustus* of Goethe he had exhausted all the round of human knowledge to find it weary and unprofitable; but unlike that splendid hero of the philosophical poet, he had discovered a solace and a cure for the "Vanitas Vanitatum" in the pages of the inspired volume.

In 1528 he left Paris for Antwerp, where he obtained from Margaret, regent of the Netherlands, the appointment of Historio-

grapher and Judiciary Councillor to the Emperor Charles V., and once more the light of success seemed to break in auspicious promise upon his upward path. But Fate could not abandon her victim. When the clouds began to roll away from the tall mountain-peaks, a dark shadow fell upon the philosopher's hearth. The plague broke out in Antwerp, and one of its first victims was his beloved wife.

It was some consolation to him in this hour of darkness that the world appeared to acknowledge the genius and virtue of the earnest, enthusiastic scholar; that men of letters visited him from every European country; that princes showed themselves anxious to secure his services. He remained at Antwerp, however, the Imperial Historiographer, and in 1530, commenced the publication of his works. It was now that the treatise on the "Vanity of the Arts and Sciences" saw the light; and the famous three books on the Occult Philosophy (1531-1533). The outcry which, from a passage in his preface, he evidently anticipated, broke out soon after the publication of the latter work; and every little cur that yelped and barked about the streets opened upon Agrippa as

wizard, necromancer, and magician. The world then as now confused the two Magis—the dreams of the philosopher with the arts of the conjuror—and saw in the earnest and imaginative student only a professor of the Black Art. Nor had his tractate on the Vanity of Human Learning found favour in the high places. So great was the anger of the Emperor Charles V. that its author was only saved from the stake by the interposition of two powerful friends, the Bishop of Liege and the Cardinal Campegio. He saved his life, but he lost his salary, and rapidly the shadows gathered round the path of this most lonely and unfortunate man. Creditors beset him. Resources he had none. Loans which he had obtained from the usurers at exorbitant interest he was unable to repay; and at length he was arrested at Brussels and flung into a debtors' prison. He languished there for some weeks, but was released through the intervention of his generous patrons, and assured the payment of a small salary as Imperial Historiographer.

He had been solicited by the advisers of Katherine of Arragon to devote his energies to her cause, and oppose the divorce solicited by Henry VIII., but his rapidly increasing

troubles had broken off the negotiation. Released from prison, he did not attempt to renew it, but retired to Mechlin—a town famous for economical living—where the indomitable scholar shortly afterwards married his third wife (A.D. 1532.) It proved an unhappy marriage. This Mechlin woman wronged the gentle husband foully, and made him the laughter of the unthinking and the byword of wicked wits. Rabelais jeered at him. “Il, voyant toutes choses etheres et terrestres sans bezicles ne voyoit sa femme brimbalante et oncques n’en sceut les nouvelles.” With eyes bent upon the heavens, the star-gazer saw not the pool of mire and filth into which his steps were wandering! He learned the truth at last, and after three years of wedded misery was divorced.

§ 4. LAST YEARS AND DEATH—THE AGRIPPA OF TRADITION.

His later years were passed in storm and battle. The priesthood everywhere persecuted the heretic, whom they slandered as the magician. When his complete work on Occult Philosophy was passing through the press at Cologne, its publication was inter-

dicted by the magistrates at the request of the Inquisitor. Agrippa launched the thunders of his eloquence at the unfortunate magistrates; defended the work of his hands; attacked the ignorance and bigotry of the Inquisitor; exposed the immorality of the theologians and professors of Cologne. In this his last decade, Agrippa was a literary Arab: his hand against every monk and priest; every monk's and priest's hand against him. But his courage and his honesty prevailed: the interdict was removed, and the "Occult Philosophy" published.

Such were the heart-burnings, jealousies, and hostilities to which men of letters were subjected in the sixteenth century! If their eloquence sometimes degenerated into vituperation; if, their love of truth was joined with an implacable hostility to error; if while claiming toleration, they occasionally became themselves intolerant; if they sullied their generous advocacy of the right by an animosity too bitter, and an enthusiasm too extravagant, who will wonder? Who will not pity? Who will dare to condemn?

From Mechlin Agrippa had removed to Bonn. He was residing there when, convinced of his wife's infidelity, he put her away. Soon afterwards the malice of his enemies prevailed

with the Emperor Charles V., and to escape the scaffold he was compelled to flee from his country. He sought an asylum in France, but did not long require it. Prematurely aged with trouble, sorrow, and study, he died at Lyons in 1535, in his 50th year. May posterity grant him that justice which was withheld by his contemporaries !

Such was the true Agrippa: the actual, breathing, living, and suffering Agrippa. Very different, indeed, is the Agrippa of tradition; the Agrippa painted by his monkish enemies; and a far more wonderful individual than we, in our humble devotion to truth, have been able to represent him !

Paulus Jovius, in his "Eulogia Doctorum Virorum," catching up a popular fable, declares that the devil attended him wherever he went in the guise of a black dog. Thomas Nash, in his "Adventures of Jack Wilton," asserts that for the edification of the Earl of Surrey, he showed him in a mirror the likeness of the beautiful Geraldine, when the lover was in Germany and the lady in England. Sir Walter Scott has made an elegant use of the tradition:—

'Twas All Souls' eve, and Surrey's heart beat high ;
He heard the midnight bell with anxious start,
Which told the mystic hour, approaching nigh,
When wise Cornelius promised by his art,

To show to him the lady of his heart,
Albeit betwixt them roar'd the ocean grim ;
Yet so the sage had hight to play his part,
That he should see her form in life and limb,
And mark, if still she lov'd, and still she thought of him.*

Agrippa not only raised the semblance of the living, but the spirit of the dead. To gratify the Emperor Charles he raised King David and King Solomon ; to please Erasmus and others he summoned from the shades many of the most illustrious worthies of antiquity.

The Jesuit Delrio, in his book "Disquisitionum Magicarum," relates a still more extraordinary story, and lays the scene of it at Louvain. The magician, he says, had a boarder who was troubled with an excess of curiosity, and Agrippa having on one occasion gone away from home, left the keys of his secret chamber with the wife whom he afterwards divorced, forbidding her to allow any one to enter therein. The curious youth, however, so entreated and besought the woman to give him the means of entrance, that she at length consented. He passed in, and his glance falling upon a large *grimoire*, or book of conjurations, began to read it. He was

* "Lay of the Last Minstrel," Canto vi.

soon disturbed by a loud knocking at the door. He listened, but all was suddenly hushed. Again he read; again he heard the knocking. His heart throbbing with apprehension, he attempted to say "Come in," but could not utter a sound. The door, however, was thrown wide open, and in stalked a stranger, dark and tall, of commanding bearing, but with a thunder-blasted brow. "Who calls?" he said. "What is it thou wouldst have me do?" The youth from very fear replied not a word, and the demon, enraged at his silence, seized him by the throat and strangled him.

In due time Agrippa returned home to find a mob of devils exulting over the dead body of their victim. Summoning the chief devil, he learned from him the particulars of the misadventure, and reprimanded him bitterly. Then he bade him enter into the corpse of the unhappy student, and walk to and fro in the market-place—a favourite rendezvous of the scholars in those days of mystery—by which means he averted the suspicions of the vulgar, for when at sunset the demon quitted the body, and the inanimate corpse fell prone upon the earth, it was naturally supposed that the youth had died of apoplexy. But some

quicker wits examined the dead body, and detecting the marks of the devil's claws upon the throat, discovered and made known the truth!*

It was said of Agrippa that the gold which he paid to his traders and other creditors, though surprisingly bright at first, always changed in four-and-twenty hours to slates. We opine that the magician could never have dealt twice with the same tradesmen, unless they were more trustful in the sixteenth than they are in the nineteenth century.

If it be true, says Natalis, as men relate, that he often lectured in public, when at Friburg, from nine to ten, and immediately afterwards—that is, at ten—began lecturing at Pont à Mousson, in Lorraine, “they must sweat lustily who rub out of him the dark stain of magic.” *If* it be true—we should agree with the erudite Natalis!

In the pages of Naudé, Delrio, and Paulus Jovius may be found many other examples of the injustice (which is always credulous) of the ignorant vulgar; but we have said enough to prove how wide a gulf exists between

* Naudé “Apologie,” p. 423; and Delrio, lib. ii. p. 29.

Cornelius Agrippa, magician, and Cornelius Agrippa, knight, scholar, and divine, &c. But it is thus that the Dweller on the Threshold must always suffer from the malice of the passers-by!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENGLISH MAGICIANS.

§ 1. DR. JOHN DEE—§ 2. WILLIAM LILLY.

§ 1. DR. DEE.

He'd read Dee's prefaces before
 The devil, and Euclid o'er and o'er ;
 And all th' intrigues 'twixt him and Kelly,
 Lescus and th' emperor would tell ye.

BUTLER, *Hudibras*.

DR. JOHN DEE was born in London in the year 1527. Endowed with a surprising natural genius, he manifested at a very early age a great passion for books and study. When scarce fifteen years old he was sent to Cambridge, where his love of knowledge so grew upon him that he spent eighteen hours a day in his library. Of the other six, two were portioned out for refreshment and four for repose. So eager an ambition was crowned with success, and his fame as a scholar spread

through all the universities of Europe ; for in those days the learned were knit together by a species of freemasonry, and hailed each new member of their guild with a welcome proportioned to his claims. The fever with which his fellow-scholars was infected seized also upon *his* aspiring intellect and fervent imagination, and not content with the limited sphere of human knowledge, he sought, like the *Faust* of Goethe, to penetrate the Invisible, and become acquainted with the mysteries of other worlds. According to some authorities he acquired a taste for this perilous stuff at Louvain ; according to others he retired thither when constrained, by the repute he had acquired for dabbling with the occult sciences, to fly from the banks of reedy Cam. At Louvain he certainly met with many kindred spirits who had sat at the feet of Cornelius Agrippa, and their recitals and fanciful conversation animated him to persevere in his vain but fascinating researches. The particular branch of magic, however, which attracted Dee was the *theurgic* ; and theurgy insists upon purity of life, cleanliness of person, and chastity of thought in those who aspire to a communication with the good spirits of the unseen world. One of his earliest writings was a defence of

Roger Bacon against the imputation of having obtained his wonderful secrets by a confederacy with demons.

Dee returned to England in 1551, and through the influence of his friend Sir John Cheek,

Who taught Cambridge and King Edward Greek,

was favourably received at court, and rewarded with an annual pension of one hundred crowns. During the reign of Mary he was in close correspondence with the Princess Elizabeth, wherefore he was jealously regarded by the Queen, suspected of heretical tendencies, and even accused of having threatened Mary's life with his incantations. He was acquitted of the latter charge, but retained in prison as a heretic, and committed to the tender mercies of Bishop Bonner; until contriving to make evident his orthodoxy, he was set free in 1555. He continued to reside in London, and to gain his livelihood by the practice of astrology, projecting horoscopes and telling fortunes.

On the accession of Elizabeth his prospects improved. He had already been consulted as to the probable date of Mary's death; he was now desired to name the most auspicious day for Elizabeth's coronation. And at a later

date her effigy in wax having been discovered in Lincoln's Inn Fields, he was summoned to her chamber to counteract the incantations. In 1578 he married, and retired to his house at Mortlake, where he was frequently visited by his sovereign. The first visit appears to have occurred in 1575, soon after his mother's death. She "came on horseback, and exhorted him to take it patiently." In 1579 his son Arthur was born there.

Living in comparative solitude—practising astrology for bread, but studying alchemy for pleasure—brooding over Talmudic mysteries and Rosicrucian theories—immersed in constant contemplation of wonders which he longed to penetrate—and dazzled by visions of the elixir of life and the Philosopher's Stone, Dee soon attained to such a condition of mystic exaltation that his visions became to him as realities, and he persuaded himself that he was the favoured of the Invisible. In his "Diary" he records that he first saw in his crystal-globe—that is, saw spirits—on the 25th of May, 1581. In another year he had attained to a higher level, and one day, in November, 1582, while on his knees and fervently praying, he became aware of a sudden glory which filled the west window of his

laboratory, and in whose midst shone the bright angel Uriel. It was impossible for Dee to speak. His tongue was frozen with awe. But Uriel smiled benignly upon him, gave him a convex piece of crystal, and told him that when he wished to communicate with the beings of another world he had but to examine it intently, and they would immediately appear and reveal the mysteries of the future. Then the angel vanished.

Dee, however, found from experience that it was needful to concentrate all one's faculties upon the crystal before the spirits would obey him. In other words, it was necessary to stimulate the imagination to the highest pitch, until the soul became a willing agent in its self-deception. Bring the will to bear upon the imagination, and it is possible to realize a spirit in every shadowy corner—to hear the song of the spirits in the low crooning of the evening wind—to read in the starry heavens the omens and portents of the future! One may become with marvellous ease the deceiver of oneself,—the dupe of one's own delusions,—and brood upon a particular subject until one passes the mysterious border between sanity and madness—passes from imagination into mania.

Dee could never remember what the spirits

said in their frequent conversations with him. When the excitement was over, he forgot the fancies with which he had been beguiled. He resolved, therefore, to discover some fellow-worker, or neophyte, who should converse with the spirits while he himself, in another part of the room, sat and recorded the interesting dialogue. He found the assistant he sought in one Edward Kelly, who unhappily possessed just the requisite boldness and cunning for making a dupe of the amiable and credulous enthusiast.

Edward Kelly was a native of Lancashire, born, according to Dee's own statement, in 1555. We know nothing of his early years, but after having been convicted at Lancaster of coining—for which offence he lost his ears—he removed to Worcester, and established himself as a druggist. Sensual, ambitious, and luxurious, he longed for wealth, and despairing of securing it by honest industry, began to grope after the Philosopher's Stone, and to employ what magical secrets he picked up in imposing upon the ignorant and profligate. Dee sought knowledge for the love of it; Kelly as a means to gratify his earthly passions. He concealed the loss of his ears by a black skull-cap, and being gifted with a good

figure and tolerably handsome countenance, looked the very incarnation of mysterious wisdom. Before his acquaintance with Dee began, he had obtained some repute as a necromancer and alchymist, who could make the dead utter the secrets of the future. One night he took a wealthy dupe, with some of his servants, into the park of Walton le Dale, near Preston in Lancashire, and there alarmed him with the most terrible incantations. He then inquired of one of the servants whose corpse had been last buried in the neighbouring churchyard, and being told that a poor man had been interred there within a very few hours, exhumed the body, and pretended to draw from it oracular utterances.

Dee appears to have had a *skryer*, or seer before his introduction to Kelly, who was named Barnabas Saul. He records in his "Diary" on the 9th of October, 1581, that the unfortunate medium was strangely troubled by "a spiritual creature" about midnight. On the 2nd of December he willed his skryer to look into the "great crystalline globe" for the apparition of the holy angel Anael. Saul looked and saw. But his invention appears to have become exhausted by the following March, when he confessed that he neither saw

nor heard any spiritual creature any more; whereat the enthusiastic Dee grew strangely dissatisfied, and soon dismissed the unsatisfactory and unimaginitive medium. Then came Edward Kelly (who appears to have been also called Talbot), and the conferences with the spirits rapidly increased in importance as well as curiosity.

A clever rogue was Kelly! Gifted with a fertile fancy and prolific invention, he never gazed into the "great crystalline globe" without making some wondrous discoveries, and by his pretended enthusiasm gained the entire confidence of the credulous Dee. The mathematician, despite his learning and his profound intellect, became the easy tool of the plastic, subtle Kelly. The latter would sometimes pretend that he doubted the innocent character of the work upon which he was engaged; would affect a holy horror of the unholy; and profess that the spirits of the crystal were not always "spirits of health," but—perish the thought!—"goblins damn'd;" demons whose task it was to compass their destruction! The conferences held between Kelly and the spirits were, meanwhile, carefully recorded by Dr. Dee; and whoever has stomach for the perusal of a great deal of absurdity and not a little

blasphemy, may consult the folio published in 1659 by the learned Méric Casaubon, and entitled "A True and Faithful Relation of what passed between Dr. John Dee and some Spirits; tending, had it succeeded, to a General Alteration of most States and Kingdoms in the World."

Two such shining lights could not hide themselves under a bushel, and their reputation extended from Mortlake even to the Continent. Dee now declared himself possessed of the *elixir vitæ*, which he had found, he said, among the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey; so that the curious were drawn to his house by a double attraction. Gold flowed into his coffers in an exuberant stream, but his experiments in the transmutation of metals absorbed a great portion of his substance.

At this time the court of England was visited by an opulent Polish nobleman, named Albert Laski, Count Palatine of Siradz, who was desirous to see the magnificence of the famous "Gloriana." Elizabeth received him with the flattering welcome she always accorded to distinguished strangers, and placed him in charge of the splendid Leicester. He visited all that the England of the 16th century had worth showing, and especially her two Uni-

versities, but was sorely disappointed at not finding the famous Dr. Dee at Oxford. "I would not have come hither," he said to the Earl, "had I wot that Dee was not here." Leicester undertook to introduce him to the learned philosopher on their return to London, and so soothed his discontent.

A few days afterwards the Pole and Leicester were waiting in the ante-chamber at Whitehall for an audience of the Queen, when Dr. Dee arrived. Leicester embraced the opportunity, and introduced him to Albert Laski. The interview between two genial spirits was interesting, and led to frequent visits from Laski to Dee's house at Mortlake. Kelly soon perceived what an inexhaustible Pactolus this wealthy Pole would prove, and as he was imbued with all the extravagant superstitions of the age relative to the elixir and the Philosopher's Stone, it was easy enough to play upon his imagination, and entangle him in the meshes of an inextricable deception. Dee, in want of money to prosecute his splendid chimeras, and influenced by Kelly's artful suggestions, lent himself in some measure to the fraud, and speedily the "great crystalline globe" began to reveal hints and predictions which inflamed the ardent fancy of the "noble Polonian." But Kelly imposed upon Dee as

well as upon Laski. He appears to have formed some wild but magnificent projects for the reconstruction of Europe, to be effected through the agency of the Pole, and thenceforth the spirits could converse upon nothing but hazy politics.

It happened, for instance, on the 28th of May, 1583, that Dee and Kelly were seated in their magical closet, discussing, as at this time they frequently did, the Polish Prince and the amount of assistance he might be induced to afford in the *magnum opus*. “Suddenly,” says Dee, “there seemed to come out of my oratory a spiritual creature, like a pretty girl of seven or nine years of age, attired on her head with her hair rowled up before, and hanging down very long behind, with a gown of sey (*soie*, or silk?), changeable green and red, and with a train; she seemed to play up and down, and seemed to go in and out behind my books, lying on heaps, and as she should ever go between them, the books seemed to give place sufficiently, dividing one heap from the other, while she passed between them. And so I considered, and heard the divers reports which E. K. made unto this pretty maiden, and I said,—Whose maiden are you?

“*She*—Whose man are you?

“*D.*—I am the servant of God, both by my bound duty, and also (I hope) by his adoption.

“(*A Voyce*—You shall be beaten if you tell.)

“*She*—Am not I a fine maiden? Give me leave to play in your house; my mother told me she would come and dwell here.

“She went up and down with most lively gestures of a young girl playing by herself, and divers times another spake to her from the corner of my study by a great perspective glass, but none was seen beside herself.

“*She*—Shall I? I will. (*Now she seemed to answer one in the foresaid corner of the study.*) I pray you let me tarry a little (*speaking to one in the foresaid corner.*)

“*D.*—Tell me what you are?

“*She*—I pray you let me play with you a little, and I will tell you who I am.

“*D.*—In the name of Jesus then, tell me.

“*She*—I rejoyce in the name of Jesus; and I am a poor little maiden, Madinie; I am the last but one of my mother’s children; I have little baby children at home.

“*D.*—Where is your home?

“*Mad.*—I dare not tell you where I dwell; I shall be beaten.

“*D.*—You shall not be beaten for telling the truth to them that love the truth;

to the eternal truth all creatures must be obedient.

“*Mad.*—I warrant you I will be obedient; my sisters say they must all come and dwell with you.

“*D.*—I desire that they who love God should dwell with me and I with them.

“*Mad.*—I love you now—you talk of God.

“*D.*—Your eldest sister—her name is Esimeli?

“*Mad.*—My sister is not so short as you make her.

“*D.*—Oh, I cry you mercy! She is to be pronounced Esiméli.

“*E. K.*—She smiled; one calls her, saying, Come away, maiden.

“*Mad.*—I will read over my gentlewomen first; my master Dee will teach me if I say amiss.

“*D.*—Read over your gentlewomen, as it pleaseth you.

“*Mad.*—I have gentlemen and gentlewomen, look you.

“*E. K.*—She bringeth a little book out of her pocket; she pointeth to a picture in the book.” And so continues the conversation between Madinie and her interlocutors.

On a careful perusal of “Dee’s Diary,” it is

impossible to come to any other conclusion than that he was imposed upon by Kelly, and accepted his revelations as the actual utterances of the spirits; and it seems probable that the clever, plastic, slippery Kelly not only knew something of the optical delusions then practised by the pretended necromancers, but possessed considerable ventriloquial powers, which largely assisted in his nefarious deceptions.

Kelly had undoubtedly conceived some extravagant notions of a vast European monarchy, in which Laski was to play the part of a *Roi fainéant*, and he himself of a *Maire du Palais*. To this point all the spiritual revelations now tended, and they were managed, it must be owned, with consummate skill. Laski was proved, by the agency of Madinie, to be descended from the Anglo-Norman family of the Lacies. Then an angel named Murifri, who was clothed like a husbandman, pointed out Laski as destined to effect the regeneration of the world. Next appeared a maiden, the poetical Galuah, who thus detailed the Pole's future fortunes.

“*Galuah*—I say unto thee his name is in the Book of Life. The sun shall not passe his course before he be a king. His counsel shall breed alteration of his state; yea, of the

whole world. What wouldst thou know of him?

“*D.*—If his kingdom shall be of Poland, or what land else?

“*G.*—Of two kingdoms.

“*D.*—Which, I beseech you?

“*G.*—The one thou hast repeated, and the other he seeketh as right.

“*D.*—God grant him sufficient direction to do all things so as may please the highest of his calling.

“*G.*—He shall want no direction in anything he desireth.

“*D.*—As concerning the troubles of August next, and the dangers then, what is the best for him to do? To be going home, before or to tarry here?

“*G.*—Whom God hath armed no one can prevail against.”

But it did not answer Kelly's purposes to bring matters too suddenly to a conclusion, and with the view of showing the extreme value of his services, he renewed his complaints upon the wickedness of dealing with spirits, and his fear of the perilous enterprises they might enjoin. He threatened, moreover, to abandon his task, a threat which completely perturbed the equanimity of Dr. Dee. Where

indeed, could he hope to meet with another *skryer* of such infinite ability? Once when Kelly expressed his desire of riding from Mortlake to Islington on some pretended business, the doctor grew afraid that it was only an excuse to cover his absolute evasion. "Whereupon," says the doctor, "I asked him why he so hasted to ride thither, and I said if it were to ride to Mr. Harry Lee I would go thither also to be acquainted with him, seeing now I had so good leisure, being eased of the book writing. Then he said that one told him the other day that the duke (Laski) did but flatter him, and told him other things both against the duke and me. I answered for the duke and myself, and also said that if the forty pounds annuity which Mr. Lee did offer him was the chief cause of his mind setting that way (contrary to many of his former promises to me), that then I would assure him of fifty pounds yearly, and would do my best, by following of my suit, to bring it to pass as soon as I possibly could; and thereupon did make him promise upon the Bible.

"Then Edward Kelly again upon the same Bible did swear unto me constant friendship, and never to forsake me; and moreover said that unless this had so fallen about he would

have gone beyond the seas, taking ship at Newcastle within eight days next.

“And so we plight our faith each to the other, taking each other by the hand, upon these points of brotherly and friendly fidelity during life, which covenant I beseech God to turn to his honour, glory, and service, and the comfort of our brethren (his children) here on earth.”

Moral (by the present writer). He who keeps his eyes fixed too constantly upon other worlds will assuredly be duped and cheated in this, and a very wise man may, it is evident, be a very great fool.

Kelly now returned to his crystal and his visions, and Laski was soon persuaded that he was destined by the spirits to achieve great victories over the Saracens, and win enduring glory. But for this purpose it was needful he should return to Poland, and to Poland the poor dupe went, taking with him the learned Dr. Dee, the invaluable Edward Kelly, and their wives and families. The spirits continued to respond to their inquiries even while at sea, and so they landed at the Brill on the 30th of July 1583, and traversed Holland and Friesland to the opulent free town of Lubeck. There they lived sumptuously for a

few weeks, and with recruited strength set out for Poland. On Christmas Day they arrived at Stettin, where they remained till the middle of January 1584. They gained Lasco, the Pole's principal estate, early in February. Immediately the grand work commenced for the transmutation of iron into gold, boundless wealth being obviously needful for so grand an enterprise as the regeneration of Europe! Laski liberally supplied them with means, but the alchemists always failed on the very threshold of success. Day by day the prince's treasures melted away in the deceptive crucible; he mortgaged his estates, he sold them, but the hungry furnace continued to cry for "More! more!" It soon became apparent to the philosophers that Laski's fortune was nearly exhausted. Madinie, Uriel, and their comrades made the same discovery at the same time, and, moreover, began to doubt whether Laski, after all, was the great regenerator intended to revolutionize Europe. The whole party lived at Cracow from March 1584, until the end of July, and made daily appeals to the spirits in reference to the Polish prince. They grew more and more discouraging in their replies, and as Laski began slowly to awake to the conviction that he had been a

monstrous dupe, in order to rid himself of the burthen, he proposed to furnish them with sufficient funds for a journey to Prague, and letters of introduction to the Emperor Rudolph. At this very moment the spirits discovered that it was necessary Dee should bear a divine message to the Emperor, and Laski's proposal was gladly accepted.

At Prague the two philosophers were well received by the Emperor. They found him very willing to believe in the existence of the famous stone, very courteous to Dee as a man of European celebrity, but very suspicious of the astute and plausible Kelly. They remained some months at Prague, living upon the funds which Laski had supplied, and cherishing hopes of being attached to the imperial service. At last the Papal Nuncio complained of the countenance afforded to heretical magicians, and the Emperor ordered them to quit his dominions within four-and-twenty hours. They precipitately complied, and by so doing escaped a prison or the stake, to which the Nuncio had received orders from Rome to consign them (May 1586).

They now proceeded to Erfurdt, and from thence to Cassel, but meeting with a cold reception, made their way once more to Cracow.

Here they earned a scanty living by telling fortunes and casting nativities; enduring the pangs of penury with an almost heroic composure, for they, the pretended possessors of the Philosopher's Stone, durst not reveal their indigence to the world, if they would not expose themselves to universal ridicule. After a while, they found a new dupe in Stephen, king of Poland, to whom Kelly's spirits predicted that the Emperor Rudolph would shortly be assassinated, and that the Germans would elect him to the Imperial throne. But he in his turn grew weary of the ceaseless demands for pecuniary supplies. Then arose a new disciple in the person of Count Rosenberg, a nobleman of large estates at Trebona, in Bohemia. At his castle they remained for upwards of two years, eagerly pursuing their alchemical studies, but never approaching any nearer to the desired result.

Dee's enthusiasm and credulity had degraded him into the tool and slave of Kelly; but the latter was nevertheless very wroth at the superior respect which Dee, as really a man of surprising scholarship and considerable ability, enjoyed. Frequent quarrels broke out between them, aggravated by the criminal passion which Kelly had conceived for the doctor's

young and handsome wife, and which he had determined to gratify. He matured at length an artful plan to obtain the fulfilment of his wishes. Knowing Dee's entire dependence upon him as a *skryer*, he suddenly announced his intention of resigning that honoured and honourable office, and only consented to remain on the doctor's urgent entreaties. That day (April 18, 1587) they consulted the spirits. Kelly professed to be shocked at the revelation they made, and refused to repeat it. Dee's curiosity was aroused, and he insisted upon hearing it, but was exceedingly discomposed when he found that the spirits enjoined the two philosophers to have their wives in common! Kelly expressed his own abhorrence of the doctrine, and when the spirits repeated it, with a mixture of socialistic extravagance to the effect that sin was only relative, and could not be sinful if ordered by God, protested they must be spirits of evil, not of good,—once more resigned his post as *skryer*,—and left the Castle.

Dee now attempted to convert his son Arthur into a medium, but the lad had neither the invention, the faith, nor the deceptive powers for such an office, and the philosopher, deprived of those conferences with the other

world which he had so long enjoyed, began to lament the absence of his old confederate. At this juncture Kelly suddenly returned. Again he consulted the crystal, and again was ordered to practise the socialistic rule of all things in common. Dee was too delighted at his return to oppose any longer the will of the spirits. The two wives resisted the arrangement for some time, but finally yielded to what was represented to be the will of Heaven, and Dee notes in his "Diary," that "on Sunday the 3rd of May, *anno* 1587 (by the new account), I, John Dee, Edward Kelly, and our two wives covenanted with God, and subscribed the same for indissoluble and inviolable unities, charity, and friendship keeping, between us four, and all things between us to be common, as God by sundry means willed us to do."

The alchymists now resumed their pursuits with eagerness; but discord soon crept into this happy family of four. The wives, never very well content with the socialistic theory, quarrelled violently; the husbands began to be pinched for want of means; and Dee turned his eyes towards England as a pleasanter asylum than the castle of Trebona was likely to prove for his old age. He obtained permission from Queen Elizabeth to return, and

separated finally from Kelly. The latter, who had been knighted at Prague, took with him the elixir found at Glastonbury Abbey, and ventured to proceed to the Bohemian capital. He was immediately arrested by order of the Emperor, and flung into prison. Obtaining his release after some months' imprisonment, he wandered over Germany, telling fortunes, and angling for dupes with the customary magical baits, but never getting a whit nearer that enjoyment of boundless resources which the possession of the Philosopher's Stone should have ensured him. Arrested a second time as a heretic and a sorcerer, and apprehending perpetual imprisonment, he endeavoured to escape, but fell from the dungeon-wall, and broke two of his ribs and both his legs. He expired of the injuries he had received—expired in spite of his "Elixir of Immortality"—in February 1593.

Dr. Dee set out from Trebona with a splendid train, the expenses of his journey apparently being defrayed by the generous Bohemian noble. Three waggons carried his baggage; three coaches conveyed himself, his family, and servants. A guard of twenty-four soldiers escorted him; each carriage was drawn by four horses. In England he was well

received by the Queen, as far as courteous phrases went, and settling himself at Mortlake, he resumed his chemical studies, and his mad, wild pursuit of the Philosopher's Stone. But nothing prospered with the unfortunate enthusiast. He employed two *skryers*—at first a rogue, named Bartholomew, and afterwards a charlatan named Heckman—but neither could discover anything satisfactory in the “great crystalline globe.” He grew poorer and poorer; he sank into absolute indigence; he wearied the Queen with ceaseless importunities; and at length obtained a small appointment as Chancellor of St. Paul's Cathedral, which in 1595 he exchanged for the wardenship of Manchester College. He performed the duties of this position until age and a failing intellect compelled him to resign it about 1602 or 1603.

He then retired to his old house at Mortlake, where he practised as a common fortune-teller, gaining little in return but the unenviable reputation of a wizard, “a conjuror, a caller, or invocator of devils.” On the 5th of June 1604, he presented a petition to James the First, imploring his protection against such injurious calumnies, and declaring that none of all the great number of “the very

strange and frivolous fables or histories reported and told of him (as to have been of his doing) were true." In consequence, an act was passed against personal slander, which produced from Dr. Dee a rhymed thanksgiving,—conclusive proof that a man may be a wonderful magician and yet a very poor poet. It is difficult to say whether his verses or his horoscopes were the more worthless !

“ TO THE HONOURABLE THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, IN THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

“ The honour due unto you all,
And reverence, to you each one
I do first yield most speciall—
Grant me this time to heare my mone.

“ Now (if you will) full well you may
Fowle sclaudrous tongues for ever tame ;
And helpe the trueth to beare some sway
In just defence of a good name.

“ Halfe hundred yeeres which hath had wrong,
By false light tongues and divelish hate ;
O helpe tryde trueth to become strong,
So God of trueth will blesse your state.

“ In sundry sorts this sclaunder greate
(Of conjurer) I have sore blamde ;
But wilfull, rash, and spitefull heat
Doth nothing cease to be enflamde.

“ Your helpe, therefore, by wisdom's lore,
And by your powre, so great and sure,
I humbly crave, that never more
This hellish wound I shall endure.

“ And so your act, with honor great
 All ages will hereafter prayse;
 And trueth, that sitts in heavenly seat,
 Will, in like case, your comforts rayse.

“ JOHN DEE,

“ Mathematician to his Most Royal
 “ Majesty, James I., etc., etc.”

“ Mortlake, June 8, 1604.”

Dee died at Mortlake in extreme poverty in 1608, in the eighty-first year of his age. He was buried in the parish church, but the last resting-place of the credulous enthusiast is undistinguished by any memorial. His son Arthur died at Norwich in 1651.

His “show-stone,” or “rock-crystal,” referred to by Butler in his “Hudibras,”

Kelly did all his feats upon
 The devil's looking-glass, a stone,
 Where, playing with him at bo-peep,
 He solv'd all problems ne'er so deep;

and which Dee declared was brought to him by the angels Raphael and Gabriel, and was “of such value, that no earthly kingdom is of sufficient worthiness to be compared to the virtue or dignity thereof,” is now preserved at the British Museum. One of his show-stones, a polished lump of cannel coal, was sold at the Strawberry Hill sale. It afterwards belonged to Lady Blessington, and an extravagant account of the visions presumed to have been

seen in it may be read in "Zadkiel's" Almanac for 1851. The crystal and its properties have recently acquired considerable notoriety through the sayings and doings of the said Zadkiel (Lieutenant Morrison), as our readers will doubtlessly remember.

§ 2. WILLIAM LILLY.

Not far from hence doth dwell
 A cunning man, hight Sidrophel,
 That deals in destiny's dark counsels,
 And sage opinions of the moon sells,
 To whom all people far and near
 On deep importances repair
 He had been long t'wards mathematics,
 Optics, philosophy, and statics,
 Magic, horoscopy, astrology,
 And was old dog at physiology :
 But as a dog that turns the spit
 Bestirs himself, and plies his feet
 To climb the wheel, but all in vain,
 His own weight brings him down again ;
 And still he's in the self-same place
 Where at his setting out he was ;
 So in the circle of the arts,
 Till falling back still, for retreat,
 He fell to juggle, cant, and cheat.

BUTLER, *Hudibras*.

In "Sidrophel," the necromancer of Butler's fine satire of "Hudibras," the poet has drawn with wonderful truth and graphic force the portrait of the most famous, and perhaps the most impudent of English magicians, WILLIAM

LILLY. Though such a man was without the philosophical pretensions of Paracelsus or Albertus Magnus, and found in science but a means for imposing upon the credulous, yet, from a work which professes to glance at the principal celebrities of the world of magic, William Lilly cannot be omitted.

He was born on the 1st of May 1602, at Diseworth, in Leicestershire. In 1620 he removed to London, where he became servant to a mantua-maker, but after three years, servitude he rose into a higher position, and being a comely, well-made youth, on the death of his master married the widow. She brought him a dowry of 1000*l.*, and dying in a very few years, was succeeded by another opulent dame, who also augmented Lilly's fortune.

His soul now soared above trade and its belongings, and infected with the delusions of the age, he began to dabble in astrological waters. He took unto himself an instructor named Evans, who had formerly been a clergyman, but was expelled from his curacy for practising numerous frauds under the pretence of revealing the whereabouts of stolen goods. Lilly tells a curious tale of this worthy:—

“Some time before I became acquainted with him,” says Lilly, “he then living in the

Minorities, was desired by the Lord Bothwell and Sir Kenelm Digby to show them a spirit. He promised so to do; the time came, and they were all in the body of the circle, when lo! upon a sudden, after some time of invocation, Evans was taken from out the room and carried into the field near Battersea Causeway, close to the Thames. Next morning a countryman going by to his labour, and espying a man in black clothes, came unto him and awaked him, and asked him how he came there? Evans by this understood his condition, inquired where he was, how far from London, and in what parish he was; which, when he understood, he told the labourer he had been late at Battersea the night before, and by chance was left there by his friends. Sir Kenelm Digby and the Lord Bothwell went home without any harm, and came next day to hear what had become of him. Just as they in the afternoon came into the house, a messenger came from Evans to his wife to come to him at Battersea. I inquired upon what account the spirit carried him away; who said he had not, at the time of invocation, made any suffumigation, at which the spirits were vexed."

Simon Forman, who literally practised the

Black Art, and was an agent in the reign of James I. in the perpetration of many abominable crimes, also gave Lilly the benefit of his counsels, and taught him many of the secrets of his abominable trade. It is but just to Lilly, however, to acknowledge that he never descended to the depths of infamy which were sounded by such men as Forman. He juggled and he cheated, but he did not murder. He sold love-potions, but eschewed poisons and abortion-medicines. He dabbled in palmistry and horoscopes, in gold-seeking and universal cures, but he had neither the ambition nor the courage to follow in the steps of the Italian magicians, who were the secret instruments of many of the dark deeds that still overshadow the history of the Middle Ages with lurid horror.

One of Lilly's intimate associates was William Hodges, who in his turn was the friend and confederate of John Scott. Lilly has left on record the particulars of an adventure in which both were concerned :—

“ Scott having some occasions into Staffordshire, addressed himself for a month or six weeks to Hodges, assisted him to dress his patients, let blood, &c. [The magicians were mostly chirurgeons and physicians as well.]

Being to return to London he desired Hodges to show him the person and feature of the woman he should marry. Hodges carries him into a field not far from his house, pulls out his crystal, bids Scott set his foot to his, and after a while wishes him to inspect the crystal, and observe what he saw there. 'I see,' saith Scott, 'a ruddy-complexioned wench in a red waistcoat drawing a can of beer.' 'She must be your wife,' said Hodges. 'You are mistaken, sir,' said Scott; 'I am, so soon as I come to London, to marry a tall gentlewoman in the Old Bailey.' 'You must marry the red waistcoat,' said Hodges. Scott leaves the country, comes up to London, finds his gentlewoman married; two years after, going into Dover, in his return he refreshed himself at an inn in Canterbury, and as he came into the hall, or first room thereof, he mistook the room, and went into the buttery, where he espied a maid, described by Hodges as before said, drawing a can of beer, &c. He then, more narrowly viewing her person and habit, found her in all parts to be the same Hodges had described; after which he became a suitor unto her, and was married unto her; which woman I have often seen. This Scott related unto me several times, being a very honest

person, and made great conscience of what he spoke."

"Another story of him is as followeth, which I had related from a person who well knew the truth of it.

"A neighbour gentleman of Hodges lost his horse; who having Hodges' advice for recovery of him, did again obtain him. Some years after, in a frolic, he thought to abuse him, acquainting a neighbour therewith, viz., That he had formerly lost a horse, went to Hodges', recovered him again, but saith it was by chance; 'I might have had him without going unto him: come, let's go, I will now put a trick upon him; I will have some boy or other at the town's-end with my horse, and then go to Hodges, and inquire for him.' He did so, gave his horse to a youth, with orders to walk him till he returned. Away he goes with his friend, salutes Mr. Hodges, thanks him for his former courtesy, and now desires the like, having lost a horse very lately. Hodges, after some time of pausing, said, 'Sir, your horse is lost, and never to be recovered.' 'I thought what skill you had,' replies the gallant; 'my horse is walking in a lane at the town's-end.' With that Hodges swore (as he was too much given unto that vice), 'your horse is gone, and

you will never have him again.' The gentleman parted in great derision of Hodges, and went where he left his horse. When he came there he found the boy fast asleep upon the ground, the horse gone, the boy's arm in the bridle. He returns again to Hodges, desiring his aid, being sorry for his former abuse. Old Will swore like a devil. This business ended not so; for the malicious man brought Hodges into the Star-chamber, bound him over to the assizes, put Hodges to great expenses: but, by means of the Lord Dudley, if I remember right, or some other person thereabouts, he overcame the gentleman and was acquitted."

Under such promising instructors Lilly's progress became very rapid, and his natural powers being considerable, he soon attracted the public attention as a felicitous predictor of events and a clever artist in horoscope-making. A rumour prevailing that there was great treasure interred beneath the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, he was applied to, in 1634, to ascertain the truth or falsity of the report by the use of the "Mosaical or miners' rods."

Permission was obtained from the dean on condition that he received his share of whatever might be found, and the attempt was accordingly made. "One winter's night," says Lilly,

“Davy Ramsey [the king’s clockmaker], with several gentlemen, myself and Scott, entered the cloisters. We played the hazel-rod round about the cloisters; upon the west side of the cloisters the rods turned one over another, an argument that the treasure was there. The labourers digged at least six foot deep, and then we met with a coffin; but in regard it was not heavy, we did not open, which we afterwards much repented. From the cloisters we went into the abbey church, where, upon a sudden (there being no wind when we began), so fierce, so high, so blustering and loud a wind did roar, that we verily believed the west end of the church would have fallen upon us; our rods would not move at all; the candles and torches all but one were extinguished, or burned very dimly. John Scott, my partner, was amazed, looked pale, knew not what to think or do, until I gave directions and commenced to dismiss the demons; which, when done, all was quiet again, and each man returned unto his lodging late, about twelve o’clock at night. I could never since be induced to join with any in such like actions.”

In 1644 Lilly published his first Almanack, and announced himself as *Merlinus Anglicus, junior*. During the troubles of the Civil War

he was often applied to by both parties for information touching the events and combinations of the future, and his sagacity usually enabled him to avoid any embarrassing complications. He was consulted by the royalists, with the king's knowledge, whether the king should accept the propositions of the Parliament, and received 20*l.* as his fee. The Parliament on the other hand paid him a sum of 50*l.*, and an annuity of 100*l.*—which he enjoyed for two years—to furnish them “with perfect knowledge of the chiefest concerns of France.” His repute was so great that even Aubrey and Ashmole numbered themselves among his friends, and both these credulous enthusiasts hovered curiously on the threshold of the forbidden knowledge.

Lilly remained a royalist until the fall of Charles I. was certain; he then veered round to the other side, engaged himself in its projects with eagerness, and was one of the committee appointed to discuss the solemn question of the king's execution. When the Restoration became imminent Lilly returned to his royalist predilections; but his apostasy was not forgiven, and his numerous applications for employment as a prophet were treated with contempt.

During the rule of the Commonwealth, however, his fame was great. He tells us that all the soldiery adored him, and that when he went to Scotland he saw an officer standing before the army with a book of prophecies in his hand, exclaiming to the men as they marched past him, "Lo! hear what Lilly saith: you are in this month promised victory! Fight it out, brave boys!" and then read that month's prediction!

After the great Fire of London he was examined before a committee of the House of Commons respecting the causes of that terrible calamity. In his "Monarchy or no Monarchy," published in 1651, he had introduced an hieroglyphical illustration representing in one compartment a number of persons in their shrouds digging graves; and in another the conflagration of a great city. Lilly plumed himself on the fulfilment of his prediction, but admitted he had not foreseen the exact year to be rendered *mirabilis annus* by so pitiful a disaster.

He explained prophecies with sufficient ingenuity, if not with very satisfactory accuracy. Thus he announced that "in the year 1588 there was a prophecy printed in Greek characters, which exactly deciphered the long

troubles of the English nation from 1641 to 1660." It ended thus:—"And after him shall come a dreadful dead man, and with him a royal G., of the best blood in the world; and he shall have the crown, and shall set England on the right way, and put out all heresies." Lilly explained the palimpsest in this wise:—

"*Monkery* being extinguished above eighty or ninety years, and the Lord General's name being *Monk*, is the dead man. The royal G or C [it is *γαμμα* in the Greek, intending C in the Latin, being the third letter in the alphabet] is Charles II., who for his extraction may be said to be of the best blood of the world."

In 1652 Lilly bought a house at Hershams, near Walton-on-the-Thames, where he finally settled in 1665, practised medicine, and became the oracle of the village, dying of palsy June 9th, 1681. His friend Elias Ashmole attended his burial in the church of Walton, and dedicated a tablet to his memory. To Ashmole, Lilly had inscribed his amusing and most curious "History of his Life and Times," which contains a complete exposure of the degraded state of astrology and the base characters of astrologers in England in the seventeenth century.

Lilly has left one admirable rule for the benefit of the weak students of an illusory science ; it is, perhaps, the only useful passage in his voluminous writings. Speaking of the angels who appeared in the magic crystal, he says,—“ These glorious creatures, if well commanded, and well observed, do teach the master anything he desires ; *Amant secreta, fugiunt aperta.* The fairies love the southern side of hills, mountains, and groves. *Neatness and cleanliness in apparel, a strict diet, and upright life, fervent prayers unto God, conduce much to the assistance of those who are curious in these ways* ”—and of those who are curious in wiser, worthier, and more honourable ways, Master Lilly !

CHAPTER IX.

THE ART OF DIVINATION.

 § 1. DREAMS—§ 2. OMENS—§ 3. PROPHECIES
AND PRESAGES.

And men still grope t' anticipate
The cabinet designs of Fate ;
Apply to wizards to foresee
What shall and what shall never be.

BUTLER, *Hudibras*.

§ 1. DREAMS.

AN ardent desire to foreknow the future—to pierce the shadows which rest on the weird pages of the Book of Fate, seems a characteristic of humanity, and the men of the ancient world flocked to their “juggling fiends”—their oracles and their sibyls—as the moderns to the wizard and the necromancer, the interpreter of the stars or the reader of dreams. To Faith, indeed, the revelation which God has made in His Scripture is sufficiently an assurance of a world beyond the grave, but even

Faith has often longed for some clearer knowledge of the events of the present life, of the chances and changes of coming fortune, of the possible clouds or sunshine of the unavoidable to-morrow. So little do events rest in our own hands, so difficult is it for us to determine the probable issue of a train of consequences to which we have ourselves apparently given the onset, so uncertain is the course of human action, so subject is it to influences which we see but cannot comprehend, that perhaps the impulse which leads us to decipher by the slightest signs and the most mysterious indications the ways of the future is hardly open to the condemnation of philosophers. But it must be owned that in our anxiety to gain this forbidden knowledge we have often had recourse to the wildest and most fantastic aids, and have attempted to eke out our obscure speculations by a resort to the most extravagant and ridiculous agencies. Men have attempted to divine the future by the examination of the reeking entrails of slaughtered animals, by drawing lots, as it were, from the holy pages of the Bible, by interpreting those wild, vague efforts of the imagination uncontrolled by the will which we call *dreams*—by giving a meaning to the

fantastic evolutions of a column of smoke, or the lights and shadows that flit across a surface of crystal. The learned and gossiping *Gaule*, in his "Magastromancer," gives a long list of these various phases of human folly.

He enumerates :—

1. *Aeromancy*—Or divining by the air.

2. *Anthropomancy*—By the entrails of human beings ; a custom to which it is probable that the human sacrifices of savage tribes may frequently be attributed.

3. *Arithmancy*—By mysterious combinations of numbers.

4. *Axinomancy*—By the peculiar sounds of saws.

5. *Astromancy*—By stars ; always a favourite mode of divination, and in vogue among all nations. The lustrous beauty of the spheres of night, their lofty serenity and tranquil loveliness, have ever appealed very strongly to the *poetry* that lies at the bottom of every heart.

And as Byron finely says—

If in their bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with them : for they are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,

That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

6. *Astragalomancy*—By dice.
7. *Alphitomancy*—By flour, meal, or bran.
8. *Alectromancy*—By the crowing of cocks.
9. *Botanomancy*—By herbs.
10. *Chiromancy*—By the shape of the hands.
11. *Cephaleonomancy*—By asses' heads.
12. *Ceromancy*—By the shapes into which melted wax disposed itself.
13. *Chartomancy*—By writing in papers.
14. *Crystallomancy*—By looking into crystals.
15. *Chalcomancy*—By vessels of brass, or other metal.
16. *Demonomancy*—By the help of demons and evil spirits; the divination peculiar to wizards and necromancers, who summoned them by conjuration and spells, or by compacts entered into with the devil.
17. *Dactylomancy*—By rings.
18. *Geomancy*—By earth.
19. *Gastromancy*—By marks upon, or the sounds of, the belly.
20. *Gyromancy*—By circles.
21. *Hydromancy*—By water.
22. *Idolomancy*—By idols, images, and figures.
23. *Ichthyomancy*—By fishes.

24. *Kleromancy*—By lots.

25. *Kapnomancy*—By smoke.

26. *Kinssomancy*—By burning incense.

27. *Katoptromancy*—By looking-glasses or mirrors.

28. *Koskinomancy*—By sieves.

29. *Krithomancy*—By corn or grain.

30. *Lecanomancy*—By basins of water.

31. *Lithomancy*—By stones.

32. *Logarithmancy*—By logarithms.

33. *Lampadomancy*—By lamps and candles.

34. *Macharomancy*—By knives and swords.

35. *Ornithomancy*—By the flight of birds.

The reader will remember the ancient legend of the foundation of Rome; how Romulus and Remus watched, each on his chosen hill, from sunrise to sunset, for a manifestation of the will of the gods by an ominous flight of birds. Remus first saw six vultures circling and wheeling on his left. Soon afterwards there appeared to Romulus a flight of twelve. It therefore became a moot point with whom the advantage rested—with Remus, who saw the birds first, or Romulus, who saw the greater number.

36. *Oneiromancy*—By dreams; a method of divination in vogue from the earliest ages of the world.

37. *Onomancy*—By names.
38. *Omphalomancy*—By the navel.
39. *Onchyomancy*—By the nails.
40. *Oinomancy*—By the lees of wine.
41. *Pyromancy*—By fire.
42. *Psychomancy*—By mens' soul, character, or affections.
43. *Podomancy*—By the feet.
44. *Rhabdomancy*—By wands or rods.
45. *Stereomancy*—By the elements.
46. *Sternomancy*—By corporeal signs, from the breast to the belly, such as moles or blemishes.
47. *Spatilomancy*—By bones, skins, &c.
48. *Sciomancy*—By shadows.
49. *Sycomancy*—By figs.
50. *Theomancy* — By reference to Scriptural texts, and pretended revelations from God.
51. *Theriomancy*—By beasts.
52. *Tephromancy*—By ashes.
53. *Tyromancy*—By cheese.

Of these numerous modes of divination four only can be said to prevail at the present day: by cards, by the dregs in the tea-cup, the lines on the palm of the hand, and dreams. The gipsies are the chief professors of this delusive art; but it is not wholly unknown at

the tea-tables of old maids and in the servants'-hall. And amongst the rural classes oneiromancy especially is in great repute, and every old woman recounts her dreams to some favoured gossip, with speculations upon their probable reference to future events. Divination by cards is seldomed practised, except in jest, by any other than the itinerant professors of palmistry, and poultry pilfering. It is comparatively a recent invention—cards themselves not bearing an antiquity of above four centuries and a half. Cheiromancy was practised by the Egyptians, and a belief in it still lingers even among the educated. It would seem possible, indeed, that the shape of the hand may indicate some broad characteristics of one's intellect and disposition, but what connexion with the future exists in the lines that chequer the human palm, must be left to those sagacious seers who believe that the Most High reveals his mysteries in a pack of playing cards!

Oneiromancy, or divination by dreams, has descended to us from the most remote times, when, in the days of a more intimate relation between earth and heaven than has existed since the revelation of Christ, God deigned to communicate His will to favoured mortals

by dreams and visions in the night-season. The circumstances have changed, but the belief engendered by the actual realization of the dreams of the elder world has survived this change; and every aged beldame studies her confused recollections of the mental shadows that have flitted across her brain in sleep, with an implicit confidence in their prophetic character. Remarkable coincidences, it must be admitted, will still occur between the dream and the event, and probably most of our readers have met with instances either in their own careers or in those of their friends. But it does not seem to us that these, when closely examined, bear a prophetic character, nor do they usually possess an intrinsic importance sufficient to warrant us in believing that Heaven would depart from its sublime mystery for such casual purposes. Some philosophers have pretended that we may produce dreams in others by the mere influence of the will. Cornelius Agrippa asserts that, "at a great distance, it is undoubtedly possible to influence another person spiritually, even when their position and the distance is unknown, although the time cannot be fixed within four-and-twenty hours." He declares that he himself had often exercised the power. This singular

theory has been revived of late years, and it is attempted to be explained by declaring the existence of a certain "mental magnetic excitement" which links soul to soul, and finds a medium in the impalpable atmosphere.

Assuming that there are authentic records of fulfilled dreams which we may suspect to be capable of an interpretation on rational grounds, but have no means of disproving or discrediting, we are brought to allow the "double nature of dreams"—as recognised by the ancients—dreams physical (so to speak) and dreams spiritual: dreams arising from some disturbances of the body, and dreams in which Heaven is pleased to reveal something of the future. To this *double nature* Homer alludes in a well-known passage:—

Immured within the silent bower of sleep,
Two portals grim the various phantoms keep ;
Of ivory one, whence flit, to mock the brain,
Of wingèd lies, a light fantastic train ;
The gates opposed pellucid valves adorn,
And columns fair incased with polished horn."

The language of dreams—remarks the great German historian of the Supernatural—is particularly marvellous, for their images are not always appearances recognised by the common eye, but surprising and mystical symbols whose meaning can hardly be expressed

in ordinary language, and the dreamer himself can seldom interpret them. Thus, in the old times, and particularly in the Greek and Roman temples, arose a novel science, which had its acknowledged professors (*oneirocritica*, *oneiroscopia*), and we know that Joseph had some fame among the Egyptians as "an interpreter of dreams." The fathers of the Christian Church adopted the ancient belief in their significance. "During sleep," says Tertullian, "are revealed the honours to which men will attain; during sleep remedies are indicated, larcenies exposed, treasures discovered. It was thus that the nurse of Cicero could foresee the glory reserved for him; it was thus that Achilles cured Cleomene."

The great victory over Maxentius which gave to Constantine the empire of the world, owed much of its decisive character to the belief in dreams shared by all the soldiers of the emperor. In the night which preceded that last battle, Constantine was admonished in a dream to inscribe the shields of his soldiers with the celestial sign of God, the sacred monogram of the name of Christ. He communicated his dream to his army, who assumed the Cross in a transport of enthusiasm, and went forward with eagerness to an assured

triumph. The dream might have been dictated by the policy or devotion of the emperor, but it was accepted at once by his soldiers, and this general acceptance is a remarkable proof of the universal credence in the prophetic meaning of dreams then cherished by the nations of Europe.

“The philosopher,” says Gibbon, “who with calm suspicion examines the dreams and omens, the miracles and prodigies, of profane or even of ecclesiastical history, will probably conclude, that if the eyes of the spectators have sometimes been deceived by fraud, the understanding of the readers has much more frequently been insulted by fiction. Every event, or appearance, or accident, which seems to deviate from the ordinary course of nature, has been rashly ascribed to the immediate action of the Deity; and the astonished fancy of the multitude has sometimes given shape and colour, language and motion, to the fleeting but uncommon meteors of the air.” But with still greater wonder will the philosopher examine the interpretations affixed by an ignorant credulity to the grotesquest physical dreams, and with some disgust will he find a large class of the community persistent in attributing a significance to the illusions

which possess the brain in sleep. A fit of indigestion—an attack of illness—will produce the most terrible or ridiculous phantoms. A change of temperature will serve to alter the character of our visions. And yet our modern oneirocritics study them with assiduous curiosity, and accept in them as indications of the future with implicit confidence !

How the ancients determined the principles of Oneirocriticism we are unable to say, but the moderns do not appear to be guided by any definite or well-considered rules. “ Dreams go by contraries ”—seems to be the shibboleth of the creed, the leading tenet of the oneirocritical philosophy. Dream that you have lost a tooth, and you will lose a friend—which is hardly, however, an instance of “ opposites,” for a sound tooth is a friend not to be despised.

Dream of little pigs, for that is fortunate ; but not of big bullocks, for that is unfortunate.

Dream that your house is on fire, and you will receive news from a distant country.

Dream of gold and silver, and you will soon be without copper—at least, copper that has passed the Mint.

Dream of dirt, and you will acquire something valuable—on the moral principle, perhaps, that “ all gold is dross.”

Dream of a funeral, and you will hear of a wedding.

Dream of clear water, and you will speedily find yourself in a troubled stream.

Dream of the dead, and you will hear news of the living.

Dream of having many friends, and you will be persecuted by many enemies.

Dream that you are up to your neck in mud and mire, and Fortune will lavish her choicest gifts upon you.

Dream that you stand naked in the public ways, and Fate will burden you with her direst curses.

Dream of vermin, and there will be sickness in your family.

Trees, plants, and flowers play a very important part in this Oneiroscopia of the vulgar, which will always be popular with ill-directed imaginations.

To dream of an oak prognosticates a prosperous longevity; of a leafless tree great sorrow; of a bare and branchless trunk despair and suicide. There is a certain poetical character in some of these interpretations, as when we are told that for a maiden to dream she strips the bark off a tree, signifies the approaching loss of her chastity; for a wife and mother the same dream betokens a family

bereavement; for the "bread-winner," an increase of fortune. The yew is accursed in dreams, and preserves its ancient connexion with the silent graveyard. The fir-tree, green and vigorous, indicates happiness and prosperity; the limetells, of voyages across trackless seas. Then, as to plants and flowers:—

Aloes—without a flower, signify long life; in flower, a legacy.

Agrimony—(perhaps from *ager*) indicates the approach of sickness.

Anemone—prophesies of love.

Auriculas—in beds, of good fortune; in pots, marriage; and to gather them foretokens widowhood.

Broom-flowers—an increase of family.

Dock-leaves—a gift from a friend in the country.

Daffodils—a maiden is warned not to retire to any secret place with her lover, or to any spot where, if needed, help cannot reach her.

Hearts'-ease—on the rule of contraries, betokens *hearts' pain*.

Lilies—indicate joy; water-lilies, danger from the sea.

Lemons—are a sign of speculation.

Pomegranates—of happy bridals to the single, and reconciliation to those who, though wedded, have been separated by domestic trials.

Quinces—of pleasant company.

Roses—of happy love ; a love, however, not exempt from shadows. But what summer sky is without a cloud ?

Sorrel—of the imminence of some great disaster, only to be conquered by the highest prudence.

Sunflowers—of a grievous blow to your pride.

Violets—joy to the married, and misfortune to the single.

Yellow flowers—of any kind, signify jealousy, with which deplorable passion the colour *yellow* has always been associated.

Yew-berries—for either sex, betoken loss of character.

§ 2. OMENS.

Ill omens may the guilty tremble at,
 Make every accident a prodigy,
 And monsters frame, where Nature never err'd ;
 May the scar'd conscience start at blazing meteors,
 And call the scream of every hooting owl,
 Or croaking raven, fate's most dreadful voice :
 For me, I laugh at them. Should now the heavens
 Flame with a thousand fires, ne'er seen before,
 And thunder beat the winds from ev'ry corner ;
 Not for the calm of all the universe,
 Would I put off my joys a moment longer.

NATHANIEL LEE.

The same longing to penetrate the clouds overshadowing the future which impels the superstitious to discern a prophetic character

in dreams, has taught them to be sensitive to every accident of nature, and to find a warning or a consolation in the most ordinary circumstances. A shooting-star, a flight of birds, the meteor streaming redly across the heavens, an earthquake,—these are at times sufficient to daunt the hearts of men, and appal their souls with a consciousness of some concealed peril. The pages of the ancient historians are crowded with allusions to the birth of human monsters, the apparition of comets, showers of milk—of blood—of stones, and to prodigies yet more frightful—such as oxen, dogs, or new-born infants speaking, the appearance of spirits, and statues shedding tears. Shakspeare finely records the supernatural occurrences that, according to the Latin writers, heralded the death of Cæsar :—

There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets ;
And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead :
Fierce, fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol :
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan ;
And ghosts did shriek, and squeal about the streets.
O Cæsar ! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.

Nor have the early Christian chroniclers omitted to preserve the record of similar ominous circumstances, in connexion with the careers of saints or kings, popes, priests, or warriors. Thus, before the death of Charlemagne, there were so many omens, according to his biographer Eginhard, that not only others, but he himself could not fail to understand their meaning. "For three successive years preceding his decease the decline of the sun and moon was very great, and black spots on the sun were seen for several days. To this was added the constant tremor of the palace at Aix-la-Chapelle, and the creaking of the panels in every house where he visited. The basilica, moreover, in which he was afterwards interred, was struck by lightning, and the golden apple which adorned the roof-peak, shattered by the flame from heaven, was flung upon the roof of the pontiff's house, contiguous to the basilica."

Other instances of popular superstition will probably interest the reader:—

A Jewish child, saved from the massacre of his kith and kin in the fiery course of the first Crusade, was baptized according to the rites of Christianity. "When the moment arrived," says Guibert de Nogent, "for lighting the

lamp and dropping into the water the molten wax, a drop which fell by itself appeared to form with such exactness the figure of a cross, that no man's hand could have designed it with an accuracy so perfect and with so little material. This cross did not appear through any simple accident, but was undoubtedly sent by Heaven itself, to announce that one of the Jewish race showed a sincerity of faith very rare in our time."

During the ceremony of the consecration of Philip Augustus and his queen, in 1181, a memorable event occurred, "which," says Rigord, "we think it useful to relate in these pages. Three lamps suspended before the high altar having been broken, the oil which they contained fell upon the royal brows as a sign of the abundance of gifts which the Holy Spirit poured upon them from the heights of heaven; for we think that God wrought this miracle to spread afar the glory and the name of the monarch, and the report of his renown, over the surface of the whole earth, as Solomon seemed to have prophesied in his Canticle upon Love, when he said, 'Our name is like an oil which they have poured out.'" Who but must admire the dexterous superstition which could convert into an augury of good,

an accident so disagreeable to the royal sufferers ?

At the commencement of the seventeenth century most of these vulgar errors were in all their force. It was an epoch of change and disaster ; men's minds were perturbed with the rush of new thoughts and emotions, and the popular feeling was so sensitive that the most natural occurrence could excite alarm and apprehension. The thunder and the comet were specially regarded as manifestations of the Divine will.

“ The rebellious,” says Cardinal Richelieu, “ wished to interpret as an evil augury an unforeseen, but yet a favourable, accident, which happened to his Majesty, near Monceaux, on his return from the chase. A burst of thunder broke over his carriage ; the bolt fell near his Majesty on the left hand ; and his coachman was slightly wounded in the eye and cheek. The king alone was neither blinded nor injured, having felt but a moderate heat on the face, like that from the priming of a musket when one discharges it. It is certain that from all time, and amongst all peoples, the light and the fire of heaven have ever been esteemed a most auspicious presage of grandeur and victory, when they do not injure the

things upon which they appear or descend. Let us content ourselves with saying that the fall of the bolt and the fire of the lightning around his Majesty were a sign which showed to all the world that God would hold the king in His safeguard, and defend him from all the perils of the earth, even as He had protected him from the fire of heaven."

A Lorraine printer and engraver named Hauzelet, about to publish a treatise on "Several Military Machines and Artificial Fires," was diverted from his project by the comet of 1619, because, said he, such fiery spectacles never appear without bringing in their train a multitude of evils. But comets have always been a terror to the superstitious, and with fear of change have perplexed kings and perturbed peoples.

But the *profanum vulgus* have not been content to draw their omens from the wonders of earth and heaven; they have sought them in every ordinary occurrence, until their daily life has become a prey to evil shadows. For there is a strange propensity in the human mind to dwell upon the cloud and the darkness; to see the warning of the thunderbolt and the earthquake, but not the consolation of the musical fountain and the sunlit cloudless sky; to

imagine evil and apprehend disaster; to tremble before the God of fear, and turn aside from the benignant brow of the God of love. Out of what grotesque trifles do men and women, even in this nineteenth century, continue to extract an agony and a sorrow! The guttering of a candle will affright the heart that could face unmoved the gleam of hostile bayonets! A dog howling at the moon will carry terror and apprehension to the bosoms of many a female who would endure the extreme of physical torture without a groan! Addison, in an admirable paper in *The Spectator*, wisely observes, that "we suffer as much from trifling accidents as from real evils. I have known," he adds, "the shooting of a star spoil a night's rest, and have seen a man in love grow pale and lose his appetite upon the plucking of a merry-thought. A screech-owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket has struck more terror than the roaring of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens and prognostics." To spill the salt—to sit at a table where you make the thirteenth guest—to walk under a ladder—to sneeze thrice—to hear the death-watch ticking

for its mate—to see an oblong hollow coal fly out of the fire—these are omens of evil which have appalled the souls of the vulgar through many generations of ignorance. On the other hand, to meet a piebald horse—to put on your stocking inside out—to sneeze twice—to be followed by a strange dog—to have a swarm of bees alight in your garden, are signs of good fortune and prosperity.

From this universal credence in signs and omens springs the fancy that certain days are more favourable than others for inquiring into the events of futurity. In a flimsy compilation of queries and answers, entitled “Napoleon’s Book of Fate,” we find the following days set apart as unlucky:—

January	1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 20
February	1, 17, 18
March	14, 16
April	10, 17, 18
May	7, 8
June	17
July	17, 21
August	20, 21
September	10, 18
October	6
November	6, 10
December	6, 11, 15

It is some consolation that out of 365 days, only 30 are stigmatized as inauspicious!

The peculiar rites appropriate to the follow-

ing anniversaries and saints' days we can but briefly glance at, referring the reader for fuller information to Hone's "Everyday Book," and the recent admirable compilation of the Messrs. Chambers, "The Book of Days."

"*The First of January*.—If a young maiden drink on going to bed a pint of cold spring water, in which is beat up an amulet, composed of the yolk of a pullet's egg, the legs of a spider, and the skin of an eel pounded, her future destiny will be revealed to her in a dream. This charm fails of its effect if tried any other day of the year.

"*Valentine's Day* (February 14).—Let a single woman go out of her own door very early in the morning, and if the first person she meets be a woman, she will not be married that year; if she meet a man she will be married within three months. There existed an old custom, as late as the days of Pepys, who repeatedly refers to it in his 'Diary,' for each gentleman to choose his *Valentine* among his female friends, married or unmarried, to whom he was expected to make some present. Or a lady might select her own *Valentine*, exacting from him a similar attention.

"*Lady Day*.—The following charm may be tried this day with certain success. Thread

thirty-one nuts on a string, composed of red worsted mixed with blue silk, and tie it round your neck on going to bed, repeating these lines :—

Oh, I wish, oh, I wish to see
Who my true love is to be !

Shortly after midnight you will see your lover in a dream, and be informed at the same time of all the principal events of your future life.

“*St. Swithin's Eve.*—Select three things you most wish to know ; write them down with a new pen and red ink on a sheet of fine wove paper, from which you must previously cut off all the corners and burn them. Fold the paper into a true-lover's knot, and wrap round it three hairs from your head. Place the paper under your pillow for three successive nights, and your curiosity to know the future will be satisfied.

“*St. Mark's Eve (April 24).*—Repair to the nearest churchyard as the clock strikes twelve, and take from a grave on the south side of the church three tufts of grass (the longer and ranker the better), and on going to bed place them under your pillow, repeating earnestly three several times—

The eve of St. Mark by prediction is blest,
Set therefore my hopes and my fears all to rest :

Let me know my fate, whether weal or woe ;
 Whether my rank's to be high or low ;
 Whether to live single, or to be a bride,
 And the destiny my star doth provide.

Should you have no dream that night you will be single and miserable all your life. If you dream of thunder and lightning your life will be one of great difficulty and sorrow.

“*St. John's Eve (June 23)*.—Make a new pincushion of the very best black velvet (no inferior quality will answer the purpose), and on one side stick your name at full length with the very smallest pins that can be bought (none other will do). On the other side make a cross with some very large pins, and surround it with a circle. Put this into your stocking when you take it off at night, and hang it up at the foot of the bed. All your future life will pass before you in a dream.” This anniversary has been ever famous in the annals of superstition :—

The rustic maid invokes her swain,
 And hails, to pensive damsels dear,
 This eve, though direst of the year.

“*First New Moon of the Year*.—On the first new moon in the year take a pint of clear spring water, and infuse into it the *white* of an egg laid by a white hen, a glass of *white* wine, three almonds peeled *white*, and a tablespoonful

of *white* rosewater. Drink this on going to bed, not making more or less than three draughts of it, repeating the following verses three several times in a clear, distinct voice, but not so loud as to be overheard by anybody :—

If I dream of water pure
 Before the coming morn,
 'Tis a sign I shall be poor,
 And unto wealth not born.
 If I dream of tasting beer,
 Middling then will be my cheer,
 Chequer'd with the good and bad,
 Sometimes joyful, sometimes sad :
 But should I dream of drinking wine,
 Wealth and pleasure will be mine.
 The stronger the drink, the better the cheer,—
 Dreams of my destiny, appear, appear !

“ *Twenty-ninth of February.*—This day, as it only occurs once in four years, is peculiarly auspicious to those who desire to have a glance at futurity, especially to young maidens burning with anxiety to know the appearance and complexion of their future lords. The charm to be adopted is the following :—Stick twenty-seven of the smallest pins that are made, three by three, into a tallow candle. Light it up at the wrong end, and then place it in a candlestick made out of clay, which must be drawn from a virgin's grave. Place this on the chimney-place, in the left-hand corner, exactly

as the clock strikes twelve, and go to bed immediately. When the candle is burnt out, take the pins and put them into your left shoe, and before nine nights have elapsed your fate will be revealed to you."

St. Agnes' Eve was another night sacred to love and the future. Keats has made a beautiful use of the fond delusion :—

They told her how upon St. Agnes' eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

The learned have had as keen a desire to anticipate the good or ill of coming fortune as the vulgar, and in "the grayest eld" were accustomed to consult the writings of the poets as if the divine afflatus had made them masters of the times to come. Herodotus, while recording this singular intellectual folly, relates at the same time the frauds to which it gave rise. "Onomacrites, a celebrated diviner," he says, "who trafficked in the oracles of Musæus, was expelled from Athens by Hipparchus, son of Pisistrates, because Lasus of Hermione had detected him in the

act of inserting among the verses of Musæus an oracle which predicted that the neighbouring isle of Lemnos should disappear beneath the sea."

Homer, and afterwards Virgil, were the poets most frequently consulted, and this custom may have had some share in originating the popular belief that the great poet of Rome was a magician. It was from the verses of Virgil that the Emperors Adrian, Alexander Severus, and Claudius I. had discovered the high dignity reserved for them.

In the Middle Ages this consultation of the Homeric and Virgilian pages (*Sortes Homericae*, *Sortes Virgilianæ*) was merely replaced by a reference to the patristic writers and the Holy Scriptures (*Sortes Sanctorum*). Gregory of Tours relates some curious facts in illustration of this superstitious practice.

When Chramm, who had revolted against his father Clotaire, was advancing upon Dijon, the priests of the cathedral, having placed upon the altar three books—the Prophets, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Evangelists—prayed God to reveal the destiny of Chramm, and to declare, by his divine power, if he should meet with success, and if he might hope to reign. This was to be ascertained by each

priest reading the passage that might first catch his eye on opening his book.

Gregory also relates that Merovius, flying from the wrath of his father Chilperic, and Frédégonde, placed upon the tomb of St. Martin, at Tours, the books of the Psalter, the Kings, and the Gospels, and "watching all night, he prayed the confessor to discover to him the future, and whether the Lord indicated if he should reign or no. Thus he passed three days, fasting, watching, and in prayer, and returning afresh to the holy tomb, opened successively one of the books, which was that of Kings. Dismayed by the responses he met with, he wept for a long time by the sepulchre of the holy bishop, and then went out of the church."

The Councils in vain endeavoured to crush this superstition. The 16th canon of the Council of Vannes (A.D. 465) forbade clerks, under pain of excommunication, from consulting the *Sortes Sanctorum*. This prohibition, extended to the laity by the 42nd canon of the Council of Agde in 506, and by the 30th of the Council of Orléans (A.D. 511), was several times renewed; amongst others by the Council of Auxerre, A.D. 595; by that of Selingenstadt, A.D. 1022; and by a capitulation

lary of Charlemagne, A.D. 789. But in despite of these formal inhibitions, divination by the Bible did not fall into disuse. In some instances it even made a part of the Liturgy. Thus, during the consecration of a bishop, at the moment when the book of the Gospel was placed upon his head it was customary to open it haphazard, and to seek in the words of the first verse that caught the eye some dim prognostic of the prelate's future destiny. The chroniclers have recorded some predictions of this kind which the event verified—most predictions by their influence on the imagination having a tendency to fulfil themselves.

“Landri, elected Bishop of Laon, received the Episcopal unction (says Guibert de Nogent) in the church of Saint Ruffin, but the text of the gospel for the day was a dire omen for him: ‘Your soul shall be pierced by a sword.’” After committing many crimes he was assassinated. His successor was a dean of Orléans whose name is not recorded. “The new bishop being presented for consecration, they sought in the Evangel what prognostication related to him, but found the page of the book wholly blank. It was as if God had said, ‘I have nothing to foretell to this man, for that which he will do will amount nearly to

nothing.'” And in effect he died in a very few months.

The following fact will give some idea of the importance attached to these absurd divinations.

In 1115, some discussions having been raised in reference to the elevation of Hugues de Montaigu to the bishopric of Auxerre, the dispute was referred to Pascal II., who himself consecrated the prelate. “A remark was made by those who supported him,” says Lebeuf, “to the effect that, at the opening of the book from whence were drawn the omens of the future fate of the prelates, these words of the angel were discovered,—*Ave Maria, gratia plena*; which was understood as a good augury of his chastity, humility, and devoutness.”

The pious often derived a supreme consolation from their reference to the Bible in moments of perplexity, and no better comforter can assuredly be found by the mourning heart or sorrow-stricken soul.

The Count Leudaste having affrighted the city of Tours with many acts of high-handed violence, “When I heard of them,” says Gregory of Tours, “I was lying very sad at heart in the episcopal palace. Full of trouble

I entered my oratory; I took the book of Psalms of David, in the hope of finding some verse which might afford me consolation. I lighted upon this: 'He will lead them full of hope, and will take away all their fear, their enemies having been covered by the sea.'"

Pilgrimages to Jerusalem were often undertaken on a perusal of the passage in Isaiah: "Et erit sepulchrum ejus gloriosum."

The *Sortes Virgilianæ* were frequently resorted to by scholars and nobles as a source of intellectual amusement. They were consulted on one occasion by Charles I. when idling with Lord Falkland in the Bodleian Library at Oxford; and the passages lighted upon both by the king and his courtier were singularly ominous of their future fate. The lines that met the eye of Charles form part of the imprecation which Dido hurls at Æneas:—

At bello audacis populi vexatus et armis,
 Finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iūli,
 Auxilium imploret, videatque indigna suorum
 Funera: nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquæ
 Tradiderit, regno aut optatâ luce fruatur;
 Sed cadat ante diem, mediâque inhumatus arenâ.

Lib. iv.

Yet let a race untamed, and haughty foes,
 His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose;
 Oppressed with numbers in the unequal field,
 His men discouraged, and himself expelled;

Let him for succour sue from place to place,
 Torn from his subjects, and his sons' embrace!
 First let him see his friends in battle slain,
 And their untimely fate lament in vain;
 And when at length the cruel war shall cease,
 On hard conditions may he buy his peace,
 Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
 But fall untimely by some hostile hand,
 And lie unburied on the barren sand.—DRYDEN.

Lord Falkland observing that the king was discomposed at his infelicitous selection, and imagining that he himself might choose some unmeaning passage which would deprive the incident of any real importance, essayed a venture at fortune, but happened upon some lines of no more cheering a character:—

Non hæc, O Pallas, dederas promissa parenti:
 Cautius ut sævo velles te credere Marti.
 Haud ignarus eram, quantum nova gloria in armis,
 Et prædulce decus primo certamine posset.
 Primitiæ juvenis miseræ, bellique propinqui
 Dura rudimenta.

O Pallas! thou hast failed thy plighted word;
 To fight with caution, not to tempt the sword:
 I warned thee, but in vain; for well I knew
 What perils youthful ardour will pursue:
 That boiling blood would carry thee too far;
 Young as thou wert to dangers, raw to war!
 O curst assay of arms! disastrous doom,
 Preludes of bloody fields, and fights to come.—DRYDEN.

An extraordinary importance was attached by the ancients on certain occasions to words spoken in their presence. Often when on the

point of engaging in a perilous enterprise, they went out of their house to collect the chance phrases scattered by the passers-by, or sent a slave to listen to what was spoken in the streets, and so endeavoured to decipher some dim indications of the future.

In the Middle Ages, this usage, though a little modified, was maintained for several generations. Clovis, when on the eve of marching against Alaric, sent some deputies to the basilica of St. Martin of Tours, saying to them:—"Go, and you will find perhaps in the holy temple some presage of victory." After having given them many presents with which to enrich the sacred place, he added, "Lord, if thou art my help, and if thou hast resolved to deliver into my hands that incredulous nation, ever the enemies of thy name, deign to show me your favour at the entrance of the basilica of Saint Martin, to the end that I may know if you will condescend to be propitious to your servant." The envoys duly arrived at the gate of the holy basilica, and, the moment they passed in, the following passage burst upon their gladdened ears: "For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against

me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies ; that I might destroy them that hate me." — (Psalm xviii. 39, 40). Having listened to this psalm, and given thanks to God, and presented the royal gifts to the priests, they went away full of joy to announce to the king this presage of victory.

This section may appropriately conclude with the recital of a divination sufficiently ridiculous to expose the gross absurdity of this superstitious practice :—

Theodatus, king of the Goths, being besieged in Naples by Belisarius, as he was in the habit of consulting the divines, and of placing his faith in their replies, inquired one day of a Hebrew who was esteemed a good magician, what would be the issue of the war? The Jew replied that if he would know, he must shut up three dozen of swine in three stables, and give to the first dozen the name of Goths, to the second that of Romans, and to the third the name of the Imperial soldiers. Then on a certain day he was to visit the three stables. This was done, and at the appointed time Theodotus entered therein. He found that all the swine named Goths were dead, except two ; that nearly all of the Imperial

soldiery were living; that five of the Romans were dead, and five others had lost their hides. Theodatus, judging from this presage the fortune of the war, believed that the power of the Romans would be destroyed, that they would lose half their army and their wealth; that the Goths would be reduced to a small number, and the Emperor would gain an easy victory. This conviction crushed his courage, and he durst not venture to give battle to his foes.*

But such indeed is the natural effect of these illicit attempts to penetrate the secrets of the Book of Fate, hidden from men by a merciful Providence. If their result be a presage of disaster, the mind insensibly yields to the influence of a superstitious fear, loses its energies, relaxes in its exertions, and accustoms itself to the idea of failure. On the other hand, an augury of good fortune lends fresh strength to the adventurous soul, and it enters into a struggle with the conviction that Heaven has already assured it victory. Thus, by operating upon the will and the imagination, the most trivial circumstance becomes prophetic, and assumes an importance which it does not in itself possess. The omen works out its own fulfilment, and he who was

* Procopius, *Vandal.*, l. ii. c. 9.

deceived by its apparently supernatural character remains ignorant of the share which his own excited fancy has had in securing the desired result.

§ 3. PROPHECIES.

Coming events cast their shadows before.

CAMPBELL.

When men began to disbelieve the oracles, the oracles ceased; but their desire to anticipate the course of time remained as eager and as keen as in the days of the prophetess and the tripod, and new prophets arose to gratify the old desire. The reverence that had been paid to the Sibyl was now given to Merlin, and the astrologer and the wizard succeeded to the reputation formerly enjoyed by soothsayer and augur. Among the British races Merlin occupied the position which the Greek had accorded to Apollo. Quaint old Drayton sings of him,—

Of Merlin and his skill what region doth not hear?
The world shall still be full of Merlin every year.
A thousand lingering years his prophecies have run,
And scarcely shall have end till Time itself be done.*

“The verses in which the ancient Cambrian poets had poured out impulsively their patriotic

* Drayton, *Polyolbion*.

enthusiasm," says M. Thierry, "were regarded as mysterious predictions in which men sought to discover the meaning in the great events of the day. Thence came the singular celebrity which Myrdhin, bard of the seventh century, enjoyed five hundred years after his death under the name of the Enchanter Merlin. . . . The books of this limited race were so filled with poetry, they had so strong a current of enthusiasm and conviction, that when translated into other languages they became for foreigners the most attractive reading, and the theme upon which the romancists of the Middle Age the most willingly founded their fictions."

Until the fifteenth century these runes, which by their vagueness and obscurity of expression, lent themselves so well to the most diverse interpretations, were looked upon by the peoples of the west of Europe as oracles whose accuracy could not be impeached. Especially in the twelfth century, no important event could occur, which the chroniclers did not profess to see predicted in the prophecies of Merlin. Take one curious instance: A prophecy for the year 1226 foretold that "the peaceable lion would die in the belly of the mountain." Louis VIII. of France,

in this very year, expired at Montpensier, and the wise men of the age immediately discovered that *he* was "the peaceable lion" who died in *le pense (ou le ventre) de Mont*—i.e., Montpensier!

"The wild seer Merlin, who saw and plainly foretold," says Suger,* "and in a surprising manner, the events which, in the course of ages, would transpire in England, has proclaimed throughout the universe and consecrated the glory of Henry I. by magnificent eulogiums, as true as they were refined. It is in his celebration that, in the manner of inspired men, he makes known these utterances of a prophetic voice:—'To the throne shall succeed the lion of justice; at his roar the Gallic towers and insular dragons shall tremble. In his time men will extract the gold from the lily and the nettle; silver shall flow under the hoofs of lowing animals; beasts with frizzled hair shall clothe themselves in divers fleeces, and their exterior shall thus make known their internal dispositions; the feet of dogs shall be cut off; savage animals shall enjoy a sweet peace; men reduced to supplicate shall suffer; the forms of commerce shall change; the half

* "Vie de Louis le Gros," par l'Abbé Suger (Collection Guizot, t. viii.)

of a whole shall become round; the kites shall lose their rapacity; the teeth of the wolves be blunted; the young ones of the lions be transformed into fishes of the sea; and the eagle shall build his nest upon the mountains of Arabia.' The whole of this ancient and marvellous prophecy applies with so much justice to the personal vigour of King Henry and to the administration of his kingdom, that not a contradictory word can be discovered. The allusion at its close to the young of the lion was clearly verified in the son and daughter of the king, who, drowned in a shipwreck and devoured by the fishes of the sea, have thus altered their form physically, and proved the accuracy of the prophecy."*

The vague expressions of the Cambrian bard, like the oracles of old, were generally susceptible of several interpretations, and these interpretations were often widely different in character.

William of Scotland having been taken prisoner by the English in 1174, was confined in the Palace of Richmond. "This circumstance," says Matthew Paris, "was regarded

* The shipwreck of the children of Henry I. took place in the month of December, 1120, on the rocks known as the Ras de Catteville.

as the accomplishment of a prophecy of Merlin, conceived in these terms:—‘They shall put between his teeth a curb forged on the shores of the Armorican Gulf.’ The Armorican Gulf must be considered to extend from the castle hereditarily and from time immemorial possessed by the lords of Armórica, (Brittany).” Some months later this prophecy was applied to Henry II., who during the revolt of his sons had been closely shut up by their auxiliaries, the Bretons.

Even Joan of Arc, the wondrous Maid who revived the drooping heart of France, was spoken of by Merlin, and his prescient eye, gazing far into futurity, discerned the fraternal jealousy of the ruthless Edward IV. of England. According to Martin du Bellay,* “the English monarch had a desire to see one day the prophecies of Merlin, to discover what accidents would befall his posterity, which is a superstition that has prevailed in England from the time of King Arthur. On examining the said prophecies it was found (for they were like the oracles of Apollo, which had always a double meaning), that according to the interpretation put upon them, one of his

* Mémoires de Martin du Bellay (Collection Michaud-Poujoulat.)

brothers, whose name should begin with G, should pluck the crown from the hands of his children. Now he had two sons and two daughters, and he thought that the prophecy spoke of the Duke of Clarence, who was named George, wherefore he seized him, and without any form of justice put him to death in a pipe of Malvoisie, persuading himself that through his decease the prophecy would lose its effect." But prophets are not so easily cheated, and Edward's second brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester, proved in due time the wonderful sagacity of Merlin.

Some authorities pretend that the Cambrian seer was no real personage, but the myth of a credulous people. It seems probable, however, that the bard really existed, and he is said to have been a contemporary of the British Vortigern. The woes of his country inflamed his poetic zeal, and he uttered in wild, impetuous verse the aspirations of a patriot, for superstitious generations to reverence as the vaticinations of a prophet. The popular idea of this famous seer has been rendered by Spenser in immortal verse:—

For Merlin had in magick more insight
Than ever him before or after living wight :

For he by wordes could call out of the sky
 Both sunne and moone, and make them him obay ;
 The land to sea, and sea to maineland dry,
 And darksome night he eke could turne to day ;
 Huge hostes of men he could alone dismay,
 And hostes of men of meanest thinges could frame,
 Whenso him list his enemies to fray ;
 That to this day, for terror of his fame,
 The feendes do quake when any him to them does name.

And, sooth, men say that he was not the sonne
 Of mortall syre or other living wight,
 But wondrously begotten, and begonne,
 By false illusion of a guilefull spright
 On a fair lady Nonne, that whilome hight,
 Matilda, daughter to Pubidius,
 Who was the lord of Mathtraval by right,
 And coosen unto King Ambrosius ;
 Whence he indued was with skill so mervelous.*

The lyrical runes or prophecies of this mysterious personage were translated into Latin prose by Geoffrey of Monmouth. A volume in reference to his "Life, Prophecies, and Miracles," written, it is supposed, by Robert de Bosron, was published at Paris in 1498. In this scarce quarto Merlin represents that the devil himself was his father, that he spoke as soon as he was born, and comforted his mother, a virtuous young woman, with the assurance that she would not die in childbed, as malignant neighbours had foretold. When

* "The Faerie Queene," book iii. canto iii.

the district magistrate heard of this wonderful occurrence, he summoned both the immaculate mother and the preternatural infant to appear before him, and they went accordingly. The judge, to test the wisdom of the youthful seer on a proverbially difficult point, asked him if he knew his own father? "The devil," rejoined Merlin; "and his power is mine, and I, like him, know all things past, present, and to come." The astonished judge put no further questions, but wisely resolved to keep clear for the future of Merlin and his progenitors.

Some of the Welsh antiquaries pretend that there were three Merlins—Merdhin Emrys, or Merlinus Ambrosius; Merdhin Wyllt, or Merlinus Caledonius, also called Merlinus Sylvestris; and Merdhin ap Morvryn, or Merlinus Avolonius, also known by the names of Melchinus, Melkinus, and Mervynus. The second and third are certainly the same person, and probably all the three Merlins are but one individual. An English collection of the prophecies was published at London in 1529, and another in 1533, and they exist in MS. both in French and English, in the Cotton and other public libraries.

The building of Stonehenge is traditionally

attributed to the power of Merlin, at whose command they hurtled through the air from Ireland to Salisbury Plain. He ranged them in their present order—runs the legend—to commemorate the fate of three hundred British chiefs, massacred on that lonesome and weird table-land by the murderous Saxons.

His cave and the scene of his dark enchantments is still pointed out at Abergwylly, near Caermarthen; and the lover of English poetry will remember the lurid splendour with which Spenser invests it in his "Faerie Queene:"—

Low underneath the ground,
 In a deepe delve, farre from the view of day,
 That of no living wight he mote be found,
 Whenso he counseld with his sprights encompass round.

And if thou ever happen that same way
 To travaill, go to see that dreadful place:
 It is an hideous hollow cave (they say)
 Under a rock that lyes a little space
 From the swift Barry, tombling downe apace
 Emongst the woody hills of Dyneowre:
 But dare thou not, I charge, in any cace
 To enter into that same balefull bowre,
 For feare the cruell feendes should thee unwares devowre.

But standing high aloft low lay thine eare,
 And there such ghatly noyse of yron chaines
 And brasen caudrons thou shalt rombling heare,
 Which thousand sprights with long enduring paines
 Doe tosse, that it will stoun thy feeble braines;

And oftentimes great grones, and grievous stownds,
 When too huge toile and labour them constraines ;
 And oftentimes loud strokes and ringing sowndes
 From under that deepe rock most horribly rebowndes.

The cause, some say, is this : A little whyle
 Before that Merlin dyde, he did intend
 A brasen wall in compas to compyle
 About Cairmardin, and did it commend
 Unto these sprights to bring to perfect end :
 During which worke the Lady of the Lake,
 Whom long he lov'd, for him in haste did send ;
 Who, thereby forst his workemen to forsake,
 Them bownd, till his retourne, their labour not to slake.

In the mean time through that false Ladies traine
 He was surprisd, and buried under beare,
 Ne ever to his worke returnd againe :
 Nath'lesse those feends may not their worke forbear,
 So greatly his commandiment they feare,
 But there doe toyle and traveile day and night,
 Untill that brazen wall they up doe reare ;
 For Merlin had in magick more insight
 Than ever him before or after living wight.

In the reign of Charles I. Thomas Heywood, the dramatist, published a "Life of Merlin, with his Prophecies and Predictions interpreted and made good by our English Annals," but there is good reason to believe that they were all, or at least the majority of them, composed by Heywood himself. Take for example this prediction of Richard III., which reads like a character composed by a political satirist rather than the vague exposition of an enthusiastic Vates :—

A hunch-back'd monster, who with teeth is born,
The mockery of art, and nature's scorn ;
Who from ye womb preposterously is hurl'd,
And with feet forward thrust into ye world,
Shall, from ye lower earth on which he stood,
Wade, every step he mounts, knee-deep in blood,
He shall to th' height of all his hopes aspire,
And, clothed in state, his ugly shape admire ;
But, when he thinks himself most safe to stand,
From foreign parts a native whelp shall land.

Probably the following couplet was floating about the discourse of the common people as a saying of Merlin's, but it hath not the Cambrian touch about it:—

When hempe is ripe and ready to pull,
Then, Englishman, beware thy skull.

Master Heywood shall act as interpreter:—
“In this word H E M P E be five letters. Now, by reckoning the five successive princes from Henry VIII., this prophecy is easily explained. H signifieth King Henry before named ; E, Edward, his son, sixth of that name ; M, Mary, who succeeded him ; P, Philip of Spain, who, by marrying Queen Mary, participated with her in the English diadem ; and lastly, E. signifieth Queen Elizabeth, after whose death there was a great fear that some troubles might have arisen about the crown. Yet,” adds Heywood, “proved this augury true, though not according to the

former expectation; for after the peaceful inauguration of King James there was great mortality, not in London only, but through the whole kingdom, and from which the nation was not quite clean in seven years after."

Other English prophets have been Peter of Pontefract, Robert Nixon, Mother Shipton, and the almanac-compilers, Lilly, Poor Robin, Partridge, Francis Moore, Murphy, and Zadkiel (Lieutenant Morrison). Nixon and Mother Shipton attained a celebrity which justifies us in devoting a few lines to their notice.

Place aux dames! Mother Shipton lived about the time of the establishment of the Tudor dynasty, and resided for many years in a cottage at Winslow-cum-Shipton, in Buckinghamshire. A popular chap-book professed to record her career and prophecies under the following attractive title:—"The Strange and Wonderful History and Prophecies of Mother Shipton, plainly setting forth her Birth, Life, Death, and Burial." 12mo. Published at Newcastle. Chap. 1. Of her birth and parentage. 2. How Mother Shipton's mother proved with child; how she fitted the justice, and what happened at her delivery. 3. By what name Mother Shipton was christened, and how her mother

went into a monastery. 4. Several other pranks play'd by Mother Shipton in revenge of such as abus'd her. 5. How Ursula married a young man named Tobias Shipton, and how strangely she discover'd a thief. 6. Her prophecy against Cardinal Wolsey. 7. Some other prophecies of Mother Shipton relating to these times. 8. Her prophecies in verse to the Abbot of Beverley. 9. Mother Shipton's life, death, and burial.

Robert Nixon was a contemporary of Mother Shipton. He was the son of indigent parents, and born near Vale Royal, on the confines of the ancient forest of Delamere. Brought up to the plough, his intense stupidity, amounting almost to idiotism, was the laughter or by-word of all the countryside, and little heed was given at first to his desultory and incoherent utterances. Alas, he was scattering gold abroad, and there were none to catch the precious handsels! But Fame came to him, as it comes to many an inspired genius—unawares. He was ploughing one day in a field, when he suddenly paused in his labour, exclaiming wildly, "Now, Dick! now, Harry! Oh, ill done, Dick! Oh, well done, Harry! Harry has gained the day!" For some time his neighbours could make "neither head nor

tail" of this extravagant outburst, but when the news arrived on the following day of the Battle of Bosworth Field and the victory of Henry VII., Nixon was immediately revered as a prophet!

Before long his reputation reached the royal ears, and a royal messenger was despatched to bring him to court. Before the nuncio could reach Cheshire, Nixon was aware of his errand, and ran about the streets of Over with loud cries that "Harry had sent for him, and he must go to court and be clammed.* The good townsmen could not understand these mysterious expressions, but on the third day the messenger arrived, and removed him to court, leaving the men of Cheshire convinced that there was but one Allah, and Nixon was his prophet!

He found the king on his arrival in pretended despair at the loss of a costly diamond, and his supernatural skill was invited to decide where it could be found. "Those who hide can find," said Nixon. As Henry had hidden the diamond simply to put the prophet to the *experimentum crucis*, he was much struck by this reply, and crediting from

* A Lancashire word for "starved to death" made unhappily familiar by recent events.

that time forth the prophet's pretensions, ordered, it is said, that all his words should be faithfully recorded.

Nixon, however, remained in mortal fear of being *clammed*, and begged the king to let him return to his Cheshire village. Henry laughed at his apprehensions, and gave directions to all his officers and cooks to supply the prophet with whatever he needed. Hence he in due time became as obese as the proverbial London alderman. One day, when the king was starting for the chase, Nixon threw himself at his feet, and implored he might not be left behind to starve. Henry called an officer, and repeated his injunctions to look after the prophet. The officer obeyed them by locking him up in the royal closet, and bringing him with his own hands four meals a day. So far Fate was cheated. But it happened that a messenger from the king required the officer's presence at Winchester on a momentous business, and he in great haste set out immediately, bestowing not a thought on the unhappy prophet. The words of doom came true ! The officer was absent for three days, and on his return, rushing to the royal closet, found Nixon dead upon the floor, *clammed*, even as he had predicted.

Some of Nixon's prophecies have been fulfilled; at least, in the opinion of his admirers, who strain their interpretations to fit the past event, on a very Procrustean principle. Here are three which are respectively supposed to indicate the defeat of Prince Charles Edward at the decisive battle of Culloden: the Rebellion of 1745, and the execution of the Scotch rebel peers; and the Pretender's return to France, crushed and defeated.

A great man shall come into England,
But the son of a king*
Shall take from him the victory.

Crows shall drink the blood of many nobles,
And the North shall rise against the South.

The Cock of the North shall be made to flee,
And his feather be pluckt for his pride,
That he shall almost curse the day that he was born.

Here are two predictions which remain unfulfilled, because no one has succeeded in discovering their meaning:—

Between seven, eight, and nine,
In England wonders shall be seen;
Between nine and thirteen,
All sorrow shall be done.

Through our own money and our men
Shall a dreadful war begin,
Between the sickle and the sick
All England shall have a pluck.

* William, Duke of Cumberland, son of George I.

Turning our glance from English to foreign seers, we are reminded of the estimation once enjoyed by the magnificent Michael Nostradamus, who died in 1566. He was born in 1503,—the son of a notary of the town of St. Remi, in Florence. He was fully fifty years old before the world recognised his genius, when his “Centuries,” a collection of rhythmical prophecies, as obscure as they were extravagant, began to excite attention. In 1556 Henry II. of France, attracted by his growing fame, appointed him his physician, and he was frequently consulted in important emergencies by the king and his subtle astute queen, Catherine de Medicis. After the death of his royal patron he retired to St. Remi, where he was visited by Charles IX., and by great nobles and learned men from the very ends of the earth.

His prophecies consist of more than a thousand stanzas, each of four lines: and they are so vague and indefinite that scarcely an event can occur which may not be found, with a little ingenuity, to bear some resemblance to a prediction of Nostradamus. They enjoyed for many years a very wide reputation. In 1576, when the Jesuits were endeavouring to crush the French Huguenots, they went about

from town to town, proclaiming the entrance of Don John of Austria into Flanders, and from the "Centuries" of Nostradamus showed that the great commander who had crushed the Turks at Lepanto, would in like manner annihilate the Huguenots, since Heaven had reserved for him the victory.

The "Centuries" have been frequently reprinted. The following couplet was indited anent their author :—

*Nostra damus cum verba damus, nam fallere nostrum est ;
Et cum verba damus, nil nisi nostra damus.*

It is not generally known that the son of Nostradamus also professed the power of foretelling the future. The "poison'd chalice," however, was returned to his own lips, and the engineer hoisted by his own petard. When the town of Pouzin, in Languedoc, was besieged in 1574 by the Catholics, its inhabitants after a vigorous resistance were compelled to surrender it. Young Nostradamus was then with the besieging army, whose commander, Saint-Luc, demanded of him what would be the fate of Pouzin. The prophet meditated profoundly, and said it would be destroyed by fire. He took the best course to prevent any failure of his prophecy, and when the town was being plundered, the soldiers

discovered him setting it on fire in various places. Saint-Luc on the following day summoned him to his presence. "Come now, master mine, does thy art tell thee that to-day an accident will befall thee?" And before the prophet could answer plunged his dagger into his stomach.

A Florentine astrologer, named Basil, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, obtained some repute for successful predictions. He is said to have foretold to Cosmo di Medicis, then a private citizen, that he would attain exalted dignity, inasmuch as the ascendant of his nativity was characterized by the same auspicious aspects as that of the emperor Charles V. Another astrologer predicted the death of Prince Alexander di Medicis, and it is supposed that he had a hand in carrying out his own prediction. More famous was Antiochus Tibertus of Romagna, who was for some years the esteemed councillor of Pandolfo di Malatesta, the prince of Rimini. Three of his predictions received a remarkable fulfilment. He foretold to his friend Guido di Bogni, a soldier of great celebrity, that he would be unjustly suspected by his best friend, and would lose his life through the suspicion. Of himself he declared that the stars doomed him

to perish on the scaffold, and of his patron, then in the flush of his power and prosperity, that he would suffer extreme penury, and die a beggar in the hospital for the poor at Bologna.

Each prediction was in due course fulfilled. Guido di Bogni was accused by his own father-in-law, the Count di Bentivoglio, of a treacherous design to surrender Rimini to the Papal forces. Such a conspiracy had actually been formed, but Guido was ignorant of it. Malatesta, however, caused him to be assassinated at his own supper-table, where he had invited him with every appearance of friendship. He also flung the astrologer into prison on suspicion of being an accomplice, and Antiochus attempting an escape, was discovered and beheaded. Thus two of the prophecies had been fulfilled; a circumstance which should have caused Malatesta some uneasiness about his own fate. But we seldom believe in the evil foretold of ourselves, however willing to credit any predictions of misfortunes for our friends. Nevertheless, the conspiracy against him in due time broke out; the city was seized by the Count de Valentinois; Malatesta escaped from the palace in disguise, wandered from town to town in miserable poverty, fell ill at

Bologna of a languishing disease, and died in the hospital to which stranger-hands had borne him.

We have spoken of these as remarkable prophecies: so they might justly have been called had Antiochus really uttered them. But unfortunately they were invented for him, *after* the events had occurred which they pretended to foretell.

Our limits compel us to omit any reference to the later astrologers and almanack-makers—Dee, Lilly, Forman, and Partridge: but of Dee and Lilly, as alchemists, we have already spoken in a preceding chapter. We shall now place before our readers some desultory examples of Prophecies and Predictions, without any special reference to their authors; and first, we shall glean them from the curious pages of the mediæval chroniclers.

“In those days,” says Gregory of Tours, “there was at Paris a woman who said to the inhabitants,—‘Fly from the city, for it is about to be destroyed by fire.’ Many laughed at her, and thought she spoke in accordance with some presages obtained from the *Sortes*, or else that she had dreamed, or that she was inspired by some demon of the south. She replied: ‘It is not indeed as you say, for I speak to you

the truth. I saw during my sleep a luminous man go out of the church of Saint Vincent, holding in his hand a flambeau of wax, with which he set on fire the houses of the merchants one after another.' Three months from the day on which the woman had spoken, and about twilight, a house broke out with flames, and the conflagration devoured a considerable portion of the city."

"When Gerbert was at the head of a school," says Ordericus Vitalis, "he had a colloquy with the devil, and asked him what would befall him one day. The malignant spirit made his reply in a verse, of which the sense was—

Transit ab R Gerbertus ad R, post papa regens R.

The oracle of the infernal *cameleon* was then too obscure to be comprehended." But when Gerbert was first bishop of Rheims and afterwards of Ravenna, and finally became Pope of Rome as Sylvester II., the diabolical prediction showed itself as clear as the sun at noonday.

A boundless confidence was, at this period, placed in the prophecies of pretended sorcerers. During the wars of the Normans in Apulia—we quote from Ordericus,—some magicians at Rome determined to ascertain who should suc-

ceed Hildebrand as Pope, and discovered that after his death a pontiff of the name of Odo would occupy the Papal chair. At this news Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, who ruled over England in the name of the Conqueror, his half-brother, "esteeming but little the wealth and power of the states of the West, if he did not govern afar, and reign over all men by right of the Papacy, sent some delegates to Rome; who purchased a palace for him, and adorned it at a great cost, and even with superfluous objects, and conciliated with rich presents the friendship of the Roman senators. He attracted to his party Hugh Earl of Chester, and a considerable troop of the most distinguished knights, prayed them to pass with him into Italy, and lavished upon them large promises in support of his prayers." Odo's intrigues excited the wrath and jealousy of the Conqueror, who suddenly returned from Normandy, arrested the ambitious prelate in the Isle of Wight, and flung him into prison. He expiated by a captivity of four years his credulity in listening to an astrologer's prediction.

In 1080, says Matthew Paris, Pope Hildebrand (Gregory VII.), by a pretended Divine revelation, foretold that a false king would die that year. His prophecy was fulfilled, but not

as he had hoped ; for he had aimed its shaft at Henry, the Emperor of Germany, and the false King was Rodolph, killed by the Emperor, with a crowd of nobles, in a bloody battle.

When the great league against Philip Augustus, which the victory of Bouvines shattered, was first formed, Matilda, aunt of Ferrand, Count of Flanders, one of the chiefs of the confederacy, consulted a famous female necromancer upon the issue of the struggle. The ambiguous response to her inquiries ran as follows:—"The King, thrown from his horse by a great throng of young warriors, shall be trodden under the horses' hoofs, but he shall not be buried: at the end of the battle, the Count, elevated in a chariot, shall be received, in the midst of deafening shouts, by the people of Paris." See how the juggling fiend palters with the truth, and breaks the flattering promise with which he cheats our ears! The prediction was accomplished, but not in its apparent sense. Philip Augustus was unhorsed, and trodden under foot, but he won the victory, and Count Ferrand entered Paris as a captive amid the applause with which its citizens greeted their victorious king.

The prophets were not always successful in their guesses at the future, and met with but

scant pity from those who had been their dupes. When John of England was wrestling with his barons, there lived (says Matthew Paris) in a province of York an hermit named Peter, who enjoyed a great reputation for wisdom, because he had often foretold coming events. Among other things which had been revealed to him in reference to King John by the spirit of prophecy, or rather, we may suppose, by his political foresight, he affirmed and proclaimed loudly, and before all those who were willing to hear him, that John would not be king at the next Feast of Ascension, and that on that day the crown of England would be transferred to another. The king being informed of the hermit's words sent for him, and asked him, "Shall I then die on the day you name? By what means shall I lose my throne?" The hermit contented himself with replying, "Know for certain that on the day which I have said you will no longer be king; and if I am convicted of a lie do with me what you will." Then said the king, "I take thee at thy word." And he gave him in charge to William d'Harcourt, who shut him up at Corfe; and the wretch waited, in good custody and loaded with irons, until the event should prove whether he had spoken the

truth. His prophecy soon spread into the remotest provinces, and all those who had any knowledge of it believed it as firmly as if it had been a message come from heaven. . . . But when the appointed day had passed by, and the king found himself safe and in health, he caused the hermit to be tied to a horse's tail, dragged through the streets of Wareham, and hung upon a gibbet with his son." The unhappy prophet's political studies had misled him, and the issue of the king's struggle with the barons was not what he had anticipated.

It was to a sorceress that Philip the Bold had recourse to ascertain the cause of the death of his eldest son Louis (A.D. 1276), whom Pierre de la Brosse pretended had been poisoned by the Queen.

"He (the king) was told that there was at Nivelles a sorceress who spoke marvellously concerning things past and to come, and attired herself in the garb of a *béguine*, and lived in holy fame and with much devoutness; and that there was at Laon another diviner, who was the vidam of the church of Laon, and knew the secrets of necromancy; and moreover, that on the borders of Germany resided a Saracen who was converted to the

Church, and was a great master of these difficult matters, and spoke much concerning things that were to come. 'By God!' cried the king, 'can none of these reveal the truth of this deed?' So he called his clerk, who was a man of great reserve and secrecy, and bade him go to Laon and Nivelles, and inquire as sagely as he could who might be considered the wisest counsellor in this difficulty. He found that the *béguine* was of greater repute than the others, and that more credence was given to her prophecies. Then he returned to the King of France, and related all he had heard. The king commanded Matthieu, abbé of St. Denis, in whom he had great confidence, and Pierre, bishop of Bayeux, who was cousin of Pierre de la Brosse on his wife's side, to repair to this *béguine*, and inquire of her diligently concerning his son's death." The first replies not proving satisfactory, Philip sent a second message to the sorceress, who rejoined that he ought not to listen to any calumnious accusations against his wife.

Froissart has a curious story respecting the pretended divinations. "At this time," (1360), he writes, "there was a minor-brother (*un frère mineur*), full of learning and understanding, in the city of Avignon, who

was named Brother Jean de la Rochetaillade, and him the Pope Innocent VI. caused to be imprisoned in the castle of Bagnolles, on account of the great marvels he proclaimed, as threatening chiefly the prelates and dignitaries of Holy Church, because of their luxury and excessive pride, and also the kingdom of France and the great lords of Christendom, because of their oppression of the common people. And the said Brother John was willing to prove all these sayings by the Apocalypse and the ancient books of the holy prophets, which were revealed to him by the grace of God, even as he said; and there were many willing to believe what he said if they should see take place aught that he had predicted. And he spake these things not as a prophet, but as knowing them through the ancient Scriptures and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which had given to him understanding to declare all these troubles, prophecies, and writings, that he might announce to all Christians the year and the time they would happen. And he made several books, well written and well grounded upon great and clerkly knowledge, the which was done in the year 1356. And in them are recorded many marvels as certain to happen between the

years 1356 and 1370, which were very hard to believe, until men had seen some of them fulfilled. And when they inquired of him respecting the wars of the French, he said that those they had seen were nought in comparison with what they would yet see, for there would be no peace nor settlement until the kingdom of France should be despoiled and ravaged in all its provinces and regions. And this we have seen happen, for the realm of France has been crushed, despoiled, and ravaged, and especially at the time fixed by the *frère-mineur*—the years '56, '57, and '59—in all its regions, so that none of its princes or gentlemen have durst face the men of low estate, collected from every country, succeeding one another, without any chieftain or noble leader."

It was about the same disturbed and tumultuous epoch that St. Bridget of Sweden (she died in 1373) published some predictions which the Council of Bâle approved, and declared worthy of exposition from the public theological chairs. Hence we may understand the general acceptance these oracles received from Christendom. They were translated into every language. In 1414 the Bishop of Norwich haranguing Charles VI. as ambassador

from the King of England, "alleged many and various authorities relating to the object of his mission, and even the revelations of holy Bridget, wherein was demonstrated how, by the prayers and orisons of Monseigneur St. Denis, the patron of the French, the princes of the warlike races of France and England might conclude a firm and lasting peace together by the ties of marriage." St. Bridget may have been an excellent prophetess, but assuredly she was a poor politician, or she would not have deemed the marriages of princes any effectual safeguards of national peace.

But the most interesting, and certainly the most curious of the mediæval predictions are those which affected the destinies of certain states. A French collector of Ana, to whom we have been much indebted, gives some remarkable illustrations of those in vogue concerning Byzantium. They prove how thoroughly the Greeks were persuaded at an early period of the limited duration of their empire, which, pressed on all sides by the Arabs, the Bulgarians, the Hungarians, the Russians, and finally by the Turks, was so often menaced in its existence.

"The Emperor Heraclius," according to Rigord, "had read in the stars, which he often

observed, that the Roman empire would be destroyed by the circumcised. But he was wrong in thinking that these words designated the Jews, for this prediction was accomplished, as we know, by the race of Agarians, named among us Saracens; and in effect soon afterwards they seized upon, and cruelly devastated, the empire of Heraclius, and Methodius declares that they will take possession of it once again at the end of the ages. Methodius the martyr has bequeathed us several predictions concerning them; they shall one day, at the end of the ages, that is to say, towards the time of Antichrist, make a second irruption, and cover the face of the world for eight octaves of years: the route they shall follow will be called the 'way of distress,' in memory of the sorrows and tribulations that shall then weigh upon the Christians. They shall slay the priests in the holy places, they shall lie with the women at the foot of the altar, they shall fasten their horses to the tombs of the saints, they shall turn their churches into stables, even close to the tomb of the holy martyrs, and all this shall happen as a punishment for the perversity of the Christians who shall then be living."*

* "Vie de Philippe Auguste" (Collection Guizot), t. xi.

According to Raoul de Dicet, an English writer whose Chronicle does not extend beyond 1199, the Golden Gate at Constantinople, through which entered the processions of triumphant generals, bore this prophecy : "When the fair king shall come from the West, I shall open of myself." It was not, however, through this gate that the Latins penetrated into the city in 1204, for the popular alarm at the predictions concerning it had caused it to be walled up a long time before. To-day the Turks apply to themselves the tradition which formerly affrighted the Greeks ; they firmly believe that one day the Golden Gate will open wide of its own accord to admit the Christians who, as they are persuaded, will finally reconquer the city.

According to an ancient prophecy which belonged to a very distant epoch, and was attributed to a holy man named Morenus, a people armed with arrows would seize the port and exterminate the Greeks.

These sinister predictions multiplied rapidly during the reign of the last of the Byzantine emperors. A fatal oracle of the sibyl of Erythrea was revived. A tale was noised abroad that there had been discovered in the convent of St. George, near the Arsenal, two

tablets written by Leo VI., containing the list of the emperors and patriarchs, a list in which were wanting the names of the last patriarch and the last emperor. It was related, too, that Michael Paleologus, tormented by his conscience, which reproached him with the crimes he had committed to gain the imperial power, and fearing he could not transmit it to his family, had consulted one day some diviners to know if his son would enjoy it peaceably after his death. The oracle replied, "*Mamaimi*," a word which signifies nothing in itself, but which was explained by the necromancer in this wise:—"The empire will be possessed by as many of your descendants as there are letters in this barbarous word. Then it shall be taken away from your posterity, and the city of Constantinople."

Such sinister predictions as these could hardly fail to weaken the energies and depress the spirit of the superstitious Greeks, while the Turks were equally encouraged and invigorated by the triumphant prophecies of Mahomet. With one further example we must content ourselves. The following passage is said to have been engraved upon the tomb of Constantine the Great:—"Many nations shall reunite upon the Black Sea and

upon the Continent: the Ismaelites shall be vanquished, and the weakened power of their nations shall sink into decay. The confederate peoples of Russia and its surrounding countries shall subjugate Ismael, shall occupy the seven hills and all which enriches them."

Guibert de Nogent, in his "Gesta Dei per Francos," relates the singular presentiments which terrified the Saracens some years before the first Crusade. In 1090 Robert the Old, Count of Flanders, having made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, "lodged at the house of a Saracen, a man of advanced years, of a sagacious mind and blameless life, as blameless at least as may be among Saracens! [Here breathes the spirit of Christian charity!] One day,—as I have learnt of those who accompanied the count, almost all the inhabitants of the city repaired in a crowd to the Temple of Solomon, and after having held there a council during the greater part of the day, returned to their homes towards the evening. When the count's host returned, Robert asked him wherefore the Saracens had remained so long a time in the council, and with what subjects they had occupied themselves during so protracted a conference. The old man replied:—'We have seen certain extraordinary signs in the divers motions of the stars, and we have drawn

from them, by positive conjectures, the assurance that men of the Christian condition shall come into this country and subjugate us after numerous combats and frequent victories. But we are still wholly uncertain whether these events will shortly be realized, or in some distant future. Nevertheless these celestial apparitions have taught us that the same men to whom it is given by the will of Heaven to vanquish our nation and expel us from the places of our birth, shall in the end be conquered by us, and driven by the right of war from the country they shall have usurped. On reperusing with care the oracles of our faith, scattered through a great number of volumes, we have found them perfectly in accord with these celestial signs, and they have attested to us in the most lucid language what the shimmering stars had announced to us by obscurer signs." Guibert died in 1121, and Jerusalem, which had been captured by the Crusaders in 1099, was retaken by the Saracens in October 1187.

Next to the destinies of nations, the dabblers in the lore of the future loved to exercise their prophetic powers upon the fate of illustrious personages. The death of Henry IV. — the hero of the snow-white

plume—originated a vast number of predictions, of which the famous Richelieu has recorded in his “Mémoires” the most important:—

“Five or six months before the king’s death information was sent from Germany to M. de Villeroy that the king would incur a very great hazard on the 14th of May, the day on which he was killed. . . From Flanders there was written on the 12th of May to Roger, the Queen’s goldsmith and valet-de-chambre, a letter, in which was deplored the death of the king that did not take place until the 14th. Many similar letters were written on the same date at Cologne, in other parts of Germany, at Brussels, Anvers, and Malines.

. . . On the same day, and at the very hour of the king’s death, about the fourth hour, the Provost of the farriers of Pithiviers, playing at bowls in Pithiviers, stopped suddenly, and after a moment’s thought said to his fellow-players, ‘*The king is on the point of being killed.*’ And as afterwards he was required to explain how he had known this news, the provost having been brought to Paris a prisoner, was one day found suspended and strangled in his prison. . . The same day that this deplorable accident happened a

young shepherdess, of the age of fourteen or fifteen years, named Simonne, a native of the village of Patay, having at nightfall driven home her flocks, inquired of her father who the king might be. Her father having answered that it was he who governed all the French, she exclaimed, 'Good God! I heard but just now a voice that told me he had been killed,' which was afterwards found to be true.

. . . Christianity teaching us," adds Riche-lieu, "to despise the superstitions which were held in great reverence among the Pagans, I do not relate these circumstances because I think they should be regarded upon other occasions; but the event having justified the truth of these presages, predictions, and extraordinary visions, we must confess there was in them much that was singular, of which we see the effects, but do not know the cause."

A Spanish friar and almanack-maker predicted King Henry's death in the clearest and most definite terms, and Peiresc, alarmed in spite of his better judgment, consulted with some of the king's friends, and had the Spanish almanack placed before his majesty. Henry's gallant spirit was not to be daunted by a friar's predictions; but the event occurred, and in the following year the Spaniard pub-

lished a new almanack, and loudly trumpeted his infallible skill. There can be little doubt but that he had some knowledge of the foul conspiracy which wrought the great monarch's death.

In troublous times superstition always reaps an abundant harvest of prophecies. Men's minds, anxious and perturbed, give utterance to their fears, their hopes, or guesses in dark oracular sayings, which are eagerly accepted by the vulgar, and which have often a sufficient resemblance to the truth to assume afterwards a prophetic character. So George Withers, himself a vaticinator as well as a poet, has expressed it:—

It may be on that darkness, which they find
 Within their hearts, a sudden light hath shined,
 Making reflections of SOME THINGS TO COME,
 Which have within them musings troublesome
 To their weak spirits ; or too intricate
 For them to put in order, and relate.
 They act as men in ecstasies have done—
 Striving their cloudy visions to declare ;
 And I, perhaps, among these may be one—
 That was let loose for service to be done.

The impetuous Knox, Scotland's fiery apostle of the Reformation, made many predictions which were singularly fulfilled, such as his announcements of the deaths of Kirkaldy of Grange and Thomas Maitland—his declaration

concerning Mary and Henry Darnley, that “as the king for the queen’s pleasure had gone to mass, the Lord, in His justice, would make her the instrument of his overthrow”—and his warning to the Regent Murray, not to go to Linlithgow, where, indeed, he was assassinated. But these were the conjectures of a sagacious mind, accustomed to the study of political events, and not the guesses of a would-be professor of supernatural lore.

Boundless indeed was the credulity of the Dark Ages! When the celebrated minister and favourite of John II., King of Castille, Alvaro de Luna, had been beheaded (July 5th, 1452), there arose a report, and it became (says a Spanish historian) very common, that Don Alvaro having consulted a certain astrologer upon his destiny, the latter had warned him that he should die at *Cadahalso*; which Alvaro understanding to signify a town of that name belonging to him in the kingdom of Toledo, he took good heed never to enter it. But *Cadahalso* also means a scaffold, and the astrologer’s prediction was accordingly fulfilled.

When James I., King of Scotland—who had excited the hatred of his turbulent nobles by the rigour of his rule—visited Perth in

1457, at a time that Robert Graham was secretly plotting against him, a Highland woman encountered him, endeavoured to prevent him from entering the town, and foretold that he would perish if he persisted in his resolution. James was moved by her words, for they coincided with a prophecy according to which a king would be slain in Scotland that year, but rising superior to superstitious fears, he addressed himself laughingly to one of his knights, who was pleasantly called *The King of Love*;—"Ah, well," he cried, "one of us two must die this year, for we are the only two kings in Scotland." Nevertheless, the event justified the prediction, and James was assassinated on the 20th of February. In this instance, too, it may be considered certain that the Highland woman had by some means obtained a knowledge of the conspiracy.

One of his successors, James III., assassinated in 1488, after the battle of Stirling, where the Homes and the Hepburns had totally defeated the royal army, had likewise been warned of his doom. An astrologer had told him, enigmatically, that there was a lion in Scotland who would be put to death by his whelps. The monarch, alarmed by the pre-

diction, attempted to rid himself of his brothers, who indeed had already conspired against him. He could but execute his project in part, however, and six years afterwards, when he marched against his rebellious subjects, then masters of the person of his son, above whose head streamed the great banner of Scotland, he lost all courage, and saved himself by fleeing before the *lion-whelp*.

Philip de Comines has several allusions in his "Memoirs" to the prophetic faculty enjoyed by Angelo Catho, who after having been in the service of Charles the Bold passed into that of Louis XI., and became his almoner, and Archbishop of Vienna. From his summary of that prelate's career we extract the following passage:—"While I was in the service of Louis XI. there happened the last battle of Nancy, in which the Duke of Burgundy was slain, on the eve of Twelfth Day, 1466; and at the hour that the said battle was delivered, and at the very instant that the said duke was killed, King Louis was hearing mass in the church of St. Martin at Tours, distant from Nancy ten long days' journey at the least, and at the said mass the almoner Archbishop of Vienna was officiating, who, in wishing the king the words of peace, said, 'Sire, God give

you peace and repose; you may have them if you will, *because it is finished*. Your enemy, the Duke of Burgundy, is dead, has this moment been killed, and his army discomfited.' And this hour was found to be that in which the Duke had really been slain. And the said king, hearing these words, was greatly amazed, and demanded of the archbishop if what he spoke was true, and how he knew it. To which the prelate replied, that he knew it even as he had known the other things which Our Lord had suffered him to predict to him and the late Duke of Burgundy; and without further speech the king made a vow to God and Saint Martin, that if the said news were true (as he found them to be shortly afterwards) he would cause the lattice work of Saint Martin's shrine, which was then of iron, to be made of silver." And this was one of the few vows which the astute Louis actually performed.

According to Brantôme,* the morning of the day on which the Constable de Bourbon was slain in the assault upon Rome (A.D. 1527), he harangued his soldiers in the following fashion:—

"My brothers, I see before me the very city respecting which, in time past, a wise astrologer predicted to me that, assuredly, at its capture my malignant star would be in the ascendant, and

* "Vie des Grands Capitaines," c. 28.

that I must die there. But I swear to you that this is the least of my anxieties; and I care but little to die, if in dying my body remains with a perpetual glory and renowned through all the world."

The premature and unexpected death of Henry II. (of France) gave rise to a host of rumours. It was remarked that his reign, which had commenced by a singular combat (the duel, *en champ clos*, of Jarnac and De la Châtaigneraie), had terminated in a like manner: and more, that this prince, who had formerly deprived one of his squires of an eye, perished by a similar wound.

"I have heard it related," says gossiping Brantôme, "and I hold it in good faith, that some years before he died (others say some days), an astrologer drew up his nativity, and caused it to be presented to him. In this he found it stated that he should die in a duel and single combat. The King then said to M. the Constable, 'See, my comrade, what death is foretold me.' 'Ah, sire,' replied the Constable, 'will you believe these rogues, who are nought but liars and cheats? Fling it in the fire.' 'Why, my friend?' said the king; 'they sometimes speak the truth. I do not fear more to die by this death than any other; but I shall love better to fall by the hand of

such an one, so that he be brave and valiant, and the glory of such a death endure.' And without taking any heed of what the Constable had said, he gave the prophecy in charge to M. de l'Aubespine, until he should demand it of him. Alas! neither he nor the Constable dreamed of the single combat in which the king perished, but of another duel—a duel to the death, and *en champ clos*—as solemn duels ought always to be fought."

The superstitious belief yielded to these diviners, necromancers, and astrologers reached an almost incredible height in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, previous to the great changes of the Lutheran Reformation. It is always the darkest, says the proverb, an hour before day; and certainly the shadows were terribly dense, and the clouds very thick and heavy before the sunlight of Truth broke upon benighted Christendom.

M. Valery relates that an astrologer had foretold to Cardinal Gozzadino, who died in 1623, and was a nephew of Gregory XV., that he should die in prison, or of the consequences of his imprisonment, and the cardinal, who was encumbered with debts, put great faith in the horoscope, but he boasted that he no longer feared it when his uncle became Pope. However, on the death of

Gregory, the sacred conclave having been assembled, the cardinal went from it sick of a malady, to which he speedily fell a victim at the age of fifty-one; and the superstitious quidnuncs of the age professed to see in this a fulfilment of the prophecy, because the conclave had been for the cardinal an actual prison, and the worst of all prisons! It is easy indeed to deceive those who thus willingly deceive themselves!

It is unnecessary to extend our examination further, or this chapter in the history of human folly might easily be written in many volumes. The end of the world—earthquakes, pestilences, sanguinary wars, revolutions moral and social—all have exercised the ingenuity of that large class who profit by the credulity and superstition of their fellows. Nor can we boast that the present generation is much wiser than its forefathers. Our familiar spirits are more absurd than the demons summoned by the mediæval necromancers, and instead of magicians we consult mediums; but the principle which lies at the bottom is simply that unwise and unhallowed desire to enter into a knowledge of the mysteries of Providence, which has manifested itself in all ages and in so many different shapes!

CHAPTER X.

WITCHCRAFT, SORCERY, AND VAUDERIE.

What wrath of gods, or wicked influence
 Of tears, conspiring wretched men t' afflict,
 Hath pour'd on earth this noyous pestilence,
 That mortal minds doth inwardly infect
 With love of blindness and of ignorance?—SPENSER.

Pescara.—The like was never read of.

Stephano.—In my judgment,
 To all that shall but hear it, 'twill appear
 A most impossible fable.

Pescara.—Troth, I'll tell you,
 And briefly as I can, by what degrees
 They fell into this madness.

MASSINGER, *Duke of Milan.*

SOME fuller account of the great moral epidemic of witchcraft seems advisable than the hints and occasional facts scattered through the foregoing pages.*

Witchcraft in Europe originated in the

* See Jules Garinet, "Histoire de la Magie en France;" Scott's "Demonology and Witchcraft;" Louandre, "La Sorcellerie;" Michelet, "Histoire de la Renaissance;" Wright's "Narratives of Sorcery and Magic;" Cotton Mather, Reginald Scott, Hutchison, "Causes Célèbres," &c.

superstitions that rapidly accreted round the simple faith of the Primitive Christians. The idea of demonology familiar to the Mahomedan nations of the East and the tribes of Northern Europe was engrafted upon Christianity. The principle of evil—Satan or Sathanas—was invested with a personality, and the “fallen stars of the morning” were transformed into inferior demons, resembling the fiends of the Teutonic Mythology in their attributes and character. The traditions of the classic world were also drawn upon for various features of grotesque horror. The existence of these new inhabitants of the Unseen once determined, it would soon be suggested that they might be subdued to the control of man, and here the sacrificial rites of Paganism came into play. The adventurous persons who had the courage to perform these rites took the place of the ancient enchanter, and being usually of the female sex, received the well-known name of witches (from wekkan, to prophesy;) those of the male sex were called wizards or warlocks. Unlike the ancient magicians, they meditated no good to their fellows, but loved to blight their fortunes, to destroy their properties, to injure their health, and darken their lives. There was a sanguinary

hue about mediæval witchcraft that savoured more of the fierce spirit of the North than of the grave and contemplative mind of the East ; and a degree of filth and obscenity that might in some measure be traced to the impurities of the old classic mysteries, but was mainly due to the uncleanness of the Gothic imagination. Take it as a whole, and no grosser or fouler creed ever bore witness to the deplorable credulity and natural depravity of mankind ! It swept over mediæval Europe like a pestilence, and blighted every fair and useful thing, contaminated the minds even of the purest, and seared the hearts even of the most tender.

According to this monstrous creed, the devil would contract with man and woman to allow them certain supernatural privileges in return for the sacrifice of their immortal souls. This devil, as conceived by the vulgar imagination, was a very nauseous and sensual personage, spiteful, cruel, easily overreached, playing a cunning game for small ends, and easily cowed by the sign of the Cross or the name of the Saviour. He usually appeared to his satellites in human shape, but wanted something of the completeness of humanity. His feet were generally deformed ; his tail was

an invariable appendage; his limbs were either shrunken or swollen; and he was either too black or too white for a perfect man. Sometimes he chose the form of a goat, sometimes of a toad. He would occasionally appear as a tree or a river, and he and his demons would also assume the guise of handsome young men, and skilfully concealing their tails, would marry fair young girls and beget children upon them. This portentous demon-birth was easily distinguishable; the devil's child shrieked incessantly, and never grew fat, though suckled by five nurses!

The devil's imps possessed much the same power of disguise as their master. Their bodies were composed of thin air, and they could pass from place to place, through stone and iron, with the utmost facility. They assumed what shape they pleased, and were called *incubi* when they were male, *succubi* when female. They increased and multiplied among themselves; but their numbers were also swelled by the souls of still-born children, wicked men, women who died in childbed, and persons slain in duels. So great was their number that they completely peopled the air, and you might be unfortunate enough at times to inhale or swallow one, in which

case you would suffer pangs like those of the colic. Wier (or Wierus), however, puts a limit to their number, and computes them as divided into seventy-two cohorts, each with its own captain, amounting in all to 7,405,926.*

In order to maintain a cordial feeling between himself and his subjects, and to receive the homage of new votaries, the devil occasionally held a general meeting or assembly, which, from its taking place on the Saturday, or immediately after midnight on the Friday, was termed "The Witches' Sabbath." It sometimes took place in one district, sometimes in another, and once every year was held among the Brocken, or other lofty mountains, as a rendezvous for all the fiends in Christendom.

Commonly they were summoned to meet in a forest, or near a lake, or where four roads arrived at a point of junction. Nothing ever grew where once this scene had occurred, as the glowing feet of the demons and the witches burnt out of the earth its fecundating principle. Witches and wizards who neglected to attend were lashed by demons with a rod of twisted serpents or scorpions. Those who did attend reached the place of meeting by an

* Wier, "De prestigiis Demonum."

aerial journey. Stripping themselves naked they anointed their bodies with an unguent* which rendered them invisible; strode across a stick or some similar article; muttered a charm, and flew away,—quitting their houses by the window or the chimney, the latter being the favourite mode of exit. Sometimes (in Italy and Spain,) the devil fetched his worshippers in the shape of a goat, and bore them to and from the place of meeting. On their return they entered the house by the keyhole. To avoid the suspicions of their relations or neighbours, the witches' places during their absence were supplied by demons who assumed their shapes, and pretending illness, laid a-bed, until the Sabbath was over.

The rites which were celebrated at the Witches' Sabbath partook of the most daring blasphemy and the filthiest obscenity, and it is marvellous how even the most prurient imagination could have given birth to such hideous conceptions. Satan having assumed the shape of a he-goat took his seat upon an elevated

* *Hecate, (to a witch).*—Here take this unbaptized brat,
(giving the dead body of a child.)

Boil it well; preserve the fat;
You know 'tis precious to transfer
Our 'nointed flesh into the air.

MIDDLETON, *The Witch of Edmonton,*

throne, and all present successively paid their homage to him, *osculantes in ano*. He then appointed one of the assembly to act as usher or chamberlain, and in company with him made a close examination of every witch and wizard to see if they bore his secret mark—usually a mole which was insensible of pain or injury. If any were not so distinguished, the devil marked them, bestowing at the same time a characteristic nickname. Then the whole assembly gave themselves up to the most riotous singing and dancing, until a newcomer arrived who required initiation. While this ceremony took place—while the neophyte was denying his salvation—undergoing a burlesque of the rite of baptism—spitting upon the Bible—and receiving the devil's embraces, the Evil One assuming either the male or female shape as the occasion required—all were silent; but when it was done they again broke into a wild Mœnad-like dance, and sang aloud,

Alegremos, Alegremos!
Que gente va tenemos!

Fatigued with this Bacchanal revel they all sat down, and proceeded to relate their exploits since their last meeting. To this incident of the Witches' Sabbath, the Elizabethan Mid-

dleton alludes in his play of *The Witch*.
Hecate says—

Now, I'll be meet with 'em ;
Seven of their young pigs I've bewitched already,
Of the last litter ;
Nine ducklings, thirteen goslings, and a hog
Fell lame last Sunday after evensong, too.

So in the tragedy of *Macbeth* the three
witches recount their doings :—

1st Witch.—Where hast thou been, sister ?

2nd Witch.—Killing swine.

3rd Witch.—Sister, where thou ?

1st Witch.—A sailor's wife had chesnuts in her lap,
And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd: *Give me,*
quoth I,

Aroint thee, witch, the rumpfed ronyon cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger :

But in a sieve I'll thither sail,

And, like a rat without a tail,

I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

2nd Witch.—I'll give a wind.

1st Witch.—Thou art kind.

3rd Witch.—And I another.

1st Witch.—I myself have all the other ;

And the very ports they blow,

All the quarters that they know

I' the shipman's cards.

I will drain him dry as hay :

Sleep shall, neither night nor day,

Hang upon his pent-house lid ;

He shall live a man forbid :

Weary sev'n nights, nine times nine,

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine :

Though his bark cannot be lost,

Yet it shall be tempest-toss'd.

Look what I have.

2nd Witch.—Show me, show me.

1st Witch.—Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wreck'd as homeward he did come.

When the tales were ended, those witches who had not done enough evil to persecute man, or had even so far forgotten themselves as to do some good, were chastised by Satan himself, who flogged them with a whip of scorpions or of thorns until they weltered in their own blood. "Several of the victims of the French courts in the latter part of the sixteenth century confessed that, having been unwilling or unable to fulfil the commands of the Evil One, when they appeared at the Sabbath he had beaten them in the most cruel manner. He took one woman, who had refused to bewitch her neighbour's daughter, and threatened to drown her in the Moselle. Others were plagued in their bodies, or by destruction of their property. Some were punished for their irregular attendance at the Sabbath; and one or two, for slighter offences were condemned to walk home from the Sabbath instead of being carried through the air. Those on the other hand who had exerted most their mischievous propensities were highly honoured at the Sabbath, and often

rewarded with gifts of money, &c. After this examination was passed, the demon distributed among his worshippers unguents, powders, and other articles for the perpetration of evil.

“It appears, also, that the witches were expected, at least once a year, to bring an offering to their master. This circumstance was certainly derived from the earlier popular superstitions; offerings to demons are mentioned frequently in the early German and Anglo-Saxon laws against Paganism. A French witch, executed in 1580, confessed that some of her companions offered a sheep or a heifer: and another, executed the following year, stated that animals of a black colour were most acceptable. A third, executed at Gerbeville in 1585, declared that no one was exempt from this offering, and that the poorer sort offered a hen or a chicken, and some even a lock of their hair, a little bird, or any trifle they could put their hands upon. Severe punishments followed the neglect of this ceremony. In many instances, according to the confessions of the witches, besides their direct worship of the devil, they were obliged to show their abhorrence of the faith they had deserted by a trampling on the cross, and

blaspheming the saints, and by other profanations." *

The next ceremony appears to have been the apportionment to the new witches or wizards of their respective imps, or familiars, whom they usually addressed as their "little masters," although able to control them at their pleasure. These imps received names of a popular character, and very much resembling each other in France, Germany, and in England. Thus, in the French trials for witchcraft we read of such names as Minette, Robin, Joly-bois, Maître Persil, Sante-Buisson, Verdelet, &c.; in Germany, Mash-leid (mischief), Ungluc (ill luck), Tzum-walt-vliegen (flying to the wood), Feder-wüsch (feather-washer), and the like; and in England, Peck-in-the-Crown, Pyewackett, Sack-and-Sugar, Grizzell Greedigut, Tetty, Robin, Tiffin, Hoppe, Puckle, Piggin, Smack, Pluc, Raise-the-wind, &c. These familiars assumed the form of animals, and are described as speaking with a voice resembling that of a man with his mouth in a jug.

A dance of toads was now offered for the amusement of the assembly. Thousands of these creatures,—whose unhappy fate it has

* Wright's "Narratives of Sorcery."

been to be invariably associated by man with the grim and laidly,—sprang out of the earth, and standing on their hind legs, danced to the devil's playing on the bagpipes or trumpet. As all these toads could speak they solicited the witches to reward them for their entertainment with the flesh of unchristened babes. The witches consented : the devil warned them to fulfil their promise, and stamping his foot, the toads immediately disappeared, and a banquet was spread for his guests. The dishes usually consisted of the most unclean and loathsome food, but choice viands and rare wines were provided for those who had shone pre-eminent in wickedness. It may be noted, however, that according to the testimony of the witches themselves, these repasts were decidedly unsatisfactory, from the unsubstantial character of the food, which left the guest famished with hunger and parched with thirst, however greedily he might have drank or eaten.

The tables cleared, the dancing was recommenced ; dancing of so violent a character that, at its conclusion, witch and warlock were exhausted with fatigue. Many preferred to amuse themselves with burlesquing the holy rite of baptism, standing sponsors for toads

whom they sprinkled with ditchwater; the devil making the sign of the cross backward, and the witches shouting out, "*In nomine Patricâ, Aragueaes Petrica, agora, agora! Valentia, jouando goure gaitis goustia!*"—which means, "In the name of Patrick, Petrick of Arragon, now, now, all our ills are ended!" The chanting of obscene rhymes; instrumental music performed upon a horse's skull or the trunk of an oak; dances of naked witches—the waltz dates its origin from the Witches' Sabbath!—and finally, a saturnalia of lust and debauchery which may not be described, completed the horrid circle of the night's amusements. The grey dawn of the morning broke upon the haunted shades of the Brocken, and the wild revel swept hurriedly away!

Such was the belief that extended over Christian Europe in the dark days of mediævalism! Such were the features of the confessions extorted by the rack and the thumb-screws from the wandering intellects of many a trembling victim! The main characteristics of witchcraft were the same in England as in France, Germany, or Italy, with the exception that the semi-grotesque, semi-horrible ideas of the Witches' Sabbath never attained any defi-

nitensness or completeness in England, nor was English sorcery so marked as the continental by romantic incidents, or the direct interference of the Evil One. The English witch was a vulgar and unimaginative person compared with that terrible incarnation of malignity so powerfully idealized by Michelet in "La Sorcière," and by Goethe in the "Walpurgisnacht" of "Faust."

Witchcraft prevailed in Europe as early as the days of Charlemagne, who fulminated an edict against it in the "Capitulaire de Baluze," and decreed the punishment of death against those who in any way evoked the devil, compounded love-philtres, afflicted either man with impotency or woman with barrenness, disturbed the atmosphere, stirred up tempests, destroyed the fruits of the earth, dried up the milk of the cow, or tormented their fellow-creatures with sores and diseases.* Prosecutions, or rather persecutions, for these imputed crimes, were frequent enough in the reigns of succeeding kings, and it was the dread accusation of sorcery—not perhaps altogether unfounded—which enabled Philip Augustus to effect the destruction of the order

* Jules Garinet, "Histoire de la Magie en France (Rois de la Seconde Race)."

of Knights Templars (A.D. 1307—1313). It was also the fatal weapon which the Archbishop of Bremen and other German potentates employed, under the patronage of Pope Gregory IX., against the Stedinger, a section of the Frieslanders, whose real crime was a devoted attachment to liberty of thought—to civil and religious freedom (A.D. 1234). The English raised the cry of “sorcery and witchcraft” against Joan of Arc, the virgin-martyr of France, and burned her at the stake in the market-place of Rouen, in a firm conviction that the monstrous charge was true. These examples fired that terrible blood-thirst which is the characteristic of a semi-civilized populace, and the Church of Rome soon stepped forward to turn the new folly to its advantage by associating the crime of heresy with that of witchcraft. True, every witch might not be a heretic, but every heretic *must* be a witch! Thus was Rome enabled to keep down the formidable religious sects, the vanguard of the Lutheran Reformation, that from time to time caught glimpses of God’s light, and sought to cherish in their hearts the blessed radiance. In 1459 a congregation of the Waldenses at Arras was crushed by means of this novel but cruel agency.

At this time—about the feast of All Saints, 1459—a Jacobin monk, named Pierre le Broussart, was inquisitor of the faith in the city of Arras.* By his orders a young woman named Demiselle, who obtained her living by prostitution in the city of Douai, was suddenly arrested at that place, and thrown into the bishop's prison at Arras. She was accused of *Vaulderie*, or sorcery. One Robinet de Vaulx, who had resided for some time as a hermit in the province of Burgundy, had recently been burnt for the crime of witchcraft, or *Vaulderie*, at Langres, whence the name had become popular. On his trial he had confessed that there were a great number of sorcerers in Artois, men and women, and had indicated, among others, this woman, Demiselle, and a man named Jehan Levite, who was known by the nickname of *Abbé de Peu de Sens* (the Abbot of Little-Sense). Upon this confession Pierre de Broussart caused Demiselle to be arrested, and she, being cruelly tortured, was induced to confess that she had been present at the *Vaulderie*, or assembly of sorcerers, and had seen Jehan Levite there. The unfortunate abbé was now in his turn arrested, subjected to a close

* Garinet, "Histoire de la Magie;" Monstrelet, "Chronicles."

examination, racked and tortured almost unto death, and in his agonies brought to acknowledge the truth of any assertions which his examiners put in his mouth. He confessed that he had been at the *Vaulderie*, and that he had seen there many people of all estates, whose names he gave.

It was not as yet considered advisable to strike at higher game, and the next arrests were confined to individuals of the poorer classes, a barber, three prostitutes, the mistress of the New Baths, and others. The usual machinery of the examination, the rack, and the confession, was applied with characteristic success to these victims also.

“At length a scaffold was raised in the public place of the city of Arras, and amid an immense concourse of people, all the prisoners were brought forth, each with a mitre on his head, on which the devil was painted in the form in which he had appeared at the *Vaulderie*. They were first exhorted by the inquisitors, and their confessions then read to them, in which they avowed that when they wished to go to the *Vaulderie*, they took a certain ointment which the devil had given them, rubbed a little wooden rod and the palms of their hands with it, and then placed

the rod between their legs, upon which they were suddenly carried through the air to the place of assembly. There they found tables spread, loaded with all sorts of meats and with wine, and a devil in the form of a goat, with the tail of an ape, and a human countenance. They first did oblation and homage to him, offering him their soul, or at least some part of their body, and then, as a mark of adoration, kissed him behind, holding burning torches in their hands. The *Abbé de Peu de Sens* was stated to have held the office of master of the ceremonies at these meetings, it being his duty to make the new-comers do their homage. After this they all trod on the cross, spat upon it, in despite of Jesus and the Holy Trinity, and performed other profane actions. They then fell to eating and drinking, and the meeting ended in a scene of indescribable debauchery, in which the demon took alternately the form of either sex. After a number of wicked actions, the devil preached to the assembly, and forbade them to go to church, or to hear mass, or to touch holy water, or perform any other Christian duty. The assembly was stated to have been most commonly held at a fountain in the wood of *Mofflaines*, about a league from Arras, but

sometimes in other places, and on some occasions they had gone thither on foot.”

After this public confession had been made sentence of death was recorded against them. The accused straightway broke out into loud lamentations, declared their innocence, and protested that they had been entrapped into a pretended confession by the promise their lives should be saved. Their supplications and their threats were equally impotent, and they were dragged to the stake—victims to a brutal and ignorant bigotry.

The object of this sudden persecution now became apparent. The depositions of the victims were employed as evidence of the pretended *Vaulderie* of many of the most influential burghers of Arras, these being men who were suspected of being attached to heretical principles. Only their wealth and influence enabled them to escape the scaffold. Some were heavily fined; some imprisoned; others escaped from the city, and a general consternation seized the inhabitants of Arras. The *Sieur de Beaufort*, however—one of the principal sufferers—had the courage to carry his cause before the Parliament of Paris (A.D. 1461), who heard his statements with patient impartiality, and finally declared the sentence

iniquitous, and set him at liberty. The other prisoners were then sent for by the Parliament, their cases examined into, and they themselves discharged from prison and released from the penalties in which they had been condemned. Nevertheless, the panic caused in the good city of Arras had probably answered the ends of those who set in motion the barbarous persecution.

The Roman pontiffs had not hitherto interfered directly in the crusade against heresy and witchcraft, though it had been superintended by the superior authorities of the Church; but in 1488, Pope Innocent VIII. fulminated his ecclesiastical thunders against these atrocious crimes—of whose rapid increase he was himself personally convinced—and thus by bringing into action the latent forces of superstition, credulity, and fanaticism, did his utmost to swell the evil which he attempted to extirpate. In his celebrated Bull, he summoned the European nations to the rescue of the Church of Christ upon earth, and detailed the horrors of which accounts had reached his ears; how that hundreds of men and women had intercourse with the infernal fiends; how by their sorceries they afflicted both man and beast—blighted the marriage-bed, destroyed

the young of women and the increase of cattle—blasted the corn on the ground, the grapes of the vineyard, the fruits of the trees, and the herbs of the field. In order to extirpate from off the face of the earth such desperate and iniquitous sinners against the laws of God and man, he appointed inquisitors in every country, armed with the apostolic power to convict and punish.

The result was the *witch mania*, which every evil passion contributed to swell—avarice, revenge, hate, jealousy, the lust of notoriety, the thirst of blood. Hundreds of innocent persons were accused of witchcraft, tortured cruelly, convicted on the wild ravings extorted from them in their extreme agony, and savagely burnt to death. Previously the secular magistracy had possessed the power of judgment, but now heresy and sorcery were linked together, and the secular power consequently placed in subjection to the ecclesiastical, as represented by the inquisitors. And now that the accusations grew so numerous, the want of some settled mode of procedure became evident—of some code of rules and regulations appertaining to the detection and conviction of the sorcerers. This was furnished at length by the notorious Sprenger, in his famous “*Malleus*

Maleficarum,"—in German the "Hexenhammer,"—in English the "Witch-Hammer,"—in French "Le Marteau des Sorcières." This ominous book, which poured out the blood of thousands, was originally published about 1489, and consisted of 625 pages quarto. The full title runs thus:—

MALLEUS MALEFICARUM:

In tres partes divisus, in quibus

I. Concurrentia ad Maleficia;

II. Maleficiorum effectus;

III. Remedia adversus maleficia.

Et modus denique procedendi ac puniendi maleficas abunde continetur, præcipue autem omnibus inquisitoribus et divini verbi concionatoribus utilis et necessarius.

Sprenger was assisted in its compilation by Johan Gremper and one Henry, and all three were papal inquisitors. Their labours have furnished posterity with a complete code of those popular superstitions in reference to witchcraft which were in vogue in the 15th century, and became the model and groundwork of the numerous treatises that afterwards appeared upon this sad phase of human folly. Michelet has analysed it with his usual keen sagacity, and we proceed to furnish the reader with the spirit of his observations.*

How was Sprenger, he says, led to the study

* Michelet, "Histoire de la Renaissance," Introduction, § xiii.

of these matters—Vauderie, or Vaulderie, and witchcraft? Sprenger himself relates that being at Rome, in the refectory where the monks were accustomed to entertain strangers, he saw there two from Bohemia; the one a young priest, the other his father. The father was sighing and praying for the success of his journey. Sprenger, in an emotion of charity, asked of him the cause of his uneasiness. “My son,” he said, “is possessed, and with great trouble and expense I have brought him to Rome, to the sepulchre of the saints.” “Where is this son?” said Sprenger. “By your side,” was the answer.

“At this reply,” writes the inquisitor, “I felt afraid and withdrew a step. I watched the young priest closely, and was astonished to see him eat with a modest air, and that he conversed with gentlemen. He told me that having spoken somewhat harshly to an old woman, she had flung upon him a spell; this spell was under a tree. Under which? The sorceress had refused to tell.” Sprenger—always out of charity—began to lead the bewitched from church to church and relic to relic. At each place, exorcism, furor, cries, contortions, wild gesticulations and extravagant outbreaks in every language, were repeated;

and all before the people, who followed them, admired, trembled. Devils, so common in Germany, were rare in Italy—a real curiosity. In a few days Rome could speak of nothing else; and the affair, which made a great noise, recommended, without doubt, the Dominican to the ecclesiastical authorities. He studied and compared all the “Mallei” and other manuscript manuals, until he became a leading spirit in the various anti-demoniacal proceedings. His “Malleus” was probably prepared in the twenty years intervening between this adventure and the great mission entrusted to him by Pope Innocent VIII. in 1484.

It was of the highest importance to select a skilful and adroit agent for the mission into Germany which the Pope contemplated. “Rome had already met with a rude check,” says Michelet, “in the Low Countries, which had made the Inquisition a thing of horror, and shut the gates of France against it.” He refers to the witch trials at Arras already described. “The Inquisition was spit at, reviled everywhere in France. The Parliament of France brusquely closed the door against it, and Rome through her awkwardness lost this opportunity of introducing into all the North a domination of terror.”

But in 1484 the time seemed ripe for another effort. The Inquisition, which in Spain had assumed the most formidable proportions, and even ruled the monarchy, appeared likely to become a conquering power, that would march of its own strength, penetrate everywhere, and subdue all. It had found in Germany, it is true, a formidable obstacle, in the jealous opposition of the ecclesiastical princes, who having their own tribunals, their own personal inquisition, were by no means eager to welcome that of Rome. But in time the situation of those princes, disturbed by the popular movements—the groundswell of the coming storm—rendered them more docile. All the country of the Rhine, all Suabia, and Eastern Germany as far as Saltzbourg, heaved and tossed as if with concealed volcanic fires. Frequent revolts of the peasantry broke out—jets of flame which revealed the subterranean commotion. The foreign Inquisition, more dreaded than the German, arrived at this moment most opportunely to terrify the country, and break down rebellious spirits, burning as sorcerers to-day those who on the morrow might be insurgents. What better arm to conquer a people could be invented! Thus was the storm turned aside upon the sorcerers,

as, in 1349, and on many other occasions, it had been directed upon the Jews.

A man, however, was required to sway the hour. "The Inquisitor who first—in the jealous courts of Mayence and Cologne, before the satirical citizens of Frankfort or Strasburg—erected his tribunal, must be a man of capacity. It was needful that his personal dexterity should balance against, should sometimes cause to be forgotten, the odium of his ministry. Rome, besides, is always on the alert to make a careful selection of instruments. Little regardful of measures, but much of men, she has thought, not without reason, that the success of her transactions depends upon the peculiar character of the agents despatched to each country. Was Sprenger such a man? Well, he was a German, a Dominican, sustained beforehand by that formidable order, by all its convents, all its schools. A worthy son of the schools was necessary, a good scholiast, a man strong upon 'the Summary,' firm upon Saint Thomas [Aquinas], always ready to hurl forth texts! Sprenger was all this, and more—he was a fool."

"It is often written," says Sprenger, "that *diabolus* comes from *dia*, two, and *bolus*, a bolus or pill, because swallowing at once the soul and

the body, of the two things the devil makes but one pill, one morsel. But," he continues, with all the gravity of a Sganarelle, "according to the Greek etymology, *diabolus* signifies *clausus ergastulo*; or better, *defluens*,—that is to say, *falling*, because he fell from heaven!"

Now for his derivation of the word *maléfice*: —"From *maleficiendo*, which signifies *malè de fide sentiendo* [thinking ill of the faith.]" Oh, wondrous etymology, and to what heights of grandeur ascending! If the *maléfice*, or witchcraft, is assimilated to *heterodox opinions*, every sorcerer is a heretic and every doubter becomes a sorcerer. We may burn as wizards everybody who believes erroneously. This indeed happened at Arras, and this it was the object of the Roman Church by slow degrees to establish everywhere.

But the solid and incontestable merit of Sprenger was, that he was a fool, and an intrepid one. He put forward hardily the least acceptable propositions. Any other person in his place would have attempted to elude, to attenuate, to diminish objections. Not so Sprenger. From the first page he exposes openly, and one by one, the natural and evident reasons why we should not believe in miracles wrought by the devil. Then he

calmly adds—*So much for heretical errors!* And without refuting these reasons, he copies contrary texts, Saint Thomas, the Bible, legends, canonists, and glossaries. He displays good sense in the first place, and then pulverizes it by the weight of authority.

Satisfied, he reseats himself, serene, and a conqueror: he appears to say,—And now then, what can you answer? Shall you have the audacity to make use of your reason? Go then, and doubt, if you can, that the devil amuses himself by interposing between husband and wife, when every day the church and the canons admit this motive of separation!

This certainly is unanswerable. No one dare whisper! Sprenger, at the head of his *Manual for Judges*, declaring the lightest doubt *heretical*, the judge is fettered; he feels that he ought not to swerve, that if unfortunately he had any temptation of doubt or humanity, he must begin by condemning and burning himself.

Everywhere we see the same methods adopted. At first reason, argument, good sense; then, in the foremost place and without any evasion, the negation of reason, argument, and good sense. Some one, for example, may

be tempted to assert that since love exists in the soul it is not at all necessary to suppose there must be any mysterious action of the devil. Is not this specious? No, says Sprenger, I make a distinction (*distinguo*). He who splits up wood is not the cause of its combustion, but only the indirect cause. Love is thus the wood-splitter (see Dionysius the Areopagite, Origen, and John of Damascus). Therefore love is but the indirect cause of—love.

Behold then, says Michelet, what it is to study! It was no feeble school which produced such a man as Sprenger. Cologne only, and Louvain, and Paris, possessed the machinery which could so mould the human brain. The school of Paris was strong; for the Latin of the kitchen what can we compare with the *Janotus* of Gargantua? But still stronger was Cologne—glorious Queen of the Shadows—which gave to Hutten the type of his *Obscuri Viri*, the obscure and the ignorant,—a race so prosperous and so prolific!

This solid Scholasticism, full of words, void of sense, the sworn foe of nature, as well as of reason, sits enthroned with a superb faith in its books and its robes, its ashes and its dust. Upon the table of its tribunal the “Summary”

lies on the one side, the "Directorium"* on the other.

"I would have wished," says Michelet, "to have seen face to face this admirable type of a judge, and the unfortunates who were brought before him. The creatures whom God might take in two different globes could not be more opposed, more foreign one to another, more destitute of a common language. The bel-dame, a tattered and ragged skeleton to the glaring eye of malice, thrice annealed in the fires of hell; the ill-omened solitary, a shepherd of the Black Forest or the lofty deserts of the Alps;—such are the savages presented to the stern gaze of the pedantic scholar, the judgment of the scholastic!

"They will not make him, however, sweat long in the bed of justice. Without torture he will confess everything. Torture *will* come, —but afterwards, for the complement and ornament of the *procès-verbal*. The criminals explain and acknowledge by order all their deeds of wickedness. The devil is the intimate friend of the peasant, and lies with the sorceress. She smiles at it—she triumphs in it. She visibly enjoys the terror of the assembly. He is her master and her lover.

* Two famous manuals of the scholastics.

Only he is a rude master and governs by dint of blows. Once filled and inflated with *him* she may desire in vain to cast out her terrible host, in vain to escape from him; wherever she flies she carries *him*! Like the sick man labouring with the *tænia*,* who feels it rising, descending, living with him, and in spite of him, she rocks in furious convulsion; it does but amuse him the more; she is his doll, his plaything; so that if she curses the world it is only because she is sorely cursed herself!"

A more vivid picture of the terrible sufferings of a woman reputed a witch, and, with a strange lust of power and notoriety, glorying in that repute, and half believing in her own demoniac possession, can hardly be imagined. Michelet continues to heighten the lights and shadows of his canvas:—

“Here is an old woman, a very foolish old woman, and there another hardly less so. Fools are they? No, neither the one nor the other of them. Far from it: they are subtle and astute—can hear the grass grow, can see through walls. And that which they can see the most distinctly is—the *monumental asses' ears* which overshadow the doctor's bonnet,—the fear which they inspire in his soul. For

* The *ver solitaire*, *tænia*, or tapeworm.

in spite of all his efforts he trembles. He himself declares that the priest, if he does not take heed, may, when conjuring the demon, decide him at once to change his location, and pass into the priest, finding it more pleasant to lodge in a body consecrated to God. Who knows if these simple devils of peasants and sorcerers may not have the ambition to inhabit an inquisitor?”

But despite those absurdities which an intellectual age like the present can criticize so keenly—despite those superstitions which are at once so ridiculous and so sanguinary—the *Malleus* became the recognised code of witchcraft throughout Christian Europe, and provoked the slaughter of thousands of innocent victims. Men and women were burnt at the stake without pity, on indications of sorcery which the *Malleus* recognised as satisfactory. A man could easily rid himself of an obnoxious neighbour in those dark days of shame and cruelty! The infection spread from Germany into France, and thence into Scotland and England, where the notorious Matthew Hopkins obtained an infamous celebrity as a witch-finder. James I. studied the “science” with peculiar zest, and his “Treatise on Demonologie” demonstrates how

thoroughly he understood the signs by which a sorcerer might be detected. He thus enforces the use of the ordeal of cold water, and the discovery of the devil's mark that branded witch or wizard as eternally his:—"Two good helps," he says, "may be used: the one is the finding of their mark, and the trying the insensibleness thereof; the other is their floating on the water,—for, as in a secret murder, if the dead carcass be at any time thereafter handled by the murderer, it will gush out of blood, as if the blood were crying to Heaven for revenge of the murderer (God having appointed that secret supernatural sign for trial of that secret unnatural crime), so that it appears that God hath appointed (for a supernatural sign of the monstrous impiety of witches) that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosom that have shaken off them the sacred water of baptism and wilfully refused the benefit thereof; no, not so much as their eyes are able to shed tears (threaten and torture them as you please), while first they repent (God not permitting them to dissemble their obstinacy in so horrible a crime); albeit the womenkind especially be able otherwise to shed tears at every light occasion when they will, yea, although it were dissembling like the crocodiles."

Matthew Hopkins, the witch-finder, whose name in the annals of witchcraft must rank as second only to those of Sprenger and James I., was a native of Essex, and was distinguished by the number of so-called witches he pretended to detect, and brought to the stake. His doings are alluded to by Butler in his "Hudibras :"—

Hath not this present Parliament
 A lieger to the Devil sent,
 Fully empower'd to treat about
 Finding revolted witches out ?
 And has he not within a year
 Hanged threescore of them in one shire ?
 Some only for not being drown'd,
 And some for sitting above ground
 Whole days and nights upon their breeches,
 And feeling pain were hung for witches ;
 And some for putting knavish tricks
 Upon green geese and turkey chicks ;
 Or pigs that suddenly deceased
 Of griefs unnatural, as he guessed ;
 Who proved himself at length a witch,
 And made a rod for his own breech.

The swimming, or rather *drowning ordeal*, was tried in this fashion :—"The hands and feet of the suspected persons were tied together crosswise, the thumb of the right hand to the toe of the left foot, and *vice versa*. They were then wrapped up in a large sheet or blanket, and laid upon their backs in a pond or river. If they sank, their friends and relatives had the poor consolation of knowing

they were innocent; but there was an end of them: if they floated, which when laid carefully on the water was generally the case, there was also an end of them; for they were deemed guilty of witchcraft, and burned accordingly." Another test was to make them repeat the *Credo* or *Lord's Prayer*, which it was thought no witch could do correctly.

From the year 1652 these iniquitous witch-trials began to decrease in number, but they were still frequent enough to excite the horror of all right-thinking and compassionate minds. The pretences on which men and women—generally women, and old women—were condemned to a death of agony were terribly ridiculous. Ugliness was a fatal misfortune; but a wart, a mole, a club-foot, a sour regard, were sufficient to doom their unhappy possessors to the stake. In the whole history of magic there is no chapter so dark, so painful, so foul a blot on our human nature as this! Fortunately, about the beginning of the eighteenth century the light broke in upon the darkness,—growing clearer and fuller and more convincing until the middle of the century, when witchcraft ceased to command the credence of any but the lowest and most ignorant. Occasionally

we are startled, even now, by some sudden evidence of the lingering of the old belief in out-of-the-way hamlets and remote rural villages, but nothing is more difficult to extirpate than a tradition of cruelty, or to destroy than the rag of an ancient superstition. To all intents and purposes, however, witchcraft is a thing of the past, and equally exploded are those bright fancies and glittering delusions of the alchymist and the necromancer—those morning dreams of science—those extravagances of fable-land and fairy-land—which once amused and occupied the gravest philosophers. The shadows are fading far away—the sun shines broadly upon hill and valley, river and lea—and the increasing glory of a richer and purer knowledge is rapidly gathering round the happy earth. So may the light dissipate mist and cloud and vapour, until the coming of that Eternal Day when to man shall be revealed Heaven's most sacred mysteries, and he shall learn the height and breadth and depth of the celestial wisdom !*

* While these volumes were passing through the press, attention was called by the *Times* to a recent case of witchcraft in Essex. We condense the remarks of the "leading Journal" :—

" In the month of August, 1863, a poor old man of four-

score was thrown into a mill-stream in the parish of Sible Hedingham, and 'swum' for a wizard. This inhuman treatment proved his death. He survived the violence for a time, but about a month afterwards he expired from the brutality to which he had been subjected. In March, 1864, the two ringleaders in this outrage were tried at Chelmsford, found guilty, and sentenced to six months' hard labour. Without entering into the evidence too minutely, we may say that the case was really as genuine a case of witchcraft as was ever reported, and that an attentive consideration of its particulars will enable us to comprehend the belief of our ancestors in this diabolical art.

"The man credited in the present instance with these supernatural powers was singularly fitted for the character. He was eighty years of age, and, though deaf and dumb, was in complete possession of his reasoning faculties. He had resided in the county of Essex for some twenty years, and for nearly half that time in the parish of Sible Hedingham. He was not, however, a native of that place, or, indeed, of this country. It was supposed that he was a Frenchman, and this conjecture was supported by certain peculiarities of his habit and manners. He was of an excitable disposition, and accustomed to express his will or his meaning by singular methods of gesticulation, which seldom, however, failed of being intelligible. Altogether, and notwithstanding the inferences suggested by his tragical end, he appears to have been by no means oppressed or friendless. The better sort of people looked kindly on his infirmities and eccentricities, while those less susceptible of such feelings had motives of their own for leaving him unmolested. In point of fact, they believed him to be a wizard, and to have the power of punishing by his spells those who might give him offence. Whether he himself advanced these pretensions, or whether he merely acquiesced in a popular impression which conduced to his security, was not clearly shown; but if he did not claim to be a sorcerer, he at least professed to be a fortune-teller, and derived his chief means of subsistence from the sale of his supernatural knowledge. One evening, then, being a person of this character and profession, he went to the house of a

certain Emma Smith, near Heddingham, and asked to be allowed to sleep on the premises. The woman refused permission, on which Old Dummev, as he was called, grew very angry, and made signs which were known to indicate his displeasure, if not to threaten harm. They were interpreted in the latter sense. Emma Smith believed herself bewitched, and at once fell sick to such purpose that no medical aid could relieve her. She was dreadfully low and nervous, her whole system was disordered by the terror under which she lay, and her sufferings were increased by the conviction that Dummev alone, who had put the spell upon her, could rescue her from its effects. It was in this condition of mind and body that she met the old man one night at a public house. She begged and entreated him to cure her. She told him that if he would but come to her house and sleep there, and take the spell off, she would not only treat him well, but would give him three sovereigns. To these prayers and offers he was deaf, answering by a sign which was variously interpreted as meaning either that he would sooner have his throat cut than do so, or that he might get his throat cut if he did. Then, at last, when no bribes or petitions had any effect, the woman fell upon him in her frenzy, and, being aided or encouraged by a crowd assembled on the spot, especially by the man who shares her punishment, she got him to the water and 'swam' him. That was the history of this poor old creature's death.

"It seems, however, placed beyond the possibility of doubt that the woman Smith did most sincerely believe that she was suffering from his diabolical spells. Her whole conduct from first to last attests the force and sincerity of her conviction. She made her submission to her enemy, she implored him to reverse his charms, she offered him a considerable sum of money if he would relent, and promised him his own way in the matter about which they had originally disagreed. When all was of no use, and when in her exasperation she flew out upon him, her words explained the passion to which she was yielding. 'You old devil,' she cried, 'you served me out, and now I'll serve you out.' Now, we have only to say that if this old conjuror did really intend to frighten this woman

into illness, and did wilfully refuse to go through the forms which she would have interpreted as releasing her—for both of which suppositions there has been some warrant—we have as complete, veritable, and real a case of witchcraft as can be found in any treatise on that wonderful subject. There is only one difference between this tale and the best authenticated tales of antiquity. That difference is in the agency to be imputed. In the days of King James I., and, indeed, a good deal later, it would have been universally believed not only that Old Dummy caused the sickness of Emma Smith, but that he did so by virtue of powers derived from the Devil. In the present day we must also believe, from the evidence before us, that the woman's illness arose from the old man's doings, or, at least, from the interpretation which she put upon them, but we have no need to assume the agency of the Devil in explaining the result. Perhaps Old Dummy did actually intend to exercise the tyranny of a strong mind over a weak one; perhaps that intent existed only in the belief of the victim; but in either case we can now understand what old writers tell us. We can see that people may really have been rendered infirm and wretched by believing themselves to lie under charms, and there is no difficulty in presuming that men and women might have been found wicked enough to pretend to these powers for purposes of evil, and perhaps even to believe that they had actually acquired them. Yet in these admissions we get the whole theory and practice of witchcraft. The thing was a terrible reality, though it did not imply the work of the Devil."

CHAPTER XI.

MESMER, AND ANIMAL MAGNETISM.*

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.—SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Marie de Concini was asked by what magic she had acquired so great an influence over her mistress, the Queen of France, she replied, "By the power of a strong mind over a weak one." And the true principle of the curative properties of what is called magnetism appears to lie in a similar species of magic—in the control which the firm will exercises over an excitable and nervous imagination. Upon this irrefragable basis the ingenuity of the quack and the credulity of the enthusiast have built up a wonderful fabric of imposture; but the thoughtful observer will not confuse the false with the true—speculation with fact

* Winter's "History of Animal Magnetism;" "Foreign Review," vol. v. 1830; Ennemoser's "History of Magic;" "Mesmer," by M. Bersot, &c.

—or refuse to believe *all* he cannot understand. There is much that is still uncertain and unintelligible in the delicate relations which exist between mind and matter; and how far the power of imagination and the force of will may be extended has not been decided with any degree of exactness. It is not impossible that to some temperaments may be given a capability of influencing—interpenetrating, as it were—or sympathizing with other temperaments, so as to produce those psychical phenomena which we are daily witnessing, but which, since we cannot expound their causes, we put aside or ridicule. The common realities of to-day were the wonders of yesterday, and there may come a time when the mental delusions of the present may be more clearly interpreted, and the theory of magnetism or mesmerism be placed upon a sound foundation, and reduced to fixed and intelligible principles. The miraculous cures effected by Jesus and his disciples were probably the results of natural laws, which the Divine intellect alone could comprehend and explain; and the influence of the will over the imagination, and the power of an absorbing faith, were undoubtedly among the agencies by which the Saviour wrought His wonders. About every science

springs the overgrowth of folly, error, and quackery : let us learn to distinguish between the parasites and the noble tree they endeavour to conceal !

Paracelsus,—of whom Liebig has justly said, that “ he had the instinct, but not the full consciousness of the right path,”—was the first promulgator of the magnetic theory of medicine. He taught that there existed a sympathy or attraction between man and the stars, which nourished his senses and his intellect ; and a similar sympathy or attraction between man and the grosser elements, which renovated his flesh and blood. He taught, moreover, that the magnetic force differed according to sex. It was Paracelsus who, as we have shown in a preceding chapter, discovered the secret and miraculous properties of the magnet, which, as he asserted, cured all hysterical and epileptic affections. Diseases could be transferred from the human body to the earth by a skilful application of the magnet. “ If a person suffer,” he wrote, “ from disease, either local or general, experiment with the following remedy. Take a magnet impregnated with mummy,* and

* According to Paracelsus there were six kinds of mummies Of these the Egyptian, Arabian, Libyan, and Pisasphaltos

combined with rich earth. In this earth sow some seeds that have a likeness to, or homogeneity with, the disease; then let this earth, well sifted and mixed with mummy, be laid in an earthen vessel; and let the seeds committed to it be watered daily with a lotion in which the diseased limb or body has been washed. Thus will the disease be transplanted from the human body to the seeds which are in the earth. Having done this, transplant the seeds from the earthen vessel to the ground, and wait till they begin to flourish into herbs. As they increase, the disease will diminish; and when they have reached their mature growth, will altogether disappear."

The physician Van Helmont was also a firm believer in the efficacy of mineral

differed only in the substances by which the dead body was preserved. The fifth was made from criminals who had been hanged, their corpses exuding "a gentle siccation" that expunged the "watery humour" without destroying the "oil and spiritual," and being cherished by the heavenly luminaries, and strengthened continually by the affluence and impulses of the celestial spirits, might properly be called by "the name of constellated or celestiall mummie." The sixth kind of mummy was composed—but in what manner Paracelsus does not explain—of corpuscles, or spiritual effluences from the frame of the living man. See the *Essay on the Magnet* in the "Opera Paracelsi," (Archidoxarum, lib. iv. &c.); "Etudes Biographiques," by Le Fevre Deumier; and Parkhurst's "Medicina Diastastica," ed. London, 1653.

magnetism. "Magnetism," he says, "is an unknown property of a heavenly nature; very much resembling the influence of the stars, and not at all restrained by any boundaries of space. He, therefore, who avails himself of a magnetic means undertakes a business pleasing to God, which has in both worlds, by one order and in equal degree, the same conductor." He expounded with elaborate lucidity the sympathy that existed between different individuals, and which after all, resolves into the well-known influence of a firm will over a weak imagination.

"The will," he says, "is the first of all powers. For through the will of the Creator all things were made and put in motion. In man the will is the fundamental cause of his movements. The will is the property of all spiritual beings, and exhibits itself in them the more actively the more they are free from controlling matter; the strength of their activity demonstrates the purity of spirits.

"The infinite power of the will in the Creator of all things is also firmly fixed in the created being, and is more or less obstructed by matter. The ideas thus enveloped in physical nature operate also naturally—that is, physically—upon the living creature through

the channel of the life-activity. They operate to a greater or less extent, according to the will of the operator, and their activity may be repelled or neutralized by the will of the persons operated upon. A magician will thus operate more strongly on a feeble nature than on a strong one, because there is a limit to the power of operating through the will, and others can oppose it more or less successfully, according to their mental strength."

Among other famous apostles of the magnetic creed were *John Reuchlin*, who believed in the curative properties of the Bible, and singularly blended religion and medicine; *Trithemius*, abbot of Sponheim; and *Cornelius Agrippa*, whose career has already been illustrated in these pages. In England these doctrines were learnedly expounded by *Robert Fludd* (*Robertus à Fluctibus*), in his "*Philosophia Mosaica*," where he points out the resemblance between man and the outer world. Man, like the earth, has his poles; is divided by his perpendicular line into two equal parts; wherefore he says man should place himself with his face to the east and his back to the west. He was a great believer in the Sympathetic Salve (see p. 286), but cautiously adopted, in addition, the ordinary curative methods of

washing, strapping, cleansing, &c. To the former, however, instead of the latter, Fludd persisted in ascribing the cures which he effected. An attack was made upon his salve by one Foster, a priest, who did not ridicule its absurdity, but denounced its diabolical character. His counterblast was entitled, "Hyplocrisma Spongus; or, A Sponge to wipe away the Weapon-Salve." Fludd was at no loss for a reply, and poured out the vials of his wrath upon the audacious Foster in a pamphlet entitled "The Squeezing of Parson Foster's Sponge; wherein the Sponge-Bearer's immodest carriage and behaviour towards his brethren is detected; the bitter flames of his slanderous reports are, by the sharp vinegar of truth, corrected and quite extinguished; and lastly, the virtuous validity of his Sponge in wiping away the Weapon-Salve is crushed out and clean abolished."

An enthusiastic believer in the doctrine of sympathies was the imaginative and credulous Sir Kenelm Digby, who fed his beautiful wife Venetia upon vipers' flesh to preserve her loveliness. He implicitly credited the glittering dreams which amused the imagination of the Dwellers on the Threshold of science. In conjunction with Descartes he mused over the

long-desired *elixir vitæ*; though the French philosopher was content to acknowledge that he could only prolong human life to a great extent, and not secure a complete protection against death. Sir Kenelm professed to have received from a Carmelite friar, who himself had obtained it in Persia or Armenia, the recipe of a *Powder of Sympathy*, which healed wounds if applied to the instruments that had caused those wounds. A curious anecdote in illustration of its efficacy is told by the knight. James Howell, the well-known author of the "Epistolæ Ho-Elianæ," having interfered between two of his friends, when engaged in a duel, received a couple of severe cuts on his hand. The dismayed combatants immediately flung down their swords, and embracing him, bound up his hand with a garter. They then conveyed him home, where he was attended by a surgeon. Four or five days afterwards, finding that the wounds had a very dangerous aspect, he repaired to Sir Kenelm, and solicited him to make trial of his sympathetic powder.

Sir Kenelm, having consented, asked him for any article that had his blood upon it. Howell gave him the garter that had first been used as a bandage. This was put into a basin of water in which the knight had

privately dissolved a handful of powder of vitriol.

“As soon as the bloody garter was brought me,” says Sir Kenelm, “I put it in the basin, observing, in the interim, what Mr. Howell did, who stood talking with a gentleman in a corner of my chamber, not regarding at all what I was doing. He started suddenly, as if he had found some alteration in himself. I asked him what he ailed? ‘I know not what ails me, but I find that I feel no more pain. Methinks that a pleasing kind of freshness, as it were a wet cold napkin, did spread over my hand, which hath taken away the inflammation that tormented me more.’ I replied, ‘Since, then, you feel already so much good of my medicament, I advise you to cast away all your plaisters; only keep the wound clean, and in a moderate temper betwixt heat and cold.’ This was presently reported to the Duke of Buckingham, and, a little after to the king, who were both very curious to know the circumstances of the business; which was, that after dinner I took the garter out of the water, and put it to dry before a great fire. It was scarce dry before Mr. Howell’s servant came running, and saying that his master felt as much burning as ever he had done, if not more; for the heat

was such as if his hand were betwixt coals of fire. I answered that, although that had happened at present, yet he should find ease in a short time; for I knew the reason of this new accident, and would provide accordingly; for his master should be free from that inflammation, it might be before he could possibly return to him. But in case he found no ease, I wished him to come presently back again; if not, he might forbear coming. Thereupon he went, and at the instant I did put the garter again into the water; thereupon he found his master without any pain at all. To be brief, there was no sense of pain afterwards; but within five or six days the wounds were cicatrized and entirely healed."

A contemporary of Sir Kenelm's was the celebrated *Valentine Greatrakes*,—the son of an Irish gentleman of good property, and himself of a cultivated mind and refined imagination. Falling at a comparatively early age into a species of religious hypochondria, he persuaded himself that God had gifted him with the power of curing certain diseases—especially those of a nervous or hysterical character. He began to practise as a Heaven-sent physician, and his patients having as much faith in his mission as he had, speedily recovered, so that

some surprising cures were actually effected. His success was bruited far and wide, and elevated him to the position of a prophet or an apostle, so that persons came from all parts of Ireland, and even from England, almost as much to worship as to experience his healing powers. In 1666 he removed to London, and performed some of his miracles before the court of Charles II., but the witty satellites of the merry monarch were too sceptical for Valentine Greatrakes, and he withdrew in dudgeon.

He was the true founder of the mesmeric doctrine, for his cures were performed by motions of the hand only. He laid his hand on the part affected, and so moved the disease downwards. Rust, Bishop of Dromore, says : —“ I can as an eye-witness assert that Greatrakes cured dizziness, very bad diseases of the eye and ears, old ulcers, goître, epilepsy, glandular swellings, scirrhus indurations, and cancerous swellings. I have seen swellings disperse in five days that were many years old, but I do not believe by supernatural means ; nor did his practice exhibit anything sacred. The cure was sometimes very protracted, and the diseases only gave way through repeated exertions ; some altogether resisted his endeavours.”

Maxwell, a Scotch physician, was also a disciple of Paracelsus, and preached the mesmeric theory so plainly that his language may often be mistaken for that of Mesmer himself. And for his "spirit" and "spirituality" read "imagination," and you can easily understand the success of the mesmerizers in certain cases. "If thou canst avail thyself of this *spirit*, and accumulate it in particular bodies, thou wilt gain no trivial advantage from it, for therein consists all the *mystery of magic*." Undoubtedly: in the most powerful appeals to the imagination, in giving an appearance of reality to the unreal, in producing vivid effects by the excitement of the nerves and senses,—in this consists the "mystery of magic;" and the mystery of magnetism or mesmerism is to be found in the same causes.

One of the most celebrated of the magnetic philosophers was *Father Kircher*, who while repudiating all other forms of magic and necromancy, became a devout believer in the sovereign virtues of the magnet. There is much that is sound and valuable in his great work—"Athanasii Kircheri Magnes, sive De Arte Magnetica, opus tripartitum"—published at Cologne in 1643—but there is also a vast amount of absurdity, error, and prejudice.

Notwithstanding his scepticism in many things, he would swallow the most exaggerated stories. He is very learned on the attraction and repulsion of plants and animals, and believes even in the sympathetic qualities of minerals. He is of opinion that the sting or bite of a venomous creature can best be cured by an application of a part of the very animal from which the mischief has proceeded. Thus the bite of a viper is cured by eating viper's flesh. The scorpion cures the bite of the scorpion, as Kircher had himself witnessed. The great poisonous toad cures the plague-boil, being previously dried in the sun, and then laid upon it. Hence it follows that the true antidote of hydrophobia is in the animal whose bite produces the disease, which Lemnius also asserts ("Levinus Lemnius, de Occultis Naturæ Miraculis"), who recommends the patient to take some hairs ("a hair of the dog that bit you!"), or to eat some part of the same animal. Some years ago a Swiss physician tried it, and especially advised as a remedy a draught of the mad dog's blood. Such are the follies of the wise!

Our list of Paracelsians or magnetizers is not yet complete. Without reference to Cardanus or Baptista Porta, to the Austrian

Gassner—who performed many surprising cures—to Oswald, Croll, Dorn, Michael Toxites, Heinrich Kunnath, or the spiritual enthusiast, Swedenborg, we must devote a line to *Tenzel Wirdig*.

Wirdig was a professor of Rastock, who published in 1673 a book which produced a great sensation—"Tenzelius Wirdig, Nova Medicina Spirituum." In his wild extravagant pages the magnetic theory ran riot. He distinguished clearly the attraction and repulsion existing between the souls of all the bodies on earth and the stars in heaven. "Out of this relationship of sympathy and antipathy," he wrote, "arises a constant movement in the whole world, and in all its parts, and an uninterrupted communion between heaven and earth, which produces universal harmony. The stars, whose emanations consist merely of fire and spirits, have an undoubted influence on earthly bodies; and their influence on man demonstrates itself by life, motion, and warmth, those things without which he cannot live. The influence of the stars is strongest at birth. The new-born child inhales this influence, and on his first breath his whole constitution frequently depends; nay, even his whole life."*

* Quoted by Ennemoser, "History of Magic," ii. 271.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century the theory of magnetic-medicine was taken up by *Father Hehl*, a learned Jesuit, and a professor of astronomy at the University of Vienna. He obtained a considerable reputation by the surprising cures he effected; applying peculiarly-shaped steel-plates to those parts of the naked body which were afflicted with disease. In the year 1774 he initiated Anthony Mesmer into his system. But Mesmer was a man of fervent imagination and original mind, and soon developed for himself a new curative theory, which is known as MESMERISM, or ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

Anthony Mesmer was born at Mersburg, in Swabia, in May, 1734, of a respectable family. Having received a careful education, and displaying mental powers beyond the average, he was sent to study medicine at the University of Vienna, where he took his degrees in 1766. The peculiar bias of his intellect displayed itself in the thesis he delivered on receiving his diploma. He chose for its subject the influence of the planets on the human body, reviving the astral medicine of the early physicians, and protesting that "the sun, moon, and fixed stars mutually affect each other in their orbits; that they

cause and direct in our earth a flux and reflux not only in the sea, but in the atmosphere; and that they similarly influence all organized bodies through the medium of a subtle and mobile fluid, which pervades the universe, and associates all things together in mutual harmony and combination." This power operated mainly on the nervous system, and produced two states, which he called *intension* and *remission*. To these two states he attributed the periodicity of certain diseases.

Having met with Father Hehl, and been inoculated with his theories, Mesmer proceeded to experimentalize with the metallic plates, and was enabled by the excessive and imaginative faith of his patients to effect some wonderful cures. Of these, Father Hehl as the discoverer, claimed the credit. Mesmer, arrogant and haughty, was by no means inclined to yield it, and a wordy war (*rixa verborum*) broke out between the two philosophers, which afforded much amusement to calmer and less extravagant minds. But Mesmer soon soared beyond the dull conceptions of Father Hehl, and published to the world the remarkable system with which his name will always be associated.

Among his patients was a young lady named Æsterline, who suffered under a con-

vulsive disease. Its accesses were periodical, and known by a violent rush of blood to the head, which produced delirium, and was followed by syncope. These symptoms, says Mackay, he soon succeeded in reducing under his system of planetary influence, and imagined he could foretell the periods of intension and remission. Having thus satisfied himself respecting the origin of the disease, he became convinced that he could effect a decided cure if he could ascertain beyond doubt, what he had long believed, that there existed between the bodies which compose our globe an action equally reciprocal and similar to that of the heavenly bodies, by means of which he could artificially imitate the periodical returns of the flux and reflux already mentioned. He soon convinced himself that this action did exist. When experimenting with the metallic plates of Father Hehl, he thought their efficacy depended on their form; but he afterwards found that he could produce the same effects without using them at all, merely by passing his hands downwards towards the feet of the patient, even when at a considerable distance.

Thus was shadowed out the grand theory of Mesmerism! Its author, elate with pride and

satisfaction, immediately communicated it to the scientific societies of Europe, but alas for the obtuseness of these conservative and bigoted communities!—only the Academy of Sciences deigned to forward a reply, and that reply was by no means in accordance with the philosopher's wishes. Mesmer, however, reflected that no great truth had ever won its way to the acceptance of the world until after a long and desperate struggle with prejudice and ignorance, and continued to promulgate his discoveries wherever he could obtain an audience. He declared that the universe was full of the magnetic fluid; that it permeated every human body, and that one individual could communicate his excess or superabundance of it to another by an exertion of the will. He declared that it was almost identical with the electric fluid, and might be propagated in the same way, through the agency of intermediate bodies. He had charged jars with it in the same way as is done with electricity. "Paper," he said, "bread, silk, wool, leather, glass, steel, dogs, men, all might be rendered magnetic to such a degree that they should produce the same effect as the loadstone on diseased persons."

In spite of these philosophical meditations,

Mesmer was looked upon—by the literati of Vienna—as a quack. He was not: he was an enthusiast, and if he deceived others was himself the first deceived. He brooded over his fancies until to his excited imagination they became actual and irrefragable facts. But to escape the contempt and ridicule of the Viennese he quitted the Austrian capital, and travelled into Swabia and Switzerland. In the latter country he formed an acquaintance with Gassner, whose wonderful cures had gained him the reputation of a prophet or an apostle. Mesmer declared the cures were effected by means of the magnetic fluid, and experimenting on some of Gassner's patients, was as successful as the Swiss philosopher in his manipulations. Emboldened by these triumphs he ventured into the hospitals of Berne and Zurich, and cured a case of ophthalmia, and another of gutta serena. Unfortunately, in the two latter cases his patients were not so satisfied with the cure as he was, and even protested that they could not see. But Mesmer returned to Vienna crowned with victory, and fully believing that he could convince or silence the most rampant scepticism.*

* Baron Dupotet's "Introduction to the Study of Animal Magnetism."

Vienna, however, betrayed no anxiety to give M. Mesmer the welcome due to his extraordinary genius! He was not fortunate either in the cures he attempted there; perhaps because the Austrians are not gifted with a sufficiently susceptible imagination. There was a Mademoiselle Paradis, who from her birth had been afflicted with blindness, and subject to violent convulsions. Her friends placed her in the hands of the magnetic philosopher, who manipulated her for several days, and then pronounced her cured. But unfortunately she could see nothing, and the convulsive fits were as numerous and as violent as before. Both her family, and an eminent oculist named Barth, declared that she had derived no benefit from Mesmer's manipulations. But Mesmer protested that she was cured; that she and her family and Dr. Barth had entered into a conspiracy to ruin his reputation. He would not sacrifice his theory to a fact, but endeavoured to warp the facts so as to subserve his theory. Heaven preserve *us* from a doctor with a theory! In the merciless hands of a theorist one becomes a helpless and most wretched victim!

Once more the *philosophe incompris* shook

the dust off his shoes at the gates of Vienna. He repaired to Paris (A.D. 1778), the city of cities for the empiric, the charlatan, and the enthusiast. There he proclaimed abroad the principles of his system, and finding the medical profession unwilling or unable to be convinced, prepared to attack the imaginations of the crowd. He furnished a large chamber in a style of great magnificence, and invited the world to witness the powerful effects of the magnetic fluid. Among other converts was M. d'Eslon, a physician of celebrity, and his accession to the ranks of Mesmer's disciples ensured the success of the new system. It became *the rage*. Fashion took it up as a new plaything, and rank and beauty were delighted with a theory that promised a fresh sensation. Everything that could charm the senses and influence the imagination was carefully studied by Mesmer; and his saloons were enriched with stained-glass windows, filled with the most delicious incense and the most fragrant perfumes, and pervaded with the sweet sounds of unseen but exquisite music. The *débauché*, the student, the idle, the inquisitive, the imaginative, the enthusiastic—all found in the new system a something adapted to their tastes, and willingly yielded themselves up to

the moral and intellectual intoxication which Mesmer knew so well how to induce.

Fancy a saloon gorgeously adorned with the richest hangings and the most splendid and luxurious furniture—sweet sounds rising upon the air, and delicious odours—and a soft dim light streaming through the many-coloured glass. In the centre observe an oval vessel about four feet long and one foot deep. The bottles which it contains are filled with magnetic water, well-corked, and disposed with their necks upwards and outwards, while they are partially covered with water impregnated with iron filings. An attendant enters and places over the vessel an iron cover, pierced with many holes, which is called the *baquet*. A long moveable iron rod issues from each hole. The patients approach; seat themselves round the mysterious vessel; apply to the diseased limb an iron rod, and then clasp each other's hand, and press their knees as closely together as may be, in order to assist the transmission of the magnetic fluid. The music ceases and a solemn silence prevails.

Now glide into the silent chamber the *assistant magnetizers*; young, handsome, well-proportioned and vigorous men, who address themselves to the different patients—clasp

them by the knees—rub them gently down the spine—fix them by a powerful and steady glance—and softly press the bosoms of the females. Meanwhile, from a concealed instrument or singer breaks forth a wild strain of melting melody, until the imagination is sufficiently aroused, and the ladies especially lose their self-control. Some grow delirious; some fall into a fit of insensibility; others appear intoxicated; they give vent to their feelings in sobs and sighs and shrieks; their faces glow; their eyes gleam and flash; the scene assumes the aspect of a Bacchic revel.

Into this chaos of passion and emotion strides Mesmer, like an enchanter prepared to subdue the demons he has evoked. His brow is grave and lofty, and his eyes seem fixed in the stony glare of speculation. He wears a gorgeous robe of silk, embroidered with gold flowers, and carries in his hand a long white rod, which he waves to and fro with solemn gestures. Before the unutterable calmness of his mien the waves of passion gradually subside. The shriek and the sob are no longer heard. His eye controls the delirious and awes the ungovernable. Then he addresses himself to the insensible: he passes his hands over the eyebrows and down the spine;

traces mysterious figures with his rod upon the breast and abdomen; and recalls them to life and action. Then the mad revel ceases, and each patient declares that from the magnetic wand flowed through all his body a current of cold vapour, and from Mesmer's hands a glowing kindling stream, so that his pangs were relieved, and his spirit possessed with an undefinable sensation of happiness.

It is no marvel that such séances as these should cause a surprising excitement through all Paris; and that Mesmer should be no less the object of the admiration of one party than of the scorn and hostility of another. Some said he had sold himself to the devil; others denounced him as a quack and fool; but hundreds adored him as directly inspired by Heaven to work his miraculous cures. At the instigation of D'Eslon, Mesmer challenged the investigation of the Faculty of Medicine, proposing to select twenty-four patients, of whom he would treat twelve according to his own magnetic system, leaving the other twelve to the attentions of orthodox practitioners. But as Mesmer proposed that the inquiry should be directed not to the means by which his effects were produced, but to their efficacy in producing those effects, the Faculty of

Medicine declined so one-sided an examination. That Mesmer had effected some surprising cures could not be denied, but that they were due to any magnetic influence was more than doubtful. Imagination has sometimes a wonderful curative power. In fact, as Mr. Braid afterwards asserted, "the whole depended on the physical and psychological condition of the patient, and not at all on the volition or passes of the operator throwing out a magnetic fluid or exciting into activity some mystical universal fluid or medium." This condition he described as "a derangement of the cerebro-spinal centres and of the circulatory and respiratory and muscular systems, induced by a fixed state, absolute repose of body, fixed attention, and suppressed respiration, concomitant with that fixity of attention."*

An application to Marie Antoinette for her influence with the government was equally unsuccessful. The ministry indeed offered him a pension of twenty thousand francs, and an order of knighthood, if he had made any medical discovery, and would communicate that discovery to some physicians to be named by the king. But Mesmer shrunk from any practical test of his pretensions, and affecting

* Braid, "Neurypnology, or the Rationale of Nervous Sleep."

to be disgusted with the cold calculating spirit of the government, suddenly quitted Paris, and retired to Spa. During his absence a commission of savants and another of physicians—the one appointed by the Faculty of Medicine, the other by the Académie des Sciences—made a careful examination into the doctrines of magnetism and the procedure of the magnetizers. Mesmer hastily returned to Paris to gather in the harvest of credulity before the labours of the commissioners were terminated—which, as he foresaw, completely exposed the groundlessness of the new “science”—and having accumulated a fortune, betook himself to his native province to enjoy it in tranquillity. He died in 1815, at the advanced age of eighty-one.

Notwithstanding the blow administered to mesmerism by the reports of the French commissioners, it still found numerous enthusiastic votaries in France and Germany and Italy. Among these the most celebrated was the Marquis de Puysegur, who carried the theory of Mesmer to still greater extravagances, and discovered the condition of magnetic somnambulism. The Chevalier de Barbarin made another step in advance, and dispensed with the magnetic wand.

In England the new delusion was first promulgated about 1788 by Dr. Mainaudue, and found a number of eager disciples. One of the earliest publications on the subject was issued by Mr. Chenevix in 1829, and the experiments performed by that gentleman attracted the attention of Dr. Elliotson, who speedily became one of the high priests of the great mystery. From that time to the present scarce a year has elapsed without some fresh treatise on its marvels; and most impassionate inquirers will now allow that amidst a vast amount of error, extravagance, and falsehood, there are some undoubted facts sufficiently curious to excite the attention of the philosophical student.

From a careful survey of the various phenomena of animal magnetism, it seems evident that they may be classified under six distinct heads:—

1st stage: called *Waking*, in which the intellect and the senses remain unchanged.

2nd stage: *Half-sleep*, or *imperfect crisis*. The sense of vision is now impaired,—the eye withdrawing itself from the influence of the will, but most of the other senses preserving their activity.

3rd stage: The *magnetic* or *mesmeric sleep*.

The organs of the senses refuse to perform their respective functions, and the patient is in an unconscious state.

4th stage: The *perfect crisis*, or *simple somnambulism*. In this condition the patient is said to "wake within himself," and regains his consciousness. He is in a state which is neither sleeping nor waking, but something between the two.

5th stage: *Lucidity*, or *lucid vision*,—more commonly known as *Clairvoyance*; in Germany, *Hellsehen*. "In this state the patient is said to obtain a clear knowledge of his own internal mental and bodily state, is enabled to calculate with accuracy the phenomena of disease which will naturally and inevitably occur, and to determine what are their most appropriate and effectual remedies. He is also said to possess the same faculty of internal inspection with regard to other persons who have been placed in mesmeric connexion (*en rapport*) with him."

6th stage: *Universal Lucidity* (in German, *Allgemeine Klarheit*). In this condition the lucid vision becomes largely increased, and extends to objects whether close at hand or at a distance.

The reader who would wish to examine

further into this curious phase of human error may consult Lang's "Mesmerism—its History, Phenomena, and Practice;" Dr. George Winter's "History of Animal Magnetism;" and "Dr. Russell's History and Heroes of Medicine."*

* Carlyle's characteristic portrait of Mesmer may here be quoted:—"Observe Herr Doctor Mesmer, in his spacious Magnetic Halls. Long-stoled he walks; reverend, glancing upwards, as in rapt commune; an antique Egyptian Hierophant in this new age. Soft music flits; breaking fitfully the sacred stillness. Round their Magnetic Mystery, which to the eye is mere tubs with water—sit breathless, rod in hand, the circles of beauty and fashion, each circle a living circular *Passion-Flower*; expecting the magnetic afflatus, and new-manufactured Heaven-on-Earth. O, women! O, men! great is your infidel-faith! . . . Had not the Academy of Sciences, with its Baillys, Franklins, Lavoisiers, interfered! But it did interfere. Mesmer may pocket his hard money, and withdraw."—*The French Revolution*, book ii. c. 6.

THE END.

DIVINE CHARACTERS OF THE PLANETS.

[See vol. ii., page 65.]

THE SUN.

THE MOON.

JUPITER.

MARS.

SATURN.

VENUS.

MERCURY.

End