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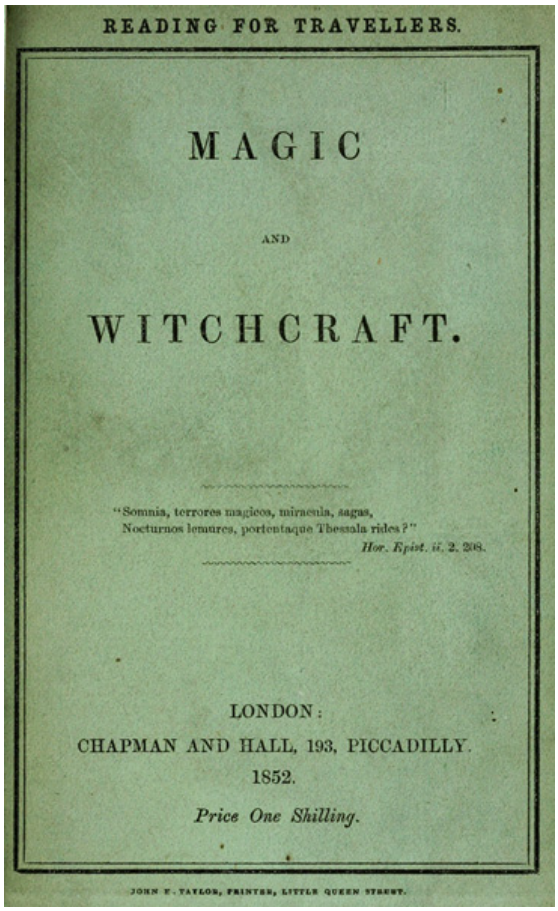
READING FOR TRAVELLERS.

MAGIC

AND

WITCHCRAFT.

"Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides?"
Hor. Epist. ii. 2. 208.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1852.
Price One Shilling.

JOHN E. TAYLOR, PRINTER, LITTLE QUEEN STREET.

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT.

observations—philosophy and pleasantry combining with genuine erudition to make this one of the most useful and entertaining of the volumes of railway reading with which we have met."

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PREFACE.

[Pg iii]

We have long wished that some English or foreign university would offer a prize for a history of Magic and Witchcraft. The records of human opinion would contain few chapters more instructive than one which should deal competently with the Black Art. For gross and painful as the details of superstition may be, yet superstition, by its very etymology, implies a dogma or a system of practice standing upon some basis of fact or truth: and however vain or noxious the superstructure may be, the foundation of it is in some way connected with those deep verities upon which rest also the roots of philosophy and religion.

For a grand error, and such alone can at any time essentially affect the opinions of mankind in general, is ever the imitation or caricature of some grand truth. From one soil spring originally the tree which yields good fruit and the plant which distils deadly poison. The very discernment of the causes of error is a step towards the discovery of its opposite. The bewilderments of the mind of man, when fully analysed, afford a clue to the course of its movements from the right track, or at least enable us to detect the point at which began the original separation between Truth and Error. Alchemy led, by no very circuitous route, to the science of chemistry; the adoption of false gods by the majority of the human race rendered necessary the dispensations of the Jewish and Christian schemes; and the corruption of true reverence for the Good, the Beautiful, and the Holy, was the parent of those arts, which, under the several appellations of Magic, Witchcraft, Sorcery, etc., drew their professors at first and the multitude afterwards to put faith in the evil, the deformed, and the impure. Magic and Witchcraft are little more than the religious instincts of mankind, first inverted, then polluted, and finally, like all corrupted matter, impregnated with the germs of a corrupt vitality.

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So universal is the belief in spiritual influences, and more especially in their malignant influences, that no race of men, no period of time, no region of the globe, have been exempt from it. It meets us in the remote antiquity of Asiatic life, in the comparatively recent barbarism of the American aborigines, in the creeds of all the nations who branched off thousands of years ago eastward and westward from their Caucasian cradle, in the myths, the observances, and the dialects of nations who have no other affinity with one another than the mere form of man.

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No nation, indeed, can reproach another nation with its addiction to magic without in an equal degree condemning itself. All the varieties of mankind have, in this respect, erred alike at different periods of their social existence, and all accordingly come under the same condemnation of making and loving a lie. The Chaldean erred when, dissatisfied with simple observation of the heavenly bodies through the luminous atmosphere of his plains, he perverted astronomy into astrology: the Egyptian erred when he represented the omnipresence of the Deity by the ubiquity of animal worship: the Hindoo erred when, having conceived the idea of an incarnation, he clothed with flesh and fleshly attributes the members of his monstrous pantheon: the Kelt and Teuton erred when, in their silent and solitary forests, they stained the serenity of nature with the deified attributes of war; and the more settled and civilized races who built and inhabited the cities of the ancient world, erred in their conversion of the indivisible unity of the Demiourgos or World-Creator into an anthropomorphic system of several gods. But the very universality of the error points to some common ground for it in the recesses of the human heart; and since Paganism under all its forms was the corruption of religion, and Witchcraft in its turn the corruption of Paganism, an inquiry into the seeds of this evil fruit cannot fail to be also in some measure an investigation of the very ‘incunabula’ of human error. [Pg vi]

We have stated, or endeavoured to state, the real scope and dimensions of the subject of Magic and Witchcraft—not however with any purpose of expatiating upon it in so small a volume as the present one. In the pages which follow we offer only a few remarks upon theories or modes of belief which in remote or in nearer ages have affected the creeds and the conduct of mankind. The subject, *in extenso*, belongs to larger volumes, and to maturer learning and meditation.

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MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT.

[Pg 1]

An amusing work appeared at Mainz, in 1826, from the pen of "Herr Kirchenrath" Horst, the title of which, translated *in extenso*, runs thus:—"The Magical Library; or, of Magic, Theurgy, and Necromancy; Magicians, Witches, and Witch Trials, Demons, Ghosts, and Spectral Appearances. By G. C. Horst, Church-Counsellor to the Grand Duke of Hesse." The following pages formed a review of this work, which appeared many years ago[1].

This book of the worthy Church-Counsellor is rather a singular one: it is not a history of Magic, but a sort of spiritual periodical, or magazine of infernal science, supported in a great measure by contributions from persons of a [Pg 2] ghostly turn of mind, who, although they affect occasionally to write in a Sadducee vein, are many of them half-believers at heart, and would not walk through a churchyard at night, except for a consideration larger than we should like to pay. The field over which it travels is too extensive, for us to attempt to follow the author throughout his elaborate subdivisions. Dante divided hell, like Germany, into circles; and Mr. Horst, adopting something of a similar arrangement, has parcelled out the territory of the Prince of the Air into sundry regular divisions, by which its whole bearings and distances are made plain enough for the use of infant schools. It is only at one of the provinces of the Inferno, however, that we can at present afford to glance; though for those who are inclined to make the grand tour, the Counsellor may be taken as an intelligent travelling companion, well acquainted with the road. In fact his work is so methodical and distinct, and the geography of the infernal regions so clearly laid down, according to the best authorities, from Jamblichus and Porphyry down to Glanvil and the Abbé Fiard, that the whole district is now about as well known as the course of the Niger; and it must be the traveller's own fault if he does not find his exit from Avernus as easy as its entrance has proverbially been since the days of Virgil.

The picture, however, drawn by these intelligent spiritual travellers is by no means calculated to impress us with a [Pg 3] high notion of the dominions of the Prince of the Air, or that the *personnel* of his majesty or his government are prepossessing. The climate, as all of them, from Faust downwards, agree, is oppressively hot, and the face of the country apparently a good deal like that between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, abounding with furnaces and coal-pits. Literature is evidently at a low ebb, from the few specimens of composition with which we are favoured in the Zauber-Bibliothek, and the sciences, with the exception of some practical applications of chemistry, shamefully neglected. The government seems despotical, but subject to occasional explosions on the part of the more influential spirits concerned in the executive. In fact, the departments of the administration are by no means well arranged; there is no proper division of labour, and the consequence is, that Beelzebub, "Mooned Ashtaroth," and others of the ministry, who, according to the theory of the constitution[2] are entitled to precedence, are constantly jostled and interfered with by Aziel, Mephistopheles, Marbuel, and other forward second-rate spirits, who are continually [Pg 4] thrusting in their claws where they are not called for. The standing army is considerable[3], besides the volunteers by which it is continually augmented. Nothing is heard however of the navy, and from the ominous silence which our geographers preserve on this point, it is easy to see that water is a rare element in this quarter.

The hints given as to the personal appearance and conduct of Lucifer, the reigning monarch, are not flattering. Common readers are apt to believe that Satan occupies that dignity[4], but this is a great error, and only shows, as Asmodeus told Don Cleofas, when he fell into a similar mistake about Beelzebub, "that they have no true notions of hell." The morals of Lucifer, as might be expected, are as bad as possible, with this exception, that we see no evidence of his being personally addicted to drinking. His licentious habits, however, are attested by many a [Pg 5] scandalous chronicle in Sprenger, Delrio, and Bodinus; and for swearing, all the world knows that Ernulphus was but a type of him. His jokes are all practical and of a low order, and there is an utter want of dignity in most of his proceedings. One of his most facetious amusements consists in constantly pulling the spits, on which his witches are riding, from beneath them, and applying them vigorously to their shoulders; and he has more than once administered personal chastisement to his servants, when they neglected to keep an appointment. He is a notorious cheat; many enterprising young men, who have enlisted in his service on the promise of high pay and promotion, having found, on putting their hands into their pockets, that he had paid them their bounty in tin sixpences, and having never risen even to the rank of a corporal. His talent might, from these narratives, be considered very mediocre, and therefore we are afraid that the ingenious selection from his papers, published by Jean Paul[5], must be a literary forgery. At least all his printed speeches are bad,—flashy enough, no doubt, in the commencement, but generally ending in smoke. He has always had a fancy for appearing in masquerade, and once delivered a course of lectures on magic at [Pg 6] Salamanca, in the disguise of a professor. So late as 1626, he lived *incog.*, but in a very splendid style, for a whole winter, in Milan, under the title of the Duke of Mammon[6]. It is in vain, however, for his partial biographers to disguise the fact, that in his nocturnal excursions, of which, like Haroun Alraschid, he was at one time rather fond, and where, we learn from the Swedish witches, he generally figured in a grey coat and red small-clothes, ornamented with ribbons and blue stockings, he has more than once received a sound drubbing from honest people, whom he has attempted to trip up by laying his tail in their way. And, in fact, since his affair with St. Dunstan, he

has kept pretty much withindoors after nightfall. Luther, as we know, kept no terms with him when he began to crack hazel-nuts in his bedroom at the Wartburg, but beat him all to nothing in a fair contest of ribaldry and abuse, besides leaving an indelible blot of ink upon his red smalls[7]. St. Lupus shut him up for a whole night in a pitcher of cold water, into which he had (as he thought, cunningly) conveyed himself, with the hope that the saint would [Pg 7] swallow him unawares[8]. This however, considering his ordinary temperature, must have been an act of kindness, which should have brought on St. Lupus the censure of the church. St. Anthony, in return for a very polite offer of his services, spat in his face; which hurt his feelings so much, that it was long before he ventured to appear in society again[9]. And although in his many transactions with mankind he is constantly trying to secure some unfair advantage, a person of any talent, particularly if he has been bred a lawyer[10], is a match for him; and there are numerous cases in the books, in which his majesty, attempting to apprehend the person of a debtor, has been unexpectedly defeated by an ingenious saving clause in the bond, which, like Shylock, he had overlooked, and non-suited in the ecclesiastical courts, where he commonly sues, with costs[11]. Finally, we infer from the Mora Trials, that his general health must have suffered from the climate, for in 1669 he was extremely ill in Sweden; and though [Pg 8] he got over the attack for a time, by bleeding and an antiphlogistic regimen, the persons who were about him thought his constitution was breaking up, and that he was still in a dying way.

Such is the grotesque aspect of the legendary Lucifer and his court, which a course of dæmonology presents to us! But though we have thus spoken with levity of these gross and palpable conceptions of the evil principle, and though undoubtedly the first impression produced by such a farrago must be a ludicrous one, the subject, we fear, has also its serious side. An Indian deity, with its wild distorted shape and grotesque attitude, appears merely ridiculous when separated from its accessories and viewed by daylight in a museum. But restore it to the darkness of its own hideous temple, bring back to our recollection the victims that have bled upon its altar, or been crushed beneath its car, and our sense of the ridiculous subsides into aversion and horror. So, while the superstitious dreams of former times are regarded as mere speculative insanities, we may for a moment be amused with the wild incoherencies of the [Pg 9] patients; but when we reflect that out of these hideous misconceptions of the principle of evil arose the belief in witchcraft; that this was no dead faith, but one operating on the whole being of society, urging on the mildest and the wisest to deeds of murder, or cruelties scarcely less than murder; that the learned and the beautiful, young and old, male and female, were devoted by its influence to the stake and the scaffold,—every feeling disappears except that of astonishment that such things could be, and humiliation at the thought that the delusion was as lasting as it was universal.

It is true that the current of human opinion seems now to set in a different direction, and that if the evil spirit of persecution is again to re-appear on earth, his *avatar* must in all probability be made in a different form. Our brains are no longer, as Dr. Francis Hutchinson says of Bodinus, "mere storehouses for devils to dance in;" and if the influence of the great enemy is still as active as before on earth, in the shape of evil passions, he at least keeps personally in the background, and has changed his tactics entirely since the days of the 'Malleus Maleficarum.'

> "For Satan now is wiser than before,
> And tempts by making *rich*—not making *poor*."

Still however it is always a useful check to the pride of the human mind, to look to those delusions which have darkened it, more especially to such as have originated in feelings in themselves exalted and laudable. Such is [Pg 10] unquestionably the case in regard to one of the gloomiest chapters in the history of human error, the belief in witchcraft and its consequences. The wish to raise ourselves above the visible world, and to connect ourselves with beings supposed to occupy a higher rank in creation, seemed at first calculated to exercise only a beneficent influence on the mind. Men looked upon it as a sort of Jacob's ladder, by which they were to establish a communication between earth and heaven, and by means of which angelic influences might be always ascending and descending upon the heart of man. But, unfortunately, the supposition of this actual and bodily intercourse with spirits of the better order, involved also a similar belief as to the possibility of establishing a free trade with the subterranean powers,

> "Who lurk in ambush, in their earthy cover,
> And, swift to hear our spells, come swarming up;"

and from these theoretical opinions, once established and acted upon, all the horrors of those tempestuous times flowed as a natural consequence. For thus the kingdoms of light and darkness were brought into open contest: if Satan was ready at every one's call, to send out his spirits like Swiss mercenaries, it became equally necessary for the true believer to rise in arms against him with fire and sword; any wavering on his part was construed into [Pg 11] apostasy, and he who did not choose to be persecuted himself was driven in self-defence to become a persecutor.

The grand postulate of direct diabolical agency being once assumed and quietly conceded on all hands, any absurdity whatever was easily engrafted on it. Satan being thus brought home, as it were, to men's business and bosoms, every one speculated on his habits and demeanour according to his own light; and soon the insane fancies of minds crazed by nature, disease, or misfortunes, echoed and repeated from all sides, gathered themselves into a code or system of faith, which, being instilled into the mind with the earliest rudiments of instruction, fettered even the strongest intellects with its baleful influence. The mighty minds of Luther, of Calvin, and of Knox, so quick in detecting error, so undaunted and merciless in exposing it, yielded tamely to its thrall; the upright and able Sir Matthew Hale passed sentence of death, in 1664, on two poor women accused of witchcraft, and Sir Thomas Browne, the historian of "Vulgar Errors," who was examined as a witness on the trial, gave it as his opinion that the fits under which the patients had laboured, though natural in themselves, were "heightened by the Devil co-operating with the malice of the witches, at whose instance he did the villanies!" and apparently on this evidence chiefly did the conviction proceed.

Neither, in fact, were the incongruities and inconsistencies of the witch-creed of the time so calculated, as they might [Pg 12] at first sight appear, to awaken men's minds to the radical insanity of the belief. The dash of the ludicrous, which

mingles itself with almost all the exploits of Satan and his satellites, grew, naturally enough, out of the monkish conception of Satan, and might be supposed not inconsistent with the character of a set of beings whose proceedings of course could not be expected to resemble those either of men or angels. The monkish Satan has no dignity about him: in soul and body he is low and deformed.

> "Gli occhi ha vermigli, e la barba unta ed atra,
> E 'l ventre largo, ed unghiate le mani,
> Graffia gli spirti, gli scuoja, ed isquatra[12]."

His apish tricks and satyr-like gambols were sufficiently in unison with the idea of a spirit with boundless malice but limited powers, grinning in despite where he could not injure, and ridiculing those sacred rites the power of which he was compelled to acknowledge and obey. Hence he preaches to his infernal flock, and mocks the institution of the sacrament; wreaks his native malice even on his own adherents; plunges his deluded victims into misery, or deserts them in their distress, deprives them of the rewards he has promised to them; plagues and torments the good, but cowers whenever he is boldly resisted, and is at once discomfited by any one who wields by commission the [Pg 13]
thunders of heaven. Writers of fiction in general have seldom seized these features of his character; indeed hardly any one has done so, except Hoffman, who, in most of his supernatural pictures, has painted him not with the grandeur and sullen gloom of the fallen archangel, but with the coarse and comic malice of the spirit of the middle ages, and has thus, on the whole, deepened the real horror of his goblin scenes by the infusion of these outbreakings of mirth, just as the frightful effect of an execution would be increased, if the criminal, instead of joining in the devotions, were suddenly to strike up a lively air from the top of the ladder.

But whether the delusion of witchcraft was thus a natural sequence of the monkish notions of an evil principle, and of the almost universal persuasion that intercourse with a higher order of beings was possible for man, no one can cast a glance over its history without being satisfied that the comprehensive nature of its influence, and its long duration, were owing to penal laws and prosecutions. It adds one more to the long list of instances which prove that there is no opinion, however absurd and revolting, which will not find believers and martyrs, if it is once made the subject of persecution. From the earliest ages of Christianity it is certain the belief existed, and must occasionally have been employed by strong minds as an instrument of terror to the weak; but still the frame of society itself was [Pg 14]
not shaken, nor, with one exception[13], does the crime begin to make any figure in history till the Bull of Innocent VIII. in 1484 stirred up the slumbering embers into a flame.

Of the extent of the horrors which for two centuries and a half followed, our readers we suspect have but a very imperfect conception; we remember as in a dream that on this accusation persons were occasionally burnt, and one or two remarkable relations from our own annals or those of the Continent may occur to our recollection. But of the extent of these judicial murders, no one who has not dabbled a little in the history of demonology has any idea. No sooner has Innocent placed his commission of fire and sword in the hands of Sprenger and his brethren, and a regular form of process for the trial of this offence been laid down in that unparalleled performance, the 'Malleus Maleficarum,' which was intended as a theological and juridical commentary on the Bull, than the race of witches seems at once to increase and multiply, till it replenishes the earth. The original edict of persecution was enforced by the successive bulls of the infamous Alexander VI. in 1494 (to whom Satan might indeed have addressed the [Pg 15]
remonstrance "et tu Brute!"), of Leo X. in 1521, and of Adrian VI. in 1522. Still the only effect of these commissions was to render the evil daily more formidable, till at last, if we are to believe the testimonies of contemporary historians, Europe was little better than a large suburb or outwork of Pandemonium. One-half of the population was either bewitching or bewitched. Delrio tells us in his preface that 500 witches were executed in Geneva in three months, about the year 1515. A thousand, says Bartholomæus de Spina, were executed in one year in the diocese of Como, and they went on burning at the rate of a hundred per annum for some time after. In Lorraine, from 1580 to 1595, Remigius boasts of having burned 900. In France the multitude of executions about 1520 is incredible; Danæus, in the first part of his dialogue concerning witches, calls it "infinitum pene veneficorum numerum." The well-known sorcerer, *Trois Echelles*, told Charles IX., while he was at Poitou, the names of 1200 of his associates. This calculation is according to Mezeray's more reasonable version of the story, for the author of the 'Journal du Règne de Henri III.' makes the number 3000, and Bodinus, not satisfied even with this allowance, adds a cypher, and makes the total return of witches denounced by Trois Echelles 30,000, though he does at the same time express some doubt as to the correctness of this account.

In Germany, to which indeed the bull of Innocent bore particular reference, this plague raged to a degree almost [Pg 16]
inconceivable. Bamberg, Paderborn, Wurtzburg, and Treves were its chief seats, though for a century and a half after the introduction of the trials under the commission no quarter of that great empire was free from its baneful influence. It would be wearisome and revolting to go through the details of these atrocities; but "ab uno disce omnes." A catalogue of the executions at Wurtzburg for the period from 1627 to February 1629, about two years and two months, is printed by Hauber in the conclusion of his third volume of the 'Acta et Scripta Magica.' It is regularly divided into twenty-nine burnings, and contains the names of 157 persons, Hauber stating at the same time that the catalogue is not complete. It is impossible to peruse this catalogue without horror. The greater part of it consists of old women or foreign travellers, seized, it would appear, as foreigners were at Paris during the days of Marat and Robespierre: it contains children of twelve, eleven, ten, and nine years of age, fourteen vicars of the cathedral, two boys of noble families, the two little sons (*söhnlein*) of the senator Stolzenburg; a stranger boy; a blind girl; Gobel Babelin, the handsomest girl in Wurtzburg, etc.

> "Sanguine placârunt Divos *et virgine cæsá*!"

And yet, frightful as this list of 157 persons executed in two years appears, the number is not (taking the population [Pg 17]
of Wurtzburg into account) so great as in the Lindheim process from 1660 to 1664. For in that small district, consisting at the very utmost of six hundred inhabitants, thirty persons were condemned and put to death, making a twentieth part of the whole population consumed in four years.

How dreadful are the results to which these data lead! If we take 157 as a fair average of the executions at Wurtzburg (and the catalogue itself states that the list was by no means complete), the amount of executions there in the course of the century preceding 1628 would be 15,700. We know that from 1610 to 1660 was the great epoch of the witch trials, and that so late as 1749 Maria Renata was executed at Wurtzburg for witchcraft; and though in the interval between 1660 and that date it is to be hoped that the number of these horrors had diminished, there can be little doubt that several thousands must be added to the amount already stated. If Bamberg, Paderborn, Treves, and the other Catholic bishoprics, whose zeal was not less ardent, furnished an equal contingent, and if the Protestants, as we know[14], actually vied with them in the extent to which these cruelties were carried, the number of victims from the date of Innocent's bull to the final extinction of these persecutions must considerably exceed 100,000 in Germany. [Pg 18]

Even the feeling of horror excited by the perusal of the Wurtzburg murders is perhaps exceeded by that to which another document relative to the state of matters in 1629 must give rise: namely a ballad on the subject of these executions, detailing in doggrel verses the sufferings of the unfortunate victims, "to be sung to the tune of Dorothea"—a common street-song of the day. It is entitled the 'Druten Zeitung,' or Witches' Chronicle, "being an account of the remarkable events which took place in Franconia, Bamberg, and Wurtzburg, with those wretches who from avarice or ambition have sold themselves to the devil, and how they had their reward at last; set to music, and to be sung to the air of Dorothea." It is graced also with some hideous devices in wood, representing three devils seizing on divers persons by the hair of their heads, legs, etc., and dragging them away. It commences and concludes with some pious reflections on the guilt of the witches and wizards, whose fate it commemorates with the greatest glee and satisfaction. One device in particular, by which a witch who had obstinately resisted the torture is betrayed into confession—namely, by sending into her prison the hangman disguised as her familiar (Buhl Teufel)—seems to meet with the particular approbation of the author, who calls it an excellent joke; and no doubt the point of it in his eyes was very much increased by the consideration that upon the confession, as it was called, so obtained, the unhappy wretch was immediately committed to the flames[15]. What are we to think of the state of feeling in the country where these horrors were thus made the subject of periodical ballads, and set to music for the amusement of the populace[16]? [Pg 19]

It was one fatal effect of the perseverance with which Satan and his dealings were thus brought before the view of every one, that thousands of weak and depraved minds were actually led into the belief that they had formed a connection with the evil being, and that the visions which had so long haunted the brain of Sprenger and his associates had been realized in their own case. In this way alone can we in some measure account for the strange confessions which form the great peculiarity in the witch trials, where unhappy creatures, with the full knowledge of their fate, admit their intercourse with Satan, their midnight meetings, incantations, their dealings with spirits, "white, black, and grey, with all their trumpery," the grotesque horrors of the sabbath,—in short, every wild and impossible phantasm which had received colour and a body in the 'Malleus,'—and seemed to be perfectly satisfied that they had fully merited the fiery trial to which their confession immediately subjected them. When we read these trials, we think of the effect of the Jew's fiddle in Grimm's fairy tale; we see the delusion spreading like an epidemic from one to another, till first the witnesses, then the judges, and lastly the poor criminals themselves, all yield to the giddy whirl, and go off like dancing Dervises under its influence. [Pg 20]

True it is that, in many of the cases, and particularly those which occur in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, when the diabolical doctrines of Sprenger and Delrio were in their full vigour, the confessions on which these convictions proceeded were elicited by torture, moral and physical, and frequently retracted, till a fresh application of the rack produced a fresh admission. One instance from Delrio may stand in place of a thousand. He mentions that an unfortunate gentleman in Westphalia had been twenty times put to the rack, "vicies sævæ quæstioni subditum," in order to compel him to confess that he was a were-wolf! All these tortures he resisted, till the hangman gave him an intoxicating draught, and under its influence he confessed that he *was* a were-wolf after all. "En judicum *clemens* arbitrium," says Delrio, "quo se porrigat in illis partibus aquilonaribus."—See how long-suffering we judges are in the north! we never put our criminals to death till we have tried them with twenty preliminary courses of torture! This is perfectly in the spirit of another worthy in Germany, who had been annoyed with the pertinacity of a witch, who, like the poor lycanthrope, persisted in maintaining her innocence. "Da liess ich sie tüchtig foltern," says the inquisitor—"und sie gestand;"—I tortured her *tightly* (the torture lasted four hours), and she confessed! Who indeed under such a system would not have confessed? Death was unavoidable either way, and the great object was to attain that consummation with the least preparatory pain. "I went," says Sir George Mackenzie, "when I was a Justice Depute, to examine some women who had confessed judicially. One of them, who was a silly creature, told me that she had not confessed because she was guilty, but, being a poor creature who wrought for her meat, and being defamed for a witch, she knew she would starve, for no person hereafter would give her meat or lodging, and that all men would beat her and hound dogs at her, and that therefore she desired to be out of the world. Whereupon she wept most bitterly, and upon her knees called God to witness to what she said[17]." In other cases, the torture was applied not only to the individual accused, but to his relations or friends, to secure confession. In Alison Pearson's case[18], it appears that her daughter, a girl of nine years of age, had been placed in the *pilliewinks*, and her son subjected to about fifty strokes in the *boots*. Where the torture was not corporeally applied, terror, confusion, and the influence of others frequently produced the same effect on the weak minds of the accused. In the case of the New England witches in 1696, six of the poor women who were liberated in the general gaol-delivery which took place after this reign of terror began to decline, (and who had all confessed previously that they had been guilty of the witchcrafts imputed to them,) retracted their confessions in writing, attributing them to the consternation produced by their sudden seizure and imprisonment. "And indeed," said they, "that confession which it is said we made was no other than what was suggested to us by some gentlemen, they telling us we were witches, and they knew it, and we knew it, and they knew that we knew it, which made us think that it was so, and our understanding, our reason, and our faculties almost gone, we were not capable of judging our condition. And most of what we said was but a consenting to what they said[19]." [Pg 21] [Pg 22] [Pg 23]

But though unquestionably great part of these confessions, which at first tended so much to prolong this delusion, were obtained by torture, or contrary to the real conviction and belief of the accused, it is impossible to deny that in many cases the confessions were voluntary, and proceeded from actual belief. Nor was it to be wondered at that persons of a weak and melancholy temperament should, more particularly at a time when the phenomena of nature and of the human body were so little understood, be disposed to set down every occurrence which they could not explain, and every wild phantasm which crossed their minds, to the direct and immediate agency of an evil power. At that period even the most natural events were ascribed to witchcraft. If a child, after being touched by a suspected individual, died or became ill, the convulsions were ascribed to diabolical interference, as in Wenham's case, so late [Pg 24]
as 1712[20]. If, on the contrary, she cured instead of killing, the conclusion was the same, although the only charm employed might be a prayer to the Almighty[21]. If an old woman's cat, coming to the door at night, took part in a concert with other cats, this was nothing but a witch herself in disguise[22]. In the case of Robert Erskine of Dun[23], tried for the murder of his nephews, he is indicted for making away with them by *poisoning* and *witchcraft*, as if the poisoning was not of itself amply sufficient to account for their death.

It was still less wonderful that those mysterious phenomena which sometimes occur in the human frame, such as spontaneous combustion, delusions arising from the state of the brain and nerves, and optical deceptions, should appear to the sufferer to be the work of the devil, whose good offices they might very probably have invoked under some fit of despondency or misanthropy, little expecting, like the poor man in the fable who called on Death, to be
taken at their word. What a "Thesaurus of Horror" would the spectres of Nicolai have afforded in the sixteenth [Pg 25]
century or the commencement of the seventeenth, if embodied in the pages of the 'Malleus' or the 'Flagellum Dæmonum,' instead of being quietly published by the patients as optical and medical phenomena in the 'Berlinische Monatschrift' for 1799, and the 15th volume of the 'Philosophical Journal!' What a fearful glimpse into the infernal world would have been afforded by the still more frightful illusions which haunted poor Backzko of Königsberg[24] during his political labours in 1806; the grinning negro who seated himself opposite to him, the owl-headed tormentor that used to stare at him every night through his curtains, the snakes twisting and turning about his knees as he turned his periods! If we go back to 1651, we find our English Jacob Böhme, Pordage[25], giving an account of visions which must have been exactly of the same kind, arising from an excited state of the brain, with the most thorough conviction of their reality. His Philadelphian disciples, Jane Leade, Thomas Bromley, Hooker, Sapperton, and others, were indulged, on the first meeting of their society, with a vision of unparalleled splendour. The princes and powers of the infernal world passed in review before them, sitting in coaches, surrounded with dark clouds and
drawn by a *cortége* of lions, dragons, tigers, and bears; then followed the lower spirits arranged in squadrons with [Pg 26]
cats' ears, claws, twisted limbs, etc.; whether they shut their eyes or kept them open, the appearances were equally distinct; "for we saw," says the master-spirit Pordage, "with the eyes of the mind, not with those of the body."

> "And shapes that come not at a mortal call
> Will not depart when mortal voices bid.
> Lords of the visionary eye, whose lid
> Once raised remains aghast, and will not fall[26]."

Thus, while phenomena which experience has since shown to be perfectly natural were universally attributed to supernatural causes, men had come to be on the most familiar footing with spiritual beings of all kinds. In the close of the sixteenth century, Dr. Dee was, according to his own account, and we verily believe his own conviction, on terms of intimacy with most of the angels. His brother physician, Dr. Richard Napier, a relation of the inventor of the logarithms, got almost all his medical prescriptions from the angel Raphael. Elias Ashmole had a MS. volume of
these receipts, filling about a quire and a half of paper[27]. In fact, one would almost suppose that few persons at that [Pg 27]
time condescended to perform a cure by natural means. Witness the sympathetic nostrums of Valentine Greatrakes and Sir Kenelm Digby; or the case of Arise Evans, reported by Aubrey, who "had a fungous nose, and to whom it was *revealed* that the king's hand would cure him; and at the first coming of King Charles II. into St. James's Park he kissed the king's hand and *rubbed his nose with it, which troubled the king, but cured him*." In Aubrey's time, too, the visits of ghosts had become so frequent, that they had their exits and their entrances without exciting the least sensation. Aubrey makes an entry in his journal of the appearance of a ghost as coolly as a merchant now-a-days makes an entry in his ledger. "Anno 1670. Not far from Cirencester was an apparition. Being demanded whether good spirit or bad, returned no answer, but disappeared with a curious perfume and a melodious twang."

Is it to be wondered at then, that, surrounded on all hands with such superstitious fancies, the weak and depraved were early brought to believe that all the wild chimeras of the demonologists were true, and that they had really concluded that covenant with Satan, the possibility of which was universally inculcated as an article of faith, and the idea of which was constantly present to their minds? or that, under the influence of this frightful delusion, they
should voluntarily come forward to confess their imaginary crime, as in the Amsterdam case of the poor girl who [Pg 28]
accused herself of bewitching cattle by the words Shurius, Turius, Tirius[28], or in another still more remarkable case in 1687, mentioned in Reichard's 'Beyträge,' where a young woman accused herself, her friend, and the mother of her friend, of a long course of witchcraft, with all the usual traditional and impossible horrors of Sprenger and his brethren?

Neither, we are afraid, is there much reason to doubt that some of the most horrible of their conceptions were founded on facts which were but too real; that the cunning and the depraved contrived to turn the ecstasies and the fears of these poor wretches to their own purposes; in short, that frauds similar to those which Boccaccio has painted in his novel of the angel Gabriel, were occasionally played off upon the deluded victims. Without entering further on a topic which is rather of a delicate kind, the reader will have an idea of our meaning who recollects the disclosures that took place in the noted French case of Father Girard and La Cadière.

Much has been said as to the wonderful coincidences to be found in the evidence of the accused when examined [Pg 29]
separately, the minuteness of their details, and the general harmony of the infernal narratives, as collected from the witch trials of different countries. But the truth is that this assertion must in the first place be received with great

limitations; for in many cases, where, accepting the assertions of Sprenger and the rest as true, we should suppose the coincidence to be complete, the original confessions which still exist prove that the resemblance was merely general, and that there were radical and irreconcileable differences in the details of the evidence. Inasfar as the assertion is really true, one simple explanation goes far to account for the phenomenon;—"Insanire parent *certâ ratione* modoque." The general notions of the devil and his demeanour, the rites of the infernal sabbath, etc. being once fixed, the visions which crossed the minds of the unfortunate wretches accused soon assumed a pretty determinate and invariable form; so that, even if left to tell their own story, there would have been the closest resemblance between the narratives of different persons. But this was not all. In almost every case the confessions were merely the echo of questions put by the inquisitors, all of which again were founded on the demonological creed of the 'Malleus.' One set of questions is put to all the witches, and the answers, being almost always simple affirmatives, necessarily correspond. Hence it is amusing enough to observe how different were the results, when the [Pg 30] process of investigation fell into the hands of persons to whom Sprenger's manual was unknown. In the Lindheim trials in 1633, to which we have already alluded, the inquisitor happened to be an old soldier, who had witnessed several campaigns in the Thirty Years War, and who, instead of troubling his head about Incubi, Succubi, and the other favourite subjects of inquiry with the disciples of the Hammer, was only anxious to ascertain who was the queen of the infernal spirits, the general, officers, *corporals*, etc., to all of which he received answers as distinct and satisfactory as any that are recorded for our instruction in the chronicles of Bodinus or Delrio.

In the seventeenth century, the manner in which the delusion was communicated seems exactly to resemble those remarkable instances of sympathy which occur in the cases of the Scottish Cambuslang Conversions and the American Forest Preachings. No sooner has one hypochondriac published his symptoms, than fifty others feel themselves at once affected with the same disorder. In the celebrated Mora case in 1669, with which of course all the readers of Glanvil (and who has not occasionally peeped into his horrors?) are familiar, the disease spreads first through the children, who believed themselves the victims of diabolical agency, and who ascribed the convulsions, faintings, etc., with which they were attacked, to that cause; and next through the unfortunate witches themselves, [Pg 31] for as soon as one or two of them, bursting into tears, confessed that the accusation of the children was true, all the rest joined in the confession. And what is the nature of their confession? Of all impossible absurdities that ever entered the brain of man, this trial is the epitome. They meet the devil nightly on the Blocula, which is the devil's ball-room in Sweden, as the Brocken is in Germany; they ride thither on sticks, goats, men's backs, and spits; they are baptized by a priest provided by the devil; they sup with him, very frugally it would appear, for the banquet commonly consists of broth made with colewort and bacon, oatmeal, bread and butter, milk and cheese; and the devil allows no wine. After supper they dance, and when the devil wishes to be particularly jolly he pulls the spits from under them, and beats them black and blue, after which he sits down and laughs outrageously. Sometimes he treats them to a musical exhibition on the harp, for he has a great turn for music, as his famous sonata to Tartini proves. All of them confess intercourse with him[29], and most of them had sons and daughters by him. Occasionally he fell sick, and required to be bled and blistered; and once he seemed to be dead, on which occasion there was a general mourning for him on the Blocula, as the Syrian damsels used to bewail the annual wound of their idol [Pg 32] Thammuz on Lebanon. Is it not frightful to think that in a trial held before a tribunal consisting of the *élite* of the province of Dalecarlia, assisted by the commissioners from the capital,—in a country where, until this time, the witch mania, already beginning to abate in Germany, had scarcely been heard of, and where it ceased earlier perhaps than in most other countries in Europe,—seventy-two women and fifteen children should have been condemned and executed at one time upon such confessions? Is it possible after this to read without shuddering the cool newspaper-like conclusion of Dr. Horneck—"On the 25th of August execution was done upon the notoriously guilty, *the day being bright and glorious, and the sun shining*, and some thousands of people being present at the spectacle!"

Thirty years before, a similar instance of the progress of the epidemic had taken place at Lille, in the hospital founded by the pious enthusiast Antoinette Bourignon. On entering the schoolroom one day, she imagined that she saw a number of little black children, with wings, flying about the heads of the girls; and not liking the colour or appearance of these visitors, she warned her pupils to be on their guard. Shortly before this, a girl who had run away from the institution in consequence of being confined for some misdemeanour of which she had been guilty, being [Pg 33] interrogated how she had contrived to escape, and not liking probably to disclose the truth, had maintained that she had been liberated by the devil, to whose service she had devoted herself from a child. Nothing more was wanting in that age of *diablerie* to turn the heads of the poor children; in the course of six months almost all the girls in the hospital, amounting to more than fifty, had confessed themselves confirmed witches, and admitted the usual intercourse with the devil, the midnight meetings, dances, banquets, etc., which form the staple of the narrative of the time. Their ideal banquets seem to have been on a more liberal scale however than those of the poor Mora witches; probably because many of the pupils had been accustomed to better fare in a populous and wealthy town in Flanders, than the others in a poor village in Sweden. Exorcisms and prayers of all kinds followed this astounding disclosure. The Capuchins and Jesuits quarrelled, the Capuchins implicitly believing the reality of the possession, the Jesuits doubting it. The parents of the culprit now turned the tables upon poor Bourignon, by accusing her of having bewitched them; and at last the pious theosophist, after an examination before the Council, was glad to seek safety in flight; having thus obtained a clearer notion than she formerly possessed of the kingdom of Satan, with regard to which she had entertained and published as many strange fancies as the Bishop of Benevento; and having [Pg 34] been taught by her own experience the danger of tampering with youthful minds, in which the train of superstition had been so long laid, that it only required a spark from her overheated brain to kindle it into a flame.

It would appear too that physical causes, and in particular nervous affections of a singular kind, had about this time mingled with and increased the delusion which had taken its rise in these superstitious conceptions of the devil and his influence. During the very year (1669) in which the children at Mora were suffering under convulsions and fainting fits, those in the Orphan Hospital at Hoorn, in Holland, were labouring under a malady exactly similar; but though the phenomena were attributed to diabolical agency, the suspicions of the public fortunately were not directed to any individual in particular. Another instance of the same kind had taken place about a century before in the Orphan Hospital at Amsterdam, of which a particular account is given in Dapper's history of that city, where the

number of children supposed to be bewitched amounted to about seventy, and where the evil was attributed to some unhappy old women, before whose houses the affected urchins, when led out into the streets, had been more than usually clamorous. Such also appears to have been the primary cause of the tragedies in New England in 1699; of the demoniac exhibitions at Loudon, which were made a pretext for the murder of the obnoxious Grandier; of the [Pg 35] strange incidents which occurred so late as 1749 in the convent of Unterzell at Wurtzburg; and of most of the other more remarkable cases of supposed possession. The mysterious principle of sympathy, operating in weak minds, will in fact be found to be at the root of most of the singular phenomena in the history of witchcraft. No wonder then that after the experience of a century, the judges, and even the ignorant public themselves, came at last to suspect that, however the principle might apply to other crimes, the confession of the criminal was not, in cases of witchcraft, the *best* evidence of the fact. In the New England cases, says Mr. Calef (April 25, 1693), "one was tried that confessed; but they were now so well taught what weight to lay upon confessions, that the jury brought her in not guilty, although she confessed she was."

But what a deluge of blood had been shed before even this principle came to be recognized, and still more before the judicial belief in the existence of the crime was fully eradicated! What a spectacle does Europe present from the date of Innocent's Bull down to the commencement of the eighteenth century! Sprenger, Henry Institor, Geiss von Lindheim, and others in Germany; Cumanus in Italy; the Inquisition in Spain; Remigius, Bodinus, and De l'Ancre in France and Lorraine, flooring witches on all sides with the 'Malleus Maleficarum,' or flogging them to death with [Pg 36] the 'Flagellum' and 'Fustis Dæmonum;' Holland, Geneva, Sweden, Denmark, England, and Scotland vying with each other in the number of trials and the depth of their infatuation and bigotry!

The Reformation, which uprooted other errors, only strengthened and fostered this. Every town and village on the continent was filled with spies, accusers, and wretches who made their living by pretending to detect the secret marks which indicated a compact with the devil[30],—inquisitors, judges, advocates, executioners, every one [Pg 37] connected with these frightful tribunals, on the watch for anything which might afford the semblance of suspicion. To ensure the death or ruin of an enemy, nothing more was necessary in most cases than to throw into this lion's mouth an accusation of magic against him. "Vix aliquis eorum," says Linden, the determined foe of these proceedings, "qui accusati sunt, supplicium evasit." The fate of Edelin, of Urban Grandier, and of the Maréchale d'Ancre in France, of Doctor Flaet and Sidonia von Vork in Germany, and of Peter of Abano in Italy[31], prove how often the accusation of sorcery was not even believed by the accusers themselves, but was resorted to merely as a certain means to get rid of an obnoxious enemy. Meanwhile the notaries' clerks and officials, labouring in their vocation, grew rich from the enormous fees attendant on these trials; the executioner became a personage of first-rate consequence: "generoso equo instar aulici nobilis ferebatur, auro argentoque vestitus: uxor ejus vestium luxu certabat cum nobilioribus[32]." Some partial diminution of this persecuting zeal took place in consequence of a [Pg 38] Rescript of John VII. (18th December, 1591), addressed to the commission, by which the fees of court were restricted within more moderate bounds; but still the profits arising from this trade in human victims were sufficient to induce the members and dependants of court, like the Brahmins in India, to support with all their might this system of purification by fire.

At last however the horrors of Wurtzburg and Treves began to open the eyes even of the dullest to the progress of the danger, which, commencing like Elijah's cloud, had gradually overshadowed the land. While the executions were confined to the lower classes, to crazed old women or unhappy foreigners, even those whose more vigorous intellect enabled them to resist the popular contagion chose rather to sit by spectators of these horrors, than to expose themselves to the fate of Edelin or Flaet, by attacking the madness in which they originated. But now, when the pestilence, spreading on and on, threatened the lives of more exalted victims,—when noblemen and abbots, presidents of courts and professors, began to swell the catalogue, and when no man felt secure that he might not suddenly be compelled by torture to bear witness against his own innocent wife or children,—selfishness began to [Pg 39] co-operate with truth and reason. So, in the same way, in the case of the New England witchcrafts, the first effectual check which they received was from the accusation of Mrs. Hale, the clergyman's wife: her husband, who till then had been most active in the persecution, immediately received a new light with regard to the transaction, and exerted his whole influence for the suppression of the trials.

The first decisive blow which the doctrines of the inquisitors received in Germany was from the publication of the 'Cautio Criminalis,' in 1631. In the sixteenth century, it is true that Ponzonibius, Wierus, Pietro d'Apone, and Reginald Scott had published works which went to impugn their whole proceedings; but the works of the foreigners were almost unknown in Germany, and that of Wierus was nearly as absurd and superstitious as the doctrines he combated. It is little to the credit of the Reformers that the first work in which the matter was treated in a philosophical, humane, and common-sense view should have been the production of a Catholic Jesuit, Frederick Spee, the descendant of a noble family in Westphalia. So strongly did this exposure of the horrors of the witch trials operate on the mind of John Philip Schonbrunn, Bishop of Wurtzburg, and finally Archbishop and Elector of Mentz, that his first care on assuming the Electoral dignity was to abolish the process entirely within his dominions—an [Pg 40] example which was soon after followed by the Duke of Brunswick and others of the German princes. Shortly after this the darkness begins to break up, and the dawning of better views to appear, though still liable to partial and temporary obscurations,—the evil apparently shifting further north, and re-appearing in Sweden and Denmark in the shape of the trials at Mora and Fioge. Reichard[33] has published a rescript of Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg, bearing date the 4th of November, 1654, addressed to the judges in reference to the case of Ann of Ellerbroke, enjoining that the prisoner should be allowed to be heard in defence, before any torture was resorted to (a principle directly the reverse of those maintained by the inquisitorial courts), and expressly reprobating the proof by water as an unjust and deceitful test, to which no credit was to be given. Even where a conviction takes place, as in the Neuendorf trial of Catherine Sempels, we find the sentence of death first passed upon her by the provincial judges, commuted into imprisonment for life by the Electoral Chamber in 1671,—a degree of lenity which never could have taken place during the height of the mania.

In 1701 the celebrated inaugural Thesis of Thomasius, 'De Crimine Magiæ,' was publicly delivered, with the highest applause, in the University of Halle, a work which some fifty years before would assuredly have procured [Pg 41] the author no other crown but that of martyrdom, but which was now received with general approbation, as embodying the views which the honest and intelligent had long entertained. Thomasius's great storehouse of information and argument was the work of Bekker, who again had modelled his on the Treatise of Van Dale on Oracles; and Thomasius, while he adopted his facts and arguments, steered clear of those Cartesian doctrines which had been the chief cause why the work of Bekker had produced so little practical effect. Still, notwithstanding the good thus produced, the fire of persecution seems to have been smothered only, not extinguished. In 1728 it flamed up again at Szegedin in Hungary, where thirteen persons were burnt alive on three scaffolds, for witchcraft, under circumstances of horror worthy of the wildest periods of this madness. And so late as 1749 comes the frightful story of Maria Renata, of Wurtzburg, the whole official details of which are published by Horst, and which in its atrocity was worthy to conclude the long series of murders which had polluted the annals of Bamberg. This trial is remarkable from the feeling of disgust it seems to have excited in Germany, Italy, and France; and the more so because, whatever may be thought of the reality of her pretensions, there seems to be no doubt from the evidence that Maria was by no means immaculate, but *was* a dabbler in spells and potions, a *venefica* in the sense of the [Pg 42] Theodosian code. But there is a time, as Solomon says, for everything under the sun; and the glories of the 'Malleus Maleficarum' were departed. The consequence was, that taking this trial as their text-book, various foreigners, particularly Maffei, Tartarotti, and Dell' Ossa, attacked the system so vigorously, that since that time the adherents of the old superstition seem to have abandoned the field in Germany.

Matters had come to a close much sooner in Switzerland and France. In the Catholic canton of Glarus, it is said, a witch was burnt even so late as 1786; but in the Protestant cantons no trials seem to have taken place for two centuries past. The last execution in Geneva was that of Michel Chauderon, in 1652. Sebastian Michaelis indeed would have us to believe, that at one time the tribunal at Geneva put no criminals accused of witchcraft to death, unless on proof of their having done actual injury to men or animals, and that the other phenomena of confessions, etc., were regarded as mere mental delusions. If such however was originally the case, this humane rule was unfortunately soon abandoned; for nowhere did the mania of persecution at one time rage more than in Geneva, as is evident from Delrio's preface. It seems fairly entitled however to the credit of having been the first state in Europe [Pg 43] which emancipated itself from the influence of this bloody superstition.

In France, the edict of Louis XIV., in 1682, directed only against *pretended* witches and prophets, proves distinctly that the belief in the reality of witchcraft had ceased, and that it was merely the pretended exercise of such powers which it was thought necessary to suppress. It is highly to the credit of Louis and his ministry, that this step was taken by him in opposition to a formal *requête* by the Parliament of Normandy, presented in the year 1670, on the occasion of his Majesty having commuted the punishment of death into banishment for life, in the case of a set of criminals whom the Parliament had condemned *more majorum* for witchcraft[34]. In this apology for their belief, they reminded Louis of the inveterate practice of the kingdom; of the numerous arrêts of the Parliament of Paris, from the trials in Artois in 1459, reported by Monstrelet, down to that of Leger in May 1616; of the judgments pronounced under the commission addressed by Henry the Great to the Sieur de l'Ancre, in 1609; of those pronounced by the Parliament of Toulouse, in 1577; of the celebrated case of Gaufridy, in 1611; of the *arrêts* of the Parliaments of Dijon and Rennes, following on the remarkable trial of the Maréchal de Retz, in 1441, who was burnt [Pg 44] for magic and sorcery in the presence of the Duke of Bretagne: and after combating the authority of a canon of the Council of Aucyra, and of a passage in St. Augustine, which had been quoted against them by their opponents, they sum up their pleading with the following placid and charitable supplication to his Majesty—"Qu'elle voudra bien souffrir l'exécution des arrêts qu'ils ont rendus, et leur permettre de continuer l'instruction et jugement des procès des personnes accusés de sortilège, et que la piété de Votre Majesté ne souffrira pas que l'on introduise durant son règne une nouvelle opinion contraire aux principes de la religion, pour laquelle Votre Majesté a toujours si glorieusement employé ses soins et ses armes." Notwithstanding this concluding compliment to his Majesty's zeal and piety, it is doubtful whether the Parliament of Normandy, in their anxiety for the support of their constitutional privileges, could have taken a more effectual plan to ruin their own case, than by thus presenting Louis with a sort of anthology or elegant extracts from the atrocities of the witch trials; and in all probability the appearance of the edict of 1680 was accelerated by the very remonstrance by which the Norman sages had hoped to strangle it.

In turning from the Continent to the state of matters in England and Scotland, the prospect is anything but a comfortable one; and certainly nothing can be more deceitful than the unction which Dr. Francis Hutchinson lays to [Pg 45] his soul, when he ventures to assert that England was one of those countries where its horrors were least felt and earliest suppressed. Witness the trials and convictions which, even before the enactment of any penal statute, took place for this imaginary offence, as in the case of Bolingbroke and Margery Jourdain, whose incantations the genius of Shakespear has rendered familiar to us in the Second Part of King Henry VI. Witness the successive statutes of Henry VIII., of Elizabeth, and of James I., the last of which was repealed only in 1736, and passed while Coke was Attorney-General, and Bacon a member of the Commons! Witness the exploits of Hopkins, the witch-finder-general, against the wretched creatures in Lincolnshire, of whom—

> "Some only for not being drown'd,
> And some for sitting above ground
> Whole nights and days upon their breeches,
> And feeling pain, were hanged for witches."
>
> *Hudibras*, part ii. canto iii.

What would the Doctor have said to the list of THREE THOUSAND victims executed during the dynasty of the Long Parliament alone, which Zachary Grey, the editor of Hudibras, says he himself perused? What absurdities can exceed those sworn to in the trials of the witches of Warboys, whose fate was, in Dr. Hutchinson's days, and perhaps is still, [Pg 46] annually "improved" in a commemoration sermon at Cambridge? or in the case of the luckless Lancashire witches, sacrificed, as afterwards appeared, to the villany of the impostor Robinson, whose story furnished materials to the

dramatic muse of Heywood and Shadwell? How melancholy is the spectacle of a man like Hale, condemning Amy Duny and Rose Cullender, in 1664, on evidence which, though corroborated by the opinion of Sir Thomas Browne, a child would now be disposed to laugh at? A better order of things, it is true, commences with the Chief-justiceship of Holt. The evidence against Mother Munnings, in 1694, would, with a man of weaker intellect, have sealed the fate of the unfortunate old woman; but Holt charged the jury with such firmness and good sense, that a verdict of Not Guilty, almost the first then on record in a trial for witchcraft, was found. In about ten other trials before Holt, from 1694 to 1701, the result was the same. Wenham's case, which followed in 1711, sufficiently evinced the change which had taken place in the feelings of judges. Throughout the whole trial, Chief Justice Powell seems to have sneered openly at the absurdities which the witnesses, and in particular the clergymen who were examined, were endeavouring to press upon the jury; but, with all his exertions, a verdict of guilty was found against the prisoner. With the view however of securing her pardon, by showing how far the prejudices of the jury had gone, he asked, [Pg 47]
when the verdict was given in, "whether they found her guilty upon the indictment for conversing with the devil in the shape of a cat?" The foreman answered, "We find her guilty of that!" It is almost needless to add that a pardon was procured for her. And yet after all this, in 1716, Mrs. Hicks and her daughter, aged *nine*, were hanged at Huntingdon for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm, by pulling off their stockings and making a lather of soap!

With this crowning atrocity, the catalogue of murders in England closes; the penal statutes against witchcraft being repealed in 1736, and the pretended exercise of such arts being punished in future by imprisonment and pillory. Even yet however the case of Rex *v.* Weldon, in 1809, and the still later case of Barker *v.* Ray, in Chancery (August 2, 1827), proves that the popular belief in such practices has by no means ceased; and it is not very long ago that a poor woman narrowly escaped with her life from a revival of Hopkins's trial by water[35]. Barrington, in his observations on the statute 20 Henry VI., does not hesitate to estimate the numbers of those put to death in England on this charge at 30,000!

We now turn to Scotland. Much light has been thrown on the rise and progress, decline and fall, of the delusion in [Pg 48]
that country by the valuable work of Mr. Pitcairn[36], which contains abstracts of every trial in the supreme Criminal Court of Scotland: the author has given a faithful and minute view of the procedure in each case, accompanied with full extracts from the original documents, where they contained anything of interest.

In no country perhaps did this gloomy superstition assume a darker or bloodier character than in Scotland. Wild, mountainous, and pastoral countries, partly from the striking, varied, and sometimes terrible phenomena which they present,—partly from the habits and manner of life, the tendency to thought and meditation which they create and foster,—have always been the great haunts in which superstition finds its cradle and home. The temper of the Scots, combining reflection with enthusiasm—their mode of life in earlier days, which amidst the occasional bustle of wild and agitating exertion, left many intervals of mental vacuity in solitude—their night watches by the cave on the hill-side—their uncertain climate, of sunshine and vapour and storm—all contributed to exalt and keep alive that [Pg 49]
superstitions fear with which ignorance looks on every extraordinary movement of nature. From the earliest period of the Scottish annals, "All was bot gaistis, and eldrich phantasie;" the meteors and auroræ boreales which prevailed in this mountainous region were tortured into apparitions of horsemen combating in the air, or corpse-candles burning on the hill-tops[37]. Skeletons danced as familiar guests at the nuptials of our kings[38]: spectres warned them back from the battle-field of Flodden, and visionary heralds proclaimed from the market-cross the long catalogue of the slain.

"Figures that seemed to rise and die,
Gibber and sign, advance and fly,
While nought confirmed, could ear or eye
Discern of sound or mien;
Yet darkly did it seem as there
Heralds and pursuivants appear,
With trumpet sound and blazon fair,
A summons to proclaim."
Marmion, canto v.

Incubi and succubi wandered about in all directions, with a degree of assurance and plausibility which would have deceived the very elect[39]; and wicked churchmen were cited by audible voices and an accompaniment of thunder before the tribunal of Heaven[40]. The annals of the thirteenth century are dignified with the exploits of three [Pg 50]
wizards, before whom Nostradamus and Merlin must stoop their crests, Thomas of Ercildoune, Sir Michael Scott, and Lord Soulis. The Tramontane fame of the second had even crossed the Alps, for Dante[41] accommodates him with a place in Hell, between Bonatto, the astrologer of Guido di Monte Feltro, and Asdente of Parma.

But previous to the Reformation, these superstitious notions, though generally prevalent, had hardly assumed a form much calculated to disturb the peace of society. Though in some cases, where these powers had been supposed to have been exercised for treasonable purposes, the punishment of death had been inflicted on the witches[42], men did not as yet think it necessary, merely for the supposed possession of such powers, or their benevolent exercise, to apply the purifying power of fire to eradicate the disorder. Sir Michael and the Rhymer lived and died peaceably; and the tragical fate of the tyrant Soulis on the Nine Stane Rigg was owing, not to the supposed sorceries which had [Pg 51]
polluted his Castle of Hermitage, but to those more palpable atrocities which had been dictated by the demon of his own evil conscience, and executed by those iron-handed and iron-hearted agents, who were so readily evoked by the simpler spell of feudal despotism.

From the commencement of the Records of the Scottish Justiciary Court, down to the reign of Mary, no trial properly for witchcraft appears on the record. For though in the case of the unfortunate Countess of Glammis, executed in 1536, during the reign of James V., on an accusation of treasonably conspiring the king's death by

poison, some hints of sorcery are thrown into the dittay, probably with the view of exciting a popular prejudice against one whose personal beauty and high spirit rendered her a favourite with the people, it is obvious that nothing was really rested on this charge.

But with the introduction of the Reformation "novus rerum nascitur ordo." Far from divesting themselves of the dark and bloody superstitions which Innocent's bull had systematized and propagated, the German reformers had preserved this, while they demolished every other idol, and moving

"In dismal dance around the furnace blue,"

had made even children pass through the fire to Moloch. Their Scottish brethren, adopting implicitly the creed of [Pg 52] their continental prototypes, transplanted to our own country, a soil unfortunately but too well prepared for such a seed, the whole doctrine of Satan's visible agency on earth, with all the grotesque horrors of his commerce with mankind. The aid of the sword of justice was immediately found to be indispensable to the weapons of the spirit; and the verse of Moses which declares that a witch shall not be suffered to live, was forthwith made the groundwork of the Act 73 of the ninth parliament of Queen Mary, which enacted the punishment of death against witches or consulters with witches.

The consequences of this authoritative recognition of the creed of witchcraft became immediately obvious with the reign of James which followed. Witchcraft became the all-engrossing topic of the day, and the ordinary accusation resorted to whenever it was the object of one individual to ruin another, just as certain other offences were during the reign of Justinian, and during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy. In Scotland the evil was not less busy in high places, than among the humbler beings, who had generally been professors of the art magic. A sort of relation of clientage seems to have been established between the operative performers, and those noble patrons (chiefly, we regret to say, of the fair sex) by whom their services were put in requisition. The Lady Buccleugh, of Branxholm Hall, whose spells have furnished our own Northern Wizard with some of his most striking pictures,—the Countess [Pg 53] of Athol, the Countess of Huntly, the wife of the Chancellor Arran, the Lady Ker, wife of James, Master of Requests, the Countess of Lothian, the Countess of Angus, (more fortunate in her generation than her grandmother Lady Glammis), were all, if we are to believe the scandal of Scotstarvet, either protectors of witches or themselves dabblers in the art[43]. Even Knox himself did not escape the accusation of witchcraft; the power and energy of mind with which Providence had gifted him, the enemies of the Reformation attributed to a darker source. He was accused of having attempted to raise "some sanctes" in the churchyard of St. Andrew's; but in the course of this resuscitation upstarted the devil himself, having a huge pair of horns on his head, at which terrible sight Knox's secretary became mad with fear, and shortly after died. Nay, to such a height had the mania gone, that Scot of Scotstarvet mentions that Sir Lewis Ballantyne, Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland, "by curiosity dealt with a warlock called Richard Grahame," (the same person who figures in the trial of Alison Balfour, as a confederate of Bothwell), "to raise the devil, who having raised him in his own yard in the Canongate, he was thereby so terrified that he took sickness and thereof died." This was a "staggering state of Scots statesmen" indeed, when even the supreme criminal judge of [Pg 54] Scotland was thus at the head of the delinquents. Well might any unfortunate criminal have said with Angelo—

"Thieves for their robbery have authority,
When judges steal themselves."
Measure f. Measure, ii. 2.

Nor, in fact, was the Church less deeply implicated than the court and the hall of justice; for in the case of Alison Pearson (1588) we find the celebrated Patrick Adamson, Archbishop of St. Andrew's, laying aside the fear of the Act of Parliament, and condescending to apply to this poor wretch for a potion to cure him of his sickness!

A faith so strong and so general could not be long in manifesting itself in works. In 1572 occurs the first entry in the Justiciary Record, the trial of Janet Bowman, of which no particulars are given, except the emphatic sentence "Convict: and Brynt." No fewer than thirty-five trials appear to have taken place before the Court of Justiciary during the remainder of James's reign, (to 1625), in almost all of which the result is the same as in the case of Bowman.

Two or three of these are peculiarly interesting; one, from the difference between its details and those which form the usual materials of the witch trials; the others, from the high rank of some of those involved in them, and the strange and almost inexplicable extent of the delusion. The first to which we allude is that of Bessie Dunlop[44], [Pg 55] convicted on her own confession; the peculiarity in this case is that, instead of the devil himself *in propriâ personâ*, the spiritual beings to whom we are introduced are our old friends the fairies, the same sweet elves whom Paracelsus defends, and old Aubrey delighted to honour. Bessie's familiar was a being whom she calls Thom Reed, and whom she describes in her judicial declaration[45] as "an honest weel elderlie man, gray bairdit, and had ane gray coitt with Lumbard sleeves of the auld fassoun, ane pair of gray brekis, and quhyte schankis gartarrit abone the kne." Their first meeting took place as she was going to the pasture, "gretand (weeping) verrie fast for her kow that was dead, and her husband and child that were lyand sick in the land-ill (some epidemic of the time), and she new risen out of gissane (childbed)." Thom, who took care that his character should open upon her in a favourable light, chid her for her distrust in Providence, and told her that her sheep and her child would both die, but that her husband should recover, which comforted her a little. His true character, however, appeared at a second "forgathering," when he unblushingly urged her "to denye her christendom and renounce her baptism, and the faith she took at the fount stane." The poor witch answered, that "though she should be riven at horse-tails she would never do that," but [Pg 56] promised him obedience in all things else,—a qualified concession with which he rather grumblingly departed. His third appearance took place in her own house, in presence of her husband and *three* tailors (three!). To the infinite consternation of this trio and of the gudeman, he took her by the apron and led her out of the house to the kiln-end, where she saw eight women and four men sitting; the men in gentlemen's clothing, and the women with plaids round about them, and "very seemly to see." They said to her, "Welcome Bessie, wilt thou go with us?" but as she made no answer to this invitation, they, after some conversation among themselves which she could not understand,

disappeared of a sudden, and "a hideous ugly sough of wind followed them." She was told by Thom, after their departure, that these "were the gude wights that wonned in the Court of Elfane," and that she ought to have accepted their invitation. She afterwards received a visit from the Queen of Elfane in person, who condescendingly asked a drink of her, and prophesied the death of her child and the recovery of her husband. The use which poor Bessie made of her privileges was of the most harmless kind, for her spells seem to have been all exerted to cure, and not to kill. Most of the articles of her indictment are for cures performed, nor is there any charge against her of exerting her powers for a malicious purpose. As usual however she was convicted and burnt. [Pg 57]

This was evidently a pure case of mental delusion, but it was soon followed by one of a darker and more complex character, in which, as far as the principal actor was concerned, it seems doubtful whether the mummery of witchcraft formed anything more than a mere pageant in the dark drama of human passions and crimes. We allude to the trials of Lady Fowlis and of Hector Munro of Fowlis, for witchcraft and poisoning, in 1590. This is one of those cases which might plausibly be quoted in support of the ground on which the witch trials have been defended by Selden, Bayle, and the writers of the Encyclopédie,—namely, the necessity of punishing the pretensions to such powers, or the belief in their existence, with as great rigour as if their exercise had been real. "The law against witches," says Selden, "does not prove there be any, but it punishes the malice of those people that use such means to take away men's lives. If one should profess that, by turning his hat and crying buz, he could take away a man's life, though in truth he could do no such thing, yet this were a just law made by the state, that whoever should turn his hat thrice and cry buz, with an intention to take away a man's life, shall be put to death." We shall hardly stop to expose the absurdity of this doctrine of Selden in the abstract, which thus makes the will universally equal to the [Pg 58] deed; but when we read such cases as that of Lady Fowlis, it cannot at the same time be denied, that the power which the pretended professor of such arts thus obtained over the popular mind, and the relaxation of moral principle with which it was naturally accompanied in the individual himself, rendered him a most dangerous member of society. In general, the profession of sorcery was associated with other crimes, and was frequently employed as a mere cover by which these might with the more security and effect be perpetrated. The philters and love-potions of La Voisin and Forman, the private court calendar of the latter, containing "what ladies loved what lords best," (which the Chief Justice prudently would not allow to be read in court), are sufficiently well known. Charms of a more disgusting nature appear to have been supplied by our own witches, as in the case of Roy, tried before the sheriff of Perth, in 1601[46], and in that of Colquhoun, of Luss, tried for sorcery and incest, 1633, where the instrument of seduction was a jewel obtained from a necromancer. In short, wherever any flagitious purpose was to be effected, nothing more was necessary than to have recourse to some notorious witch. In poisoning, in particular, they were accomplished adepts, as was naturally to be expected from the power which it gave them of realizing their [Pg 59] own prophecies. Poisoners and witches are classed together in the conclusion of Louis XIV.'s edict; and the trials before the Chambre Ardente prove that the two trades were generally found in harmonious juxtaposition. Our own Mrs. Turner, in England, affords us no bad specimen of this union of the poisoner with the procuress and the witch; while the prevalence of the same connection in Scotland appears from the details of the case of Robert Erskine, of Dun, from that of the daughter of Lord Cliftonhall, Euphemia Macalzean, and still more from the singular case of Lady Fowlis.

The object of the conspirators in this last case was the destruction of the young lady of Balnagown, which would have enabled George Ross, of Balnagown, to marry the young Lady Fowlis. But in order to entitle them to the succession of Fowlis, supposing the alliance to be effected, a more extensive slaughter was required. Lady Fowlis's stepsons, Robert and Hector, with their families, stood in the way, and these were next to be removed. Nay, the indictment goes the length of charging her with projecting the murder of more than thirty individuals, including an accomplice of her own, Katharine Ross, the daughter of Sir David Ross, whom she had seduced into her schemes, a woman apparently of the most resolute temper, and obviously of an acute and penetrating intellect; there seems reason to doubt whether she had any faith in the power of the charms and sorceries to which she resorted, but she [Pg 60] probably thought that, in availing herself of the services of those hags whom she employed, the more prudent course would be to allow them to play off their mummeries in their own way, while she combined them with more effective human means. Accordingly the work of destruction commenced with the common spell of making two pictures of clay, representing the intended victims; but instead of exposing them to the fire, or burying them with their heads downward, the pictures were in this case hung up on the north side of the room, and the lady, with her familiars, shot several arrows, shod with elf-arrow heads, at them, but without effect. Though the Lady Fowlis gave orders that other two pictures should be prepared, in order to renew the attempt, she seems forthwith to have resorted to more vigorous measures, and to have associated Katharine Ross and her brother George in her plans. The first composition prepared for her victims was a stoupful of poisoned ale, but this ran out in making. She then gave orders to prepare "a pig of ranker poison, that would kill shortly," and this she dispatched by her nurse to the young Laird of Fowlis. Providence however again protected him: the "pig" fell and was broken by the way, and the nurse, who could not resist the temptation of tasting the contents, paid the penalty of her curiosity with her life. So corrosive was the nature of the potion, that the very grass on which it fell was destroyed. Nothing however could [Pg 61] move Lady Fowlis from her purpose. Like Mrs. Turner, who treated Overbury with spiders, cantharides, and arsenic, alternately, that she might be able to "hit his complexion," she now proceeded to try the effect of "ratton poyson," (ratsbane,) of which she seems to have administered several doses to the young laird, "in eggs, browis, or kale," but still without effect, his constitution apparently proving too strong for them. She had more nearly succeeded, however, with her sister-in-law, her female victim. The "ratton poyson" which she had prepared for Lady Balnagown, she contrived, by means of one of her subsidiary hags, to mix in a dish of kidneys, on which Lady Balnagown and her company supped; and its effects were so violent, that even the wretch by whom it was administered revolted at the sight. At the date of the trial, however, it would seem the unfortunate lady was still alive. Lady Fowlis was at last apprehended, on the confession of several of the witches she had employed, and more than one of whom had been executed before her own trial took place. The proceedings after all terminated in an acquittal, a result which is only explicable by observing that the jury was evidently a packed one, and consisted principally of the dependants of the houses of Munro and Fowlis.

This scene of *diablerie* and poisoning, however, did not terminate here. It now appeared that Mr. Hector, one of his stepmother's intended victims, had himself been the principal performer in a witch underplot directed against the life of his brother George. Unlike his more energetic stepmother, credulous to the last degree, he seems to have been entirely under the control of the hags by whom he was surrounded, and who harassed and terrified him with fearful predictions and ghastly exhibitions of all kinds. He does not appear to have been naturally a wicked man, for the very same witches who were afterwards leagued with him against the life of George, he had consulted with a view of curing his elder brother Robert, by whose death he would have succeeded to the estates. But being seized with a lingering illness, and told by his familiars that the only chance he had of recovering his health was that his brother should die for him, he seems quietly to have devoted him to death, under the strong instinct of self-preservation. In order to prevent suspicion, it was agreed that his death should be lingering and gradual, and the officiating witch, who seemed to have the same confidence in her own nicety of calculation as the celebrated inventress of the *poudre de successions*, warranted the victim until the 17th of April following. It must be admitted that the incantations which followed were well calculated to produce a strong effect, both moral and physical, on the weak and credulous being on whom they were played off. Shortly after midnight, in the month of January, the witches left the house in which Mr. Hector was lying sick at the time, and passed to a piece of ground lying betwixt the lands of two feudal superiors, where they dug a large grave. Hector Munro, wrapped in blankets, was then carried forth, the bearers all the time remaining dumb, and silently deposited in the grave, the turf being laid over him and pressed down with staves. His foster-mother, Christian Neill, was then ordered to run the breadth of nine riggs, and returning to the grave, to ask the chief witch "which was her choice." She answered that Mr. Hector was her choice to live, and his brother George to die for him. This cooling ceremony being three times repeated, the patient, frozen with cold and terror, was carried back to bed. Mr. Hector's witches were more successful than the hags employed by his stepmother. George died in the month of April, as had been predicted, doubtless by other spells than the force of sympathy, and Hector appears to have recovered. He had the advantage, however, of a selected jury on his trial, as well as Lady Fowlis, and had the good fortune to be acquitted.

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Scarcely had the agitation produced by these trials subsided, when the public mind was again confounded by a new, a more extensive, and almost inexplicable scene of enchantment, directed against the life of James and his Queen, in 1591.

The first hint of those strange proceedings which were afterwards disclosed, was derived from the confessions of a girl named Gellie, or Gellis Duncan, servant to the Deputy Bailiff of Tranent. Some sudden cures performed by this girl, and other suspicious points in her conduct, having attracted the observation of her master, he, with a laudable anxiety for the discovery of the truth, "did, with the help of others, torment her with the torture of the pilliewinkis [a species of thumbscrew] upon her fingers, which is a grievous paine, and binding or wrenching her head with a cord or rope, which is a most cruel torment also[47]." But, notwithstanding these persuasive applications, no confession could be extorted. At last it was suggested by some of the operators, that her silence was owing to her having been marked by the devil, and on a diligent examination the mark was found on the fore part of the throat. No sooner was it detected than the charm was burst: she confessed that all her cures were performed by the assistance of the devil, and proceeded to make disclosures relative to the extent of her guilt, and the number of associates, which utterly eclipse all the preceding "discoveries of witchcraft," with which the criminal records furnish us down to this time. Thirty or forty different individuals, some of whom, as the pamphlet observes, were "as civill honest women as anie that dwelled within the city of Edinburgh," were denounced by her, and forthwith apprehended upon her confession. Nor was this list confined to the lower classes, from whom the victims offered to this superstition had generally been selected; for among those apprehended on Duncan's information was Euphemia Macalzean, the daughter of Lord Cliftonhall, one of the senators of the College of Justice.

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To trace out the wide field of witchcraft which was opened to him by the confessions of the accused, as they were successively examined, was an employment highly congenial to the credulous mind of James, prone to every superstition, and versed in all the traditionary lore of Sprenger and Bodinus. Day after day he attended the examinations in person, was put into a "wonderful admiration" by every new trait of grotesque horror which their confessions disclosed, and even carried his curiosity so far as to send for Gellie Duncan herself, who had, according to the confession of another witch, Agnes Sampson (the wise wife of Keith), played a reel or dance before the witches, as they moved in procession to meet the devil in the kirk of North Berwick, in order that he might himself listen to this infernal air—"who upon the like trumpe did play the said dance before the King's majestie, who, in respect of the strangeness of these matters, took great delight to be present at these examinations."

All these disclosures, however, it may be anticipated, were not without a liberal application of the usual compulsitor in such cases—the torture. The chief sufferer was a person named Cuningham, who figures in the trials under the name of Dr. Fian, a schoolmaster near Tranent, and apparently a person of dissolute character, although, as appeared from his conduct on this inquisition, also of singular strength of mind and firmness of nerve. He was put to the question, "*first*, by thrawing of his head with a rope, whereat he would confess nothing; *secondly*, he was persuaded by *fair means* to confess his folly," (would it not have been as natural to have tried the fair means first?) "but that would prevail as little; lastly, he was put to the most cruel and severe pain in the world, called the Boots[48], who, after he had received three strokes, being inquired if he would confess his damnable acts and wicked life, his tongue would not serve him to speak." Being released from this instrument of torture, he appears, under the influence of the agony produced by it, to have subscribed a confession, embracing not only the alleged charges of conspiracy against the King by means of witchcraft, but a variety of particulars relative to his own life and conversation, by no means of an edifying character.

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But the weight to be attached to this confession was soon made apparent by what followed; for Fian, who had been recommitted to prison, and who had appeared for a day or two to be "very solitarye" and penitent, contrived in the course of the next night to make his escape, and on his re-apprehension and second examination thought fit, to the great discomposure of James, to deny the whole of the charges which he had previously admitted. "Whereupon the King's majestie, perceiving his stubborn wilfulnesse," prescribed the following remedy for his relapse. "His nayles

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upon his fingers were riven and pulled with an instrument called in Scottish a Turkas[49]. And under every naile there was thrust in two needles over even up to the heads. At all which torments, notwithstanding, the doctor never shrunke anie whitt, neither would he then confess it the sooner for all the tortures inflicted upon him. Then was he *with all convenient speed* by commandment conveyed again to the torment of the boots, where he continued a long time, and abode so many blows in them that his legs were crushed and beaten together *as small as might be*, and the bones and flesh so bruised, that the blood and marrow spouted forth in great abundance, whereby they were made unserviceable for ever."

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The doctor, it will be seen, did not long require their services; but whether his confession was obtained by fair means or foul, it certainly bears so startling a resemblance to that of the leading witch, Agnes Sampson, a woman whom Spottiswood describes as "matron-like, grave and settled in her answers," that it is hardly to be wondered at that the superstitious mind of James should have been confounded by the coincidence. Nothing, in fact, can exceed the general harmony of the accounts given by the different witches of their proceedings, except the ludicrous and yet horrible character of the incidents which they record, and which might well extort, even from James himself, the observation he appears to have made in the commencement of the proceedings, that they were all "extreme lyars."

James, it appears, from his singular piety, and the active part which, long before the composition of his 'Dæmonologie,' he had taken against Satan and his invisible world, had been, from the first, most obnoxious to his servants upon earth. On one occasion, when an unsuccessful attempt had been made against his life, the fiend pleaded (though we do not see why a Scotch devil should speak French) that he had no power over him, adding, "Il est homme de Dieu[50]." The visit which, in a sudden fit of romantic gallantry, he paid to Norway, to bring over his queen, was too favourable an opportunity for the instruments of Satan to be neglected; and accordingly it was

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resolved by the conclave that every exertion should be made to raise such a tempest as should infallibly put an end to the greatest enemy (as Satan himself confidentially admitted to one of the witches) whom the devil ever had in the world. The preparations were therefore commenced with all due solemnity. Satan undertook, in the first instance, to raise a mist so as to strand the King on the English coast, but, more active measures being thought necessary, Dr. Fian, as the devil's secretary, or register, as he is called throughout these trials, addressed a letter to a distinguished witch, Marion Linkup, and others of the sisterhood, directing them to meet their master on the sea within five days, for the purpose of destroying the King[51]. On All-hallowmas Eve the infernal party, to the number of about two hundred, embarked, "each in a riddle or sieve, and went into the same very substantially." In what latitude they met with Satan is not stated, but after some cruizing about he made his appearance, and delivered to Robert Grierson a cat, which it appears had previously been drawn nine times through the cruik[52], giving the word to "cast the same into the sea! Hola!" And this notable charm was not without its effect, for James, whose fleet was at that time clearing the Danish coast, afterwards declared that his ship alone had the wind contrary, while all the other vessels

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had a fair one.

The charm upon the water being finished, the witches landed, and after enjoying themselves with wine, which they drank out of the same sieves in which they had previously sailed so "substantially," they moved on in procession towards the kirk of North Berwick, which had been fixed on as their place of rendezvous with their master. The company exceeded one hundred, of whom thirty-two are enumerated in Agnes Sampson's confession. And they were preceded by Gellie Duncan, playing upon the Jew's-harp the following ditty:

> "Cummer, goe ye before, Cummer, goe ye,
> Gif ye will not go before, Cummer, let me!"

Here their master was to appear in a character less common in Scotland than on the Continent, that of a preacher. Doctor Fian, who, as the devil's register, took the lead in the ceremonies at the kirk, *blew* up the doors, and blew in the lichts, which resembled black candles sticking round about the pulpit, while another of the party, Grey Meill, acted as door-keeper. Suddenly the devil himself started up in the pulpit, attired in a gown and hat, both black. The sketch of his appearance given in Sir James Melville's Memoirs has something of the power and picturesqueness of Dante. "His body was hard lyk yrn, as they thocht that handled him; his faice was terrible, his nose lyk the bek of an egle, gret bournyng eyn" (occhi di bragia); "his handis and leggis were herry, with clawis upon his handis, and feit

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lyk the Griffin, and spak with a how voice." He first called the roll of the congregation, to which each answered by name; he then demanded of them whether they had been good servants, what they had done since the last time they had convened, and what had been the success of their conjurations against the King. Gray Meill, the doorkeeper, who was rash enough to remark, that "naething ailet the King yet, God be thankit," was rewarded for this *mal-apropos* observation by a great blow. The devil then proceeded to admonish them to keep his commandments, which were simply to do all the evil they could; on his leaving the pulpit, the whole congregation, male and female, did homage to him, by saluting him in a way and manner which we must leave those who are curious in such ceremonies to ascertain from the original indictments.

Such is the strange story in which all the criminals examined before James and the Council substantially agree; and unquestionably the singular coincidence of their narratives remains at this day one of the most difficult problems in the philosophy of Scottish history. The fate of the unfortunate beings who confessed these enormities could not, in that age of credulity, be for a moment doubtful. Fian, to whom, after the inhuman tortures to which he had been subjected, life could not be of much value, was condemned, strangled, and burnt. Agnes Sampson underwent a

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similar fate. Barbara Napier, another person said to have been present at the convention, though acquitted of this charge, was condemned on certain other charges of sorcery in the indictment; but so strongly was the mind of James excited, that, though he had secured a conviction against her, he actually brought the assize to trial for wilful error in acquitting her on this point of dittay.

But the most distinguished victim connected with this scene of witchcraft was Euphemia Macalzean, the daughter of an eminent judge, Lord Cliftonhall, a woman of strong mind and licentious passions, a devoted adherent to the Roman Catholic faith, a partisan of Bothwell (who was accused by several of the witches as implicated in these

practices against the King's life), and a determined enemy to James and to the Reformed religion. Whatever may have been the precise extent of this lady's acquirements in sorcery, there can be no doubt that she had been on terms of the most familiar intercourse with abandoned wretches of both sexes, pretenders to witchcraft, and that she had repeatedly employed their aid in attempting to remove out of the way persons who were obnoxious to her, or who stood in the way of the indulgence of her passions. The number of sorceries, poisonings, and attempts at poisoning, charged against her in the indictment, almost rivals the accusations against Brinvilliers; and, though the jury [Pg 73] acquitted her of several of these, they convicted her of participation in the murder of her own godfather, of her husband's nephew, and of Douglas of Pennfrastone; besides being present at the convention of North Berwick, and various other meetings of witches, at which the King's death had been contrived. Her punishment was the severest which the court could pronounce: instead of the ordinary sentence, directing her to be first strangled at a stake and then burned, the unhappy woman was doomed to be "bund to ane staik and burnt in assis, *quick*, to the death," a fate which she endured with the greatest firmness, on the 25th of June, 1591. So deep and permanent was the impression made by these scenes upon the King's mind, that we owe to them the preparation of an Act of Parliament anent the form of process against witches, mentioned among the unprinted acts for 1597, and more immediately the composition of that notable work of the Scottish Solomon, the 'Dæmonologie.'

In the trials of Bessie Roy, of James Reid, of Patrick Currie, of Isobel Grierson, and of Grizel Gardiner[53], the charges are principally of taking off and laying on diseases either on men or cattle; meetings with the devil in various shapes and places; raising and dismembering dead bodies for the purpose of enchantments; destroying crops; [Pg 74] scaring honest persons in the shape of cats; taking away women's milk; committing housebreaking and theft by means of enchantments, and so on. South-running water, salt, rowan-tree, enchanted flints (probably elf-arrow heads), and doggrel verses (generally a translation of the Creed or Lord's Prayer) were the means employed for effecting a cure. Diseases again were laid on by forming pictures of clay or wax, which were placed before the fire or buried with the heads downward; by placing a dead hand, or some mutilated member, in the house of the intended victim; or, as in the case of Grierson, by the simpler process of throwing an enchanted tailzie (slice) of beef against his door. It was immaterial whether the supposed powers of the witch were exerted for good or evil. In the case of Grieve, no malefice (to use the technical term) was charged against him, but simply that he had cured diseases by means of charms; and the same in the case of Alison Pearson; but both were executed. Bartie Paterson seems to have been the most pious of warlocks, for his patients were uniformly directed, in addition to his prescriptions, to "ask their health at all livand wichtis abone or under the earth, in the name of Jesus." The trial of Robert Erskine of Dun, though given as one for witchcraft, seems to have been a simple case of poisoning, he having merely resorted to a notorious witch, named Margaret Irvine, for the herbs by which he despatched his nephews. The case of Margaret [Pg 75] Wallace, towards the close of James's reign, deserves notice as being the first where something like a stand was made against some of the fundamental positions of the demonologists; the counsel for the prisoner contending strongly against the doctrine that, in the case of a person accused of witchcraft, every cure performed by her was to be set down to the agency of the devil. The defence however, though it seems to have been ably conducted, was unsuccessful.

Matters continued much in the same state during the reign of Charles I. From 1625 to 1640 there are eight entries of trials for witchcraft on the Record, one of which, that of Elizabeth Bathgate, is remarkable, as being followed by an acquittal. In that of Katharine Oswald[54], the prisoner's counsel had the boldness to argue, that no credit was to be given to the confessions of the other witches, who had sworn to the presence of the prisoner at some of their orgies; "for all lawyers agree," argued he, "that they are not really transported, but only in their fancies, while asleep, in which they sometimes dream they see others there." This reasoning however appears to have made no impression on the jury, any more than the argument in Young's case[55], that the stoppage of the mill, which she was accused of having effected *twenty-nine years before*, by sorcery, might have been the effect of natural causes. About one-half of [Pg 76] the convictions during this period proceed on judicial confessions; whether voluntary or extorted does not appear. They are not in general interesting, though some of the details in the trial of Hamilton[56] differ a little from the ordinary routine of the witch trials of the time. Having met the devil on Kingston Hills, in East Lothian, he was persuaded by the tempter to renounce his baptism—a piece of apostasy for which he received only four shillings. The devil further directed him to employ the following polite adjuration when he wished to raise him, namely, to beat the ground three times with his stick, and say, "Rise up, foul thief!" On the other hand, the devil's behaviour towards him was equally unceremonious; for on one occasion, when Hamilton had neglected to keep his appointment, he gave him a severe drubbing with a baton.

The scene darkens however, towards the close of this reign, with the increasing dominion of the Puritans. In 1640 the General Assembly passed an act, that all ministers should take particular note of witches and charmers, and that the commissioners should recommend to the supreme judicature the unsparing application of the laws against them. In 1643 (August 19), after setting forth the increase of the crime, they recommend the granting a standing [Pg 77] commission from the Privy Council or Justiciary to any "understanding gentlemen or magistrates," to apprehend, try, and execute justice against the delinquents. The subject appears to have been resumed in 1644, 1645, and 1649; and their remonstrances, it would seem, had not been without effect, for in 1649, the year after the execution of Charles, an Act of Parliament was passed confirming and extending the provisions of Queen Mary's, so as more effectually to reach consulters with witches, in regard to whom it was thought (though we do not see why) that the terms of the former act were a little equivocal. From this time, not only does the number of convictions, which since the death of James had been on the decline, increase, but the features of the cases assume a deeper tinge of horror. The old, impossible, and abominable fancies of the 'Malleus' were revived in the trials of Janet Barker and Margaret Lauder[57], which correspond in a remarkable manner with some of the evidence in the Mora trials. About thirty trials appear on the record between this last date and the Restoration, only one of which appears to have terminated in an acquittal; while at a single circuit-court, held at Glasgow, Stirling, and Ayr, in 1659, seventeen persons were convicted and burnt for this crime.

Numerous however as are the cases in the Records of Justiciary, it must be kept in view that these afford an extremely inadequate idea of the extent to which this pest prevailed over the country. For though Sir George Mackenzie doubts whether, in virtue merely of the general powers given by the act, 1563, inferior judges did at any time, of their own authority, try and condemn criminals accused of witchcraft, the same end was managed in a different way. The Court of Justiciary was anxious to get rid of a jurisdiction which would alone have afforded them sufficient employment; and the Privy Council were in use to grant commissions to resident gentlemen and ministers, to examine, and afterwards to try and execute, witches all over Scotland; and so numerous were these commissions, that Wodrow expresses his astonishment at the number found in the Registers. Under these commissions multitudes were burnt in every part of the kingdom. In Mercer's Manuscript Diary, Lamont's Diary, and Whitelock's Memorials, occasional notices of the numbers burnt are perpetually occurring. [Pg 78]

In every case of the kind it would appear that the clergy displayed the most intemperate zeal. It was before them that the poor wretches "delated" of witchcraft were first brought for examination,—in most cases after a preparatory course of solitary confinement, cold, famine, want of sleep, or actual torture. On some occasions the clergy themselves actually performed the part of the prickers, and inserted long pins into the flesh of the witches in order to try their sensibility; and in all they laboured, by the most persevering investigations, to obtain from the accused a confession, which might afterwards be used against them on their trial, and which in more than one instance, even though retracted, formed the sole evidence on which the convictions proceeded. In some cases, where the charge against the criminal was that she was "habit and repute a witch," the notoriety of her character was proved before the Justiciary Court by the oath of a minister, just as habit and repute is now proved in cases of theft by that of a police officer. [Pg 79]

Though the tide of popular delusion in regard to this crime may be said to have turned during the reign of Charles II., its opening was perhaps more bloody than that of any of its predecessors. In the first year after the Restoration (1661), about twenty persons appear to have been condemned by the Justiciary Court, two of whom, though acquitted on their first trial, were condemned on the second on new charges. The numbers executed throughout the country are noticed by Lamont. Fourteen commissions for trials in the provinces appear to have been issued by the Privy Council in one day (November 7, 1661). Of the numbers of nameless wretches who died and made no sign, under the hands of those "understanding gentlemen" (as the General Assembly's overture styles them) to whom the commissions were granted, it is now almost impossible to form a conjecture. In reference however to the course of procedure in such cases, we may refer to some singular manuscripts relative to the examination of two confessing witches in Morayshire in 1662, in the possession of the family of Rose, of Kilravock; more particularly as the details they contain are, both from their minuteness and the unparalleled singularity of their contents, far more striking than anything to be found on the Records of Justiciary about this time. [Pg 80]

The names of these crazed beldames were Isobel Gowdie and Janet Braidhead. Two of the latter's examinations are preserved; the former appears to have been four times examined at different dates between the 13th April and 27th May, 1662, before the sheriff and several gentlemen and ministers of the neighbourhood; and on one of these is a marking by the Justice Depute Colville, as follows:—"Having read and considered the confession of Isobel Gowdie, within contained, as paction with Sathan, renunciation of baptism, with divers malefices, I find that a commission may be very justly given for her last trial.—*A. Colville*[58]." The confessions are written under the hand of a notary public, and subscribed by all the clergymen, gentlemen, and other witnesses present; as would appear to have been the practice where the precognitions were to be transmitted to the Justiciary, with the view of obtaining a commission to try and punish the crime. What the result of Isobel Gowdie's "last trial" was, it is easy, from the nature of her confessions, to conjecture. [Pg 81]

"Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda, e passa."

Though examined on four different occasions, at considerable intervals of time, and undoubtedly undergoing solitary confinement in the interim, so minute and invariable are the accounts given by Gowdie in particular, of the whole life and conversation of the witches to whom she belonged, that a pretty complete institute of infernal science might be compiled from her confession. The distinctness with which the visions seem to have haunted her, the consistency they had assumed in her own mind, and yet the inconceivable absurdity and monstrosity of these conceptions, to many of which we cannot even allude, furnish some most important contributions to the history of hypochondriac insanity.

Her devotion to the service of the devil took place in the kirk of Auldearn, where she was baptized by him with the name of Janet, being held up by a companion, and the devil sucking the blood from her shoulder[59]. The band or coven to which they belonged consisted of thirteen (whose names she enumerates, and some of whom appear to have been apprehended upon her delation), that being the usual number of the covens. Each is provided with an officer, whose duty it is to repeat the names of the party after Satan; and a maiden, who seems to hold sway over the women, and who is the particular favourite of the devil, is placed at his right hand at feasts. A grand meeting of the covens takes place quarterly, when a ball is given. Each witch has a "sprite" to wait upon her, some appearing "in sad dun, some in grass green, some in sea green, some in yellow." Those of Gowdie's coven were, "Robert the Jakes, Sanders the Reed-Reever, Thomas the Fairy, Swein the Roaring Lion, Thief of Hell wait-upon-herself, MacHector," and so on. Some of these spirits, it would appear, did not stand high in Isobel's opinion; for Robert the Jakes, she says, was aged, and seemed to be "a gowkit glaikit spirit." Each of the witches too received a sobriquet, by which they were generally known[60]. Satan himself had several spirits to wait upon him; "sometimes he had boots and sometimes shoes upon his feet, but still his feet are forked and cloven." The witches, it appears, occasionally took considerable liberties with his character, on which occasions Satan, on detecting the calumny, used to beat the delinquents "up and down like naked gaists" with a stick, as Charon does the naked spirits in the 'Inferno,' with his oar. (Cant, iii.) He found it much more easy however to deal with the warlocks than with the fair sex. "Alexander Elder," says the confessing witch, "was soft, and could not defend himself, and did naething but greit and crye while he will be scourging him; but Margaret Wilson in Auldearn would defend herself finely, and [Pg 82] [Pg 83]

cast up her hands to cape the blows, and Bessie Wilson would speak crustily with her tongue, and would be bellin again to him stoutly."

The amusements and occupations of the witches are described with the same firmness and minuteness of drawing. When the devil has appointed an infernal diet, the witches leave behind them, in bed, a besom or three-legged stool, which assumes their shape till their return, a feature exactly corresponding with the Mora trials. When proceeding to the spot where their work is to be performed, they either adopt the shape of cats, hares, etc., or else, mounting upon corn or bean straws, and pronouncing the following charm,—

"Horse and hattock, horse and go,
Horse and pellats, ho! ho!"

they are borne through the air to the place of their destination. If any see these straws in motion, and "do not sanctify themselves," the witches may shoot them dead. This feat they perform with elf-arrow heads, which are [Pg 84] manufactured by Satan himself; and his assistants the elf boys, who are described, like the Scandinavian trolls, as little humpbacked creatures who speak "goustie like" (gruffly); each witch receiving from Satan a certain number of these "Freischütze." A list of forty or fifty persons is given by the witch, who had been destroyed by herself and her companions, by these means; while she also mentions that she had made an unsuccessful attempt against the life of Mr. Harry Forbes, minister of Auldcarn, one of the witnesses actually present and subscribing her confession.

Another attempt against the life of this minister is described very graphically. The instrument employed was "a bag made of the flesh and guts and galls of toads, the liver of a hare, pickles of corn, parings of nails, of feet, and toes," which olio being steeped all night, and mixed *secundum artem* by Satan himself, was consecrated by a charm dictated by Satan, and repeated by the witches, "all on their knees, and their hair about their shoulders and eyes, holding up their hands, and looking stedfastly on the devil, that he might destroy the said Mr. Harry." This composition one of the witches, who made her way into the minister's chamber, attempted to throw upon him, but was prevented by the presence of some other holy men in the room. Another composition of the same kind, intended for the destruction of the lairds of Park and Lochloy, was more successful, as appears from the deposition of the [Pg 85] other witch, Janet Braidhead. Having prepared the venom, "they came to Inshock in the night time, and scattered it up and down, above and about the gate, and other places, where the lairds and their sons would most haunt. And then we, in the likeness of crows and rooks[61], stood above the gate, and in the trees opposite the gate. It was appointed so that, if any of them should touch or tramp upon any of it, as well as that it or any of it fall on them, it should strike them with boils and kill them, *which it did, and they shortly died*. We did it to make this house heirless."

It is needless to pursue further these strange details, which however form a valuable appendix to the records at that time.

It would seem as if the violence of this popular delirium began after 1662 to relax. An interval of six years now [Pg 86] occurs without a trial for this crime, while the record bears that James Welsh[62] was ordered to be publicly whipped for accusing several individuals of it,—a fate which he was hardly likely to have encountered some years before. Fountainhall, in noticing the case of the ten poor women convicted on their own confession in 1678[63], obviously speaks of the whole affair with great doubt and hesitation. And Sir George Mackenzie, in his 'Criminal Law,' the first edition of which appeared in the same year, though he does not yet venture to deny the existence of the crime or the expediency of its punishment, lays down many principles very inconsistent with the practice of the preceding century. "From the horridness of the crime," says he, "I do conclude that of all crimes it requires the clearest relevancy and most convincing probature; and I condemn, next to the wretches themselves, those cruel and too forward judges who burn persons by thousands as guilty of this crime." And accordingly, acting on these humane and cautious principles, Sir George, in his Report to the Judges in 1680, relative to a number of persons then in prison for this crime, stated that their confessions had been procured by torture, and that there seemed to be no other proof against them, on which they were set at liberty. "Since which time," adds Lord Royston, "there has been no [Pg 87] trial for this crime before that court, nor before any other court, that I know of, except one at Paisley by commission from the Privy Council in anno 1697." This observation of Lord Royston is not altogether correct. The trial at Paisley to which he alludes is evidently the noted case of the Renfrewshire witches, tried on a charge of sorcery against a girl named Christian Shaw, the daughter of Shaw of Bargarran. The conviction of the accused appears to have taken place principally on the evidence of the girl herself, who in the presence of the commissioners played off a series of ecstasies and convulsion fits, similar to those by which the nuns of Loudon had sealed the fate of Grandier the century before. In this atrocious case, the Commissioners (in the Report presented by them to the Privy Council, 9th March, 1697), reported that there were twenty-four persons, male and female, suspected of being concerned in the sorceries; and among them, it is to be observed, is a girl of fourteen, and a boy not twelve years of age. After this, we almost feel surprised that out of about twenty who were condemned, only five appear to have been executed. They were burnt on the green at Paisley. The last trial before the Court of Justiciary was that of Elspet Rule, tried before Lord Anstruther, on the Dumfries circuit, 3rd of May, 1708, where the prisoner, though convicted by a plurality of voices, was merely sentenced to be burned on the cheek and banished Scotland for life. [Pg 88] The last execution which took place was that of an old woman in the parish of Loth, executed at Dornoch in 1722, by sentence of the Sheriff depute of Caithness, Captain David Ross, of Little Dean. "It is said, that being brought out for execution, the weather proving very severe, she sat composedly warming herself by the fire, while the other instruments of death were made ready!"

So ends in Scotland the tragical part of the history of witchcraft. In 1735, as already mentioned, the penal statutes were repealed; much to the annoyance however of the Seceders, who, in their annual confession of national sins, printed in an act of their Associate Presbytery at Edinburgh, in 1743, enumerated, as a grievous transgression, the repeal of the penal statutes "contrary to the express laws of God!" And though in remote districts the belief may yet linger in the minds of the ignorant, it has now, like the belief in ghosts, alchemy, or second sight, only that sort of

vague hold on the fancy which enables the poet and romance writer to adapt it to the purposes of fiction, and therewith to point a moral or adorn a tale. And, of a truth, no unimportant moral is to be gathered from the consideration of the history of this delusion; namely, the danger of encouraging those enthusiastic conceits of the possibility of direct spiritual influence, which, in one shape or other, and even in our own days, are found to haunt [Pg 89] the brain of the weak and presumptuous. For it is but the same principle which lies at the bottom of the persecutions of the witches, and which shows itself in the quietism of Bourignon, the reveries of Madame Guyon, the raptures of Sister Nativity, the prophecies of Naylor, the dreams of Dr. Dee, or Swedenborg's prospect of the New Jerusalem; still but an emanation of that spirit of pride, which, refusing to be "but a little lower than the angels," asserts an immediate communion and equality with them, and which, according to the temper of the patient, feeds him with the gorgeous visions of quietism, or impels him, like a furious Malay, along the path of persecution. Some persons assert that, in this nineteenth century of ours, we have no enthusiasm. On the contrary, we have a great deal too much: at no period has enthusiasm of the worst kind been more rife; witness the impostures of Southcott and Hohenlohe, and the thousand phantasies which are daily running their brief course of popularity. At no time has that calenture of the brain been more widely diffused, which, as it formerly converted every natural occurrence into the actual agency of the devil, now transforms every leader of a petty circle into a saint, and invests him with the garb and dignity of an apostle. Daily, are the practical and active duties of life more neglected under the influence of this principle; the charity which thinketh no evil of others daily becomes more rare; the stream of benevolence which of old stole deep [Pg 90] and silently through the haunts of poverty and sickness at home, is now but poorly compensated by being occasionally thrown up in a few pompous and useless jets, at public subscriptions for distant objects; while even in those whose minds are untinctured by the grosser evils to which enthusiasm gives rise, life passes away in vain and illusive dreams of self-complacent superiority, which, as they are based only in pride and constitutional susceptibility, rarely endure when age and infirmity have shaken or removed the materials out of which they were reared. Thus, the enthusiast who, like Mirza, has been contemplating through the long day the Elysian islands that lie beyond the gulf, and already walking in a fancied communion with their myrtle-crowned inhabitants, feels, in spite of all his efforts, that, as evening creeps upon the landscape, the phantasmagoria becomes dimmer and more dim; the bridge, the islands, the genius who stood beside them disappear; till at last nothing remains for him but his own long hollow valley of Bagdad, with its oxen, sheep, and camels grazing on its sides;—this sober, weary, working world, in short, with all its cares and duties, through which, if he had been wisely fulfilling the end for which he was sent into it, he should have been labouring onward with a beneficent activity, not idly dreaming by the wayside of the Eden for which he is bound; and so he awakes to a consciousness of his true vocation in life when he is on the point [Pg 91] of leaving it, and perceives the value and the paramount necessity of exertion, only when youth, with its opportunities, and its energies, lies behind him for ever, like the shadows of a dream.

The work of Church-Councillor Horst, and the review of its principal contents, leave however one hemisphere at least of the subject of Magic, Theurgy, and Necromancy unnoticed. These arts, or at least the popular belief in them, are much more ancient than any of the forms of Christianity, and were, in fact, a most unlucky legacy bequeathed by Paganism to the creeds which supplanted it. It needs no ghost to tell the reader how firmly the ancients believed in all supernatural influences: how populous, in their conceptions, were the elements with omens, portents, and prodigies; how abject and unreasoning was their credulity; and how dependent both their public and their domestic life upon the exorcisms of the priest and the science of the augur. The Canidias and Ericthos of antiquity were not mere creations of the poets; the most sober and sceptical of historians does not disdain to relate that, in the house of the dying Germanicus, were found burnt bones and dissevered limbs of dead bodies; and the most philosophical of the Roman poets recounts with complacent gravity the charms by which the dead might be evoked, or the faithless [Pg 92] lover recalled by his forsaken mistress. Nor did the belief in witches and supernatural agencies decay or decline with the disbelief in the state-religion which marked the latter ages of the Roman Empire. On the contrary, as scepticism increased in one direction, credulity and abject superstition grew and prevailed in another. Neither were these infirmities of the mind by any means confined to the vulgar or the profane. The later Platonists were deeply infected with the malady of superstition, and there are few more curious chapters in the history of human inconsistency, than the lives of many of the philosophers, who argued against the being of a God, and who trembled if a hare crossed their path, at a sinister flight of crows, or at a sudden encounter with a beldame or a blackamoor in the grey of the morning.

The magical art of the ancients, more especially towards the decline of Pagandom, was indeed of an extremely dark and atrocious complexion. Unmindful of the wise and reverent forbearance of the poet of the Æneid—

> "Sin has ne possim naturæ accedere partes
> Frigidus obstiterit circum præcordia sanguis,"—

the ancient wizards pried, or affected to pry, into the very "incunabula vitæ." Could we recover a few of those books which the sorcerers at Corinth burned and brought the price of them to St. Paul, we should probably find in their [Pg 93] pages, among some curious physical or medical secrets, nearly all the elements of a cruel and obscene superstition.

Rome, we know, was both early and deeply infected with the orgiastic worship of the East, and especially with the impure ceremonies of the priests of Isis. It was of no avail to level to the ground the Isiac chapels, and to banish their ministers. In an age of unbelief there was a passion for the mysteries of darkness; and although Christianity gradually superseded Paganism in form, the spirit of the latter long survived in the multitude, and especially among the ignorant rural population. James Grimm, in his erudite work upon the 'Antiquities of the German Race,' traces with great acuteness the connection between the superstitions of the Dark Ages and the magical formularies of Heathenism. The spells of witches, the abracadabra of quacks, and the loathsome furniture of Sidrophel's laboratory are genuine descendants of the impostures and abominations which were practised for ages both in the Roman and Parthian empires.

In Lucian and Apuleius indeed we are presented with a singular and terrible aspect of social existence. The most ordinary acts and functions of life were believed to be affected by the invisible powers, and those powers were supposed to be willing to do service to all who were malignant enough to seek their aid, and fearless enough to serve [Pg 94] the apprenticeship which was demanded of them. It is easy to decry the weakness and detect the absurdity of such a creed. Yet it *was* believed: it excited terror: it nurtured revenge: it wrought withering and wasting effects upon the feeble and the credulous: it cast a dark shade over life: it was potent over the sinews of the strong and over the bloom of the beautiful: it exercised "upon the inmost mind" all "its fierce accidents," and preyed upon the purest spirits,

> "As on entrails, joints and limbs,
> With answerable pains, but more intense."

It is idle to regard such a belief as a mere superficial or individual superstition. It pervaded all ranks of society, from the philosopher who disputed about a first cause, and the magistrate who viewed religion in the light of a useful system of police, to the shepherd who watched Orion and the Pleiades, and the miner who rarely beheld either sun or star. It was an erroneous, but it was an earnest, belief which drove men to consult with diviners, and to question the elements for signs and wonders.

Availing ourselves of Sir George Head's excellent translation, we extract from the 'Golden Ass' of Apuleius a story which, to our conceptions, is unsurpassed for its horror by any of the dreariest legends of Pagan or Medieval sorcery.

"My master, the baker, was a well-behaved, tolerably good man, but his wife, of all the women in the world, was the [Pg 95] most wicked creature in existence, and continually rendered his home such a painful scene of tribulation to him, that, by Hercules, many is the time and oft that I have silently deplored his fate. The heart of that most detestable woman was like a common cess-pool, where all the evil dispositions of our nature were collected together. She was cruel, treacherous, malevolent, obstinate, penurious, yet profuse in expenses of dissipation, faithless to her husband, a cheat and a drunkard. One day I heard it said that the baker had procured a bill of divorce against his execrable helpmate, and this intelligence turned out in due time to be true. She, exasperated by the proceedings instituted against her, communicated with a certain woman who had the reputation of being a witch, and whose spells and incantations were of power unlimited. Having conciliated this woman by gifts and urgent supplications, she besought of her one of two things—either to soften the heart of her husband, so that he might be reconciled to her; or if unable to do that, to send a ghost or some evil spirit to put him to a violent death. In the first endeavour the sorceress totally failed, whereupon she set about contriving the death of my unfortunate master. To effect her purpose, she raised from the grave the shade of a woman who had been murdered. So one day, about noon, there entered the bakehouse a bare-footed woman half-clad, wearing a mourning mantle thrown across her shoulders, her [Pg 96] pale sallow features marked by a lowering expression of guilt, her grisly dishevelled hair sprinkled with ashes, and her front locks streaming over her face. Unexpectedly approaching the baker, and taking him gently by the hand, she drew him aside, and led him into an adjoining chamber, as if she had private intelligence to communicate. After the baker had departed, and a considerable period had elapsed without his returning, the servants went to his chamber-door and knocked very loudly, and, after continued silence, called several times, and thumped still harder than before. They then perceived that the door was carefully locked and bolted; upon which, at once concluding that some serious catastrophe had happened, they pushed against it with their utmost strength, and by a violent effort, either breaking the hinge or driving it out of its socket, they effected an entrance by force. The moment they were within the chamber, they saw the baker hanging quite dead from one of the beams of the ceiling, but the woman who had accompanied him had disappeared, and was nowhere to be seen."

This evoking of the dead to destroy the living, this warring of a corpse with a living sold, and then the sudden dismissal, when its foul and fatal errand had been accomplished, of the ghost to its grave, presents to the mind a climax of terrors, for which we do not know where, in history or in fiction, to find a counterpart.

The Lex Majestatis, or law of High Treason, was one of the most effectual and terrible weapons which the imperial [Pg 97] constitution of Rome placed in the hands of its military despots. Against one offence this double-handled and sure-smiting engine was frequently levelled, viz. against the crime or the charge of inquiring into the probable duration of the Emperor's life. This was done in various ways,—by fire applied to waxen images, by consulting the stars, by casting nativities, by employing prophets, by casual omens, but especially by certain permutations and combinations of numbers, "numeros Babylonios," or the letters of the alphabet. The following extract from Ammianus Marcellinus affords an example of this treasonable sacrilege, the practice or suspicion of which, on so many occasions, led to the expulsion of the "mathematicians" from Italy. The Romans indeed, profoundly ignorant of science, or contemning it as the art of Greek adventurers or Egyptian priests, neither of whom were in good odour with the government at any period, gave to the current impostors of those days an appellation which Cambridge wranglers now account equal to a patent of nobility.

The following story seems to have been substantially a deposition taken before the magistrates of Constantinople, and extracted from the witnesses or defendants by torture. The principal deponent is said to have been brought "ad summas angustias"—to the last gasp almost, before he would confess. [Pg 98]

"This unlucky table," he said, "which is now produced in court, we made up of laurel boughs, after the fashion of that which stands before the curtain at Delphi. Terrible were the auspices, awful the charms, long and painful the dances, which preceded and accompanied its construction and consecration. And as often as we consulted this disc or table, the following was our mode of procedure. It was set in the midst of a chamber which had previously been well purified by the smoke of Arabian gums and incense. On the table was placed a round dish, welded of divers metals. On the rim of the dish were engraven the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, separated from one another by equal and exactly measured spaces. Beside the table stood a certain man clad in linen, and having linen buskins or boots on his feet, with a handkerchief bound around his head. He waved in one hand a branch of vervain, that propitious herb; he recited a set formulary of verses, such as are wont to be sung before the Averruncal gods, He that

stood by the table was no ordinary magician. With his other he held and shook a ring which was attached to curtains, spun from the finest Carpathian thread, and which had often before been used for such mystic incantations. The ring thus shaken dropped ever and anon between the interspaces of the letters, and formed by striking the letters together [Pg 99] certain words, which the sorcerer combined into number and measure, much after the manner of the priests who manage the oracles of the Pythian and Branchidian Apollo. Then, when we inquired who perchance would succeed to the reigning Emperor, the bright and smooth ring, leaping among the letters, struck together T, H, E, O, and afterwards a final S, so that one of the bystanders at once exclaimed that THEO[DORU]S was the emperor designated by the Fates. We asked no more questions: seeing that Theodorus was the person whom we had sought for."

The lingering belief in the old religion, and in the magical and thaumaturgical practices which had, like ivy around an oak, gradually accrued to it, was productive in the decline of Paganism of many poetical forms of superstition. It is curious and instructive to remark the increasing earnestness with which the decaying creed of Heathendom sought to array itself against the encroachments of Christianity. The light *persiflage* with which the philosophy of the Augustan age treated the state-religion nearly disappears. The indifference of the magistrate gives place to an intolerant and indignant tone of reclamation. The Pagan Cæsars attack the new religion as a formidable antagonist; the Christian emperors, in their turn, assail directly or ferret out perseveringly the superstitions which lingered among the rural towns and districts. The ancient gods are no longer regarded by either their worshipers or their [Pg 100] opponents as simply deified heroes or men, but as powerful and mysterious beings, informed with demoniac energies and capable of conferring temporal good or evil,—beauty, power, and wealth, on the one hand; deformity, ignominy, and disease, on the other,—upon those who honoured or abjured them. Such conceptions of blessing or of bale were embodied in strange narratives of weeping or jubilant processions of majestic forms when the moon was hid in her vacant interlunar cave, of demons assuming the shape of fair enchantresses who beguiled men to their undoing, of palaces reared in a night and dislimning in the day, of banquets, like that visionary banquet in the wilderness, which Milton has adorned with all the graces of imagination in his 'Paradise Lost.'

We can afford room for only two of the narratives of demoniac influence in which the later Pagans expressed their belief in the influence of the early gods.

1. The superstition of the Lamia. One result of the consolidation of Western Asia with Europe, under the Roman Empire, was to spread widely over the latter continent the germs of the serpent-worship of the East. The subtlest beast of the field, retaining in full vigour his powers of assuming tempting forms and uttering beguiling words, was wont, it seems, to disport himself among the sons and daughters of men under the shape in which he deceived our [Pg 101] general mother, the over-curious Eve. Especially did he delight to entrap some hopeful youth who was studying philosophy in the schools of Athens or Berytus, or some neophyte in the Christian Church. A fair young gentleman at Corinth had been abroad on a pleasure excursion, and might perchance be returning home a little the worse for wine. However this may have been, at the gates of Corinth he encountered a damsel richly attired, "beautiful exceedingly," but with hair dishevelled, and drowned in tears. He began by inquiring the cause of her distress. Faithless servants had carried off her litter and left her lone. He offered her consolation, which she accepted, and his arm also, which she did not decline. She led him to a lordly palace in a bye street of the city, where he had never yet been. At its marble portico waited a crowd of slaves with torches awaiting their absent mistress, and the pair, now become fond, were ushered into a sumptuous banqueting hall, where a board was spread covered with all the delicacies of the season, and garnished with effulgent plate. In this palace of delight the young man abode many days, taking no account of time. But at length, cloyed with sweets, he proposed inviting a party of his college friends, much to the dismay of his fair hostess, who, with many tears and embraces, besought him to forego his wish. In an evil hour however he persevered, and his rooms were filled with gownsmen, marvelling much, not [Pg 102] without envy, at the good fortune that had befallen their chum, Lucius, no one knew how or why. But among the undergraduates came a grave and grey college tutor, deeply read in conjurors' books, who could detect by his skill the devil under any shape. Pale and silent the old man sat at the festive board, and was ill-bred enough to stare the lady not only out of countenance, but out of her beauty also. She grew pale, livid, an indiscriminate form: she melted away; the palace melted also; the plate, the viands, and the wines vanished also; and in place of columns and ceiled roofs was a void square in Corinth, and in place of the damsel was a loathsome serpent, writhing in the agonies of dissolution. The white-bearded fellow had scanned and scotched and slain the snake—the Lamia—but he destroyed his patient also, for Lucius became a maniac; had the charm lasted awhile longer, his soul would have become the fiend's property.

2. A young man had sorely offended the great goddess Venus, or, as she was called in his native city, the Syrian Byblus, Astarte. To redeem himself from the curse upon his board and bed,—for he had recently married a fair wife,—he applied to a wise astrologer. The sage heard his case, and advised him, as his only remedy, to go on a certain night, at its very noon, to a spot just without the gates, called the Pagan's Tomb,—to station himself on the roof of it, [Pg 103] and to recite, at a prescribed moment, a certain formulary, with which his counsel, learned in magical law, furnished him. On the Pagan's Tomb accordingly the young man placed himself at the noon of night, and awaited his deliverance. And presently, towards the confines of morning, was heard a sound of sad and solemn music, and of much wailing, and of the measured tread of a long procession. And there drew nigh a mournful company of persons, who might have seemed men and women, but for their extraordinary stature, and their surpassing majesty and beauty: and the young man remembered the words of the magician, and knew that before him was the goodly company of the gods whom his forefathers in past generations had worshiped. One only of that august and weeping band was borne in a chariot—the god Saturn—perhaps by reason of his great age; and to Saturn he addressed his prayer, which was of such potency that Saturn straightway commanded Astarte to release the petitioner from the curse she had laid upon him.

We have been able merely to indicate how wide a field lies beyond the proper domain of medieval witchcraft. It would be curious to trace the similarity of the Heathen and Christian superstitions, or rather the derivation of one from the other. But we must reserve this subject to some other occasion, and conclude with repeating the wish with [Pg 104]

which we commenced, that some competent hand would undertake to trace through all its ramifications the obscure yet recompensing subject of Magic and Witchcraft.

THE END.

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, PRINTER,
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Footnotes:

[1] Since they were written, Sir Walter Scott's 'Demonology and Witchcraft' has been published, a book replete with interesting historical notices.

[2] Faustus, who is a sort of Delolme in matters infernal, has an able treatise on the subject, entitled 'Mirakel-Kunst- und Wunder-Buch, oder der schwartze Rabe, auch der dreifache Höllen Zwang genannt,' in which the political system of Lucifer's dominions is examined. Dionysius the Areopagite indeed is not more exact in his calendar of the celestial hierarchy. Perhaps these treatises are the common parents of the modern 'Blue Books.'

[3] Reginald Scott's 'Discoverie of Witchcraft' contains an army-list or muster-roll of the infernal forces. Thus the Duke of Amazeroth, who seems to be a sort of brigadier-general, has the command of sixty legions, etc.

[4] Satan is a mere third-rate spirit, as they will find by consulting a list of the Infernal Privy Council for 1669, contained in Faust's 'Black Raven.' But we are not told the exact date of his deposition from his primacy. It is singular that both in the book of Job, where he is mentioned for the first time, and in the Scandinavian mythologers, he appears in a similar character—"The Ranger," or "Roving Spirit of Tartarus." See Whiter, Etymologicon, vol. iii., in which very learned, though now forgotten work, there is much diabolical erudition.

[5] Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren. Yet, like Cato the Censor, Lucifer may have taken to study late in life.

[6] Lotichius, Oratorio super fatalibus hoc tempore Academiarum periculis: 1631. Lotichius took the trouble to compose a Latin poem on the subject of his triumphal entry. A book entitled 'Mammon' had some reputation in its day. The acknowledged author's name indeed is Harris; yet some commentator of the year 2150 will perhaps suggest that it was 'Old Harry's Mammon.' We have seen worse "conjectural emendations."

[7] Colloquia Mensalia.

[8] Legenda Aurea Jacob. de Voragine, leg. 123.

[9] *Ibid.* leg. 21.

[10] Or even a bishop. See Southey's pithy and profitable tale of 'Eleemon, or a Sinner Saved.'

[11] In the case of St. Lydvina, when he pleaded his case in person, and thought it a clear one, he was fairly laughed out of court, "deriso explosoque Dæmone." (Brugmann, Vita Lydvinæ, p. 290.) He was hoaxed in a still more ingenious manner by Nostradamus, who having agreed that the devil should have him, if he was buried either in the church or out of it, left directions that he should be buried in a hole in the wall. Sometimes however he was the gainer in such equivocal compacts,—as, for example, in the case of the monk who was to live so long as he abstained from sleeping between sheets. The monk always slept in a chair; but in an unlucky hour Satan caught him as fast as a top with his head between *the sheets* of a sermon, and claimed his bond.

[12] Inferno, canto vi.

[13] The trials at Arras, in 1459. Vide Monstrelet's Chronicle, vol. iii. p. 84: Paris, 1572. But these were rather religious prosecutions against supposed heretics, and the crime of witchcraft only introduced as aggravating their offences.

[14] Christoph von Ranzow, a nobleman of Holstein, burned eighteen at once on *one* of his estates.

[15] Some of our readers may wish to see a specimen of this precious production. We shall take a stanza or two, descriptive of the joke of which the poor witch was the victim.

> Ein Hexen hat man gefangen, zu Zeit die war sehr reich
> Mit der man lang umbgaben ehe sie bekannte gleich,
> Dann sie blieb darauf beständig es gescheh ihr Unrecht gross,
> Bis man ihr macht nothwendig *diesen artlichen Poss*(!),
>
> Das ich mich drüber wunder; man schickt ein Henkersknecht
> Zu ihr ins Gefängniss 'nunter, den man hat kleidet recht
> Mit einer Bärnhaute als wenns der Teufel wär;
> Als ihm die Drut anschaute meynts ihr Buhl kam daher.
>
> Sie sprach zu ihm behende, wie lestu mich so lang
> In der Obrigkeit Hände? Hilf mir aus ihren Zwang,
> Wie du mir hast verheissen, ich bin ja eben dein;
> Thu mich aus der Angst entreissen, o liebster Bule mein!
>
> Sie thet sich selbst verrathen, und gab Anzeigung viel
> Sie hat nit geschmeckt den Braten, *was das war für ein Spiel*(!).
> Er tröstet sie und saget, ich will dir helfen wohl;
> Darum sey unverzaget, Morgens geschehen soll.

It bears the colophon "Printed at Smalcald in the year 1627."

[16] When these horrors were thus versified, it is not wonderful to find them "improved" by the preachers of the time. At Riga, in 1626, there appeared 'Nine Select Witch Sermons, by Hermann Sampsonius, superintendent at Riga,' and many others in the course of that century.

[17] Criminal Law. Tit. x.

[18] Records of Justiciary. Trial of the Master of Orkney.

[19] Calef's Journal.

[20] Cobbett's State Trials.

[21] Trial of Bartie Paterson. Records of Scottish Justiciary. Dec. 18, 1607.

[22] In Wenham's case, Mr. Chauncy deposed that a cat belonging to Jane Wenham had come and *knocked* at his door at night, and that he had killed it. This was founded on evidence at the trial.

[23] Rec. of Just. 1613, Dec. 1.

[24] See the 'Neue Necrologie der Deutschen, 1823,' for an account of these remarkable appearances.

[25] Divina et Vera Metaphysica.

[26] Wordsworth's 'Dion.'

[27] The prefixed characters which Ashmole interprets to mean Responsum Raphaelis seem remarkably to resemble that cabalistic-looking initial which in medical prescriptions is commonly interpreted "Recipe."

[28] Dapper (Beschreibung von Amsterdam, p. 150) describes her as a melancholy or hypochondriac girl. She was burned however as usual. These rhyming or alliterative charms are of very remote antiquity. Cato, in his treatise on Husbandry, recommends the following formulary for a sprain or fracture: "Huat Hanat, Huat Ista, Pista Sista, Domiabo Damnaustra," or "Motas Væta, Daries Dardaries, Astataries Dissunapiter."

[29] This, indeed, is an almost invariable feature in the witch trials, and, if the subject could justify the discussion, might lead to some singular medical conclusions.

[30] The trade of a pricker, as it was called, *i. e.* a person who put pins into the flesh of a witch, was a regular one in Scotland and England, as well as on the Continent. Sir George Mackenzie mentions the case of one of them who confessed the imposture (p. 48); and a similar instance is mentioned by Spottiswood (p. 448). Sir Walter Scott gives the following account of this trade:—"One celebrated mode of detecting witches, and torturing them at the same time, to draw forth confession, was, by running pins into their body, on pretence of discovering the devil's stigma, or mark, which was said to be inflicted by him upon all his vassals, and to be insensible to pain. This species of search, the practice of the infamous Hopkins, was in Scotland reduced to a trade; and the young witch-finder was allowed to torture the accused party, as if in exercise of a lawful calling, although Sir George Mackenzie stigmatizes it as a horrid imposture. I observe in the Collections of Mr. Pitcairn, that, at the trial of Janet Peaston of Dalkeith, the magistrates and ministers of that market-town caused John Kincaid of Tranent, the common pricker, to exercise his craft upon her, 'who found two marks of what he called the devil's making, and which appeared indeed to be so, for she could not feel the pin when it was put into either of the said marks, nor did they (the marks) bleed when they were taken out again; and when she was asked where she thought the pins were put in, she pointed to a part of her body distant from the real place. They were pins of three inches in length.' Besides the fact, that the persons of old people especially sometimes contain spots void of sensibility, there is also room to believe that the professed prickers used a pin, the point or lower part of which was, on being pressed down, sheathed in the upper, which was hollow for the purpose, and that which appeared to enter the body did not pierce it at all."—*Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 297.

[31] Peter died in prison just in time to escape the flames. He was burned in effigy however after his death.

[32] Lindon, cited by Wyttenbach, 'Versuch einer Geschichte von Trier,' vol. iii. p. 110.

[33] Beyträge zur Beförderung einer nähern Einsicht in das gesammte Geisterreich, vol. i. p. 284.

[34] The Abbé Fiard, one of the latest believers on record, has printed the Requête at full length in his 'Lettres sur la Magie,' p. 117 *et seq.*

[35] Even now a complaint of 'being bewitched' is occasionally made to Justices of the Peace by the very ignorant or the very malignant.

[36] Trials and other Proceedings in Matters Criminal before the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland, selected from the Records of that Court. By Robert Pitcairn. Edinburgh.

[37] Holingshed, vol. i. pp. 50, 317.

[38] At the second marriage of Alexander III., Fordun, vol. ii. p. 128. Boece, p. 294, ed. 1574.

[39] Boece, p. 149.

[40] In the case of Cameron, Bishop of Glasgow, 1466.—Buchanan. Pitscottie.

[41]

> "Quell' altro, che nei fianchi è così poco,
> Michele Scotto fu, che veramente
> Delle magiche frode seppe il giuoco."—*Canto xx.*

[42] As in the case of the witches at Forres, who attempted to destroy King Duffus by the favourite pagan charm of roasting his image in wax, and those burnt at Edinburgh for a similar attempt against James III., in 1479.

[43] Scot of Scotstarvet, Home of Godscroft, *passim*.

[44] Nov. 8, 1576. Pitcairn, vol. i. p. 48.

[45] Ibid. p. 51.

[46] Rec. of Just. May 27, 1601.

[47] News from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Dr. Fian.—Pitcairn, vol. i. p. 213.

[48] We need hardly remind our readers of the torture of Macbriar by the Boots, before the Privy Council, in the ‘Tales of my Landlord.’

[49] Old French, *Turquois*, a smith’s pincers, from *torquere*.

[50] Sir James Melville, p. 294.

[51] Pitcairn, vol. i. p. 211.

[52] Crook—the hook from which pots are hung over a Scottish kitchen fire.

[53] Just. Records, 1590-1610.

[54] Most of the cases here cited are found in the Justiciary Records, from about 1605 to 1640.

[55] Feb. 4, 1629.

[56] Just. Records, Jan. 1630.

[57] Just. Rec., Dec. 1643.

[58] The paper is marked on the back, “Edinburgh, July 10th, 1662: considered and found relevant by the Justice Depute.” The part of Janet Braidhead’s deposition, which appears to have borne a similar marking by the Justice Depute, is torn off.

[59] Her fellow-witch, Braidhead, was baptized by the very inappropriate name of *Christian*.

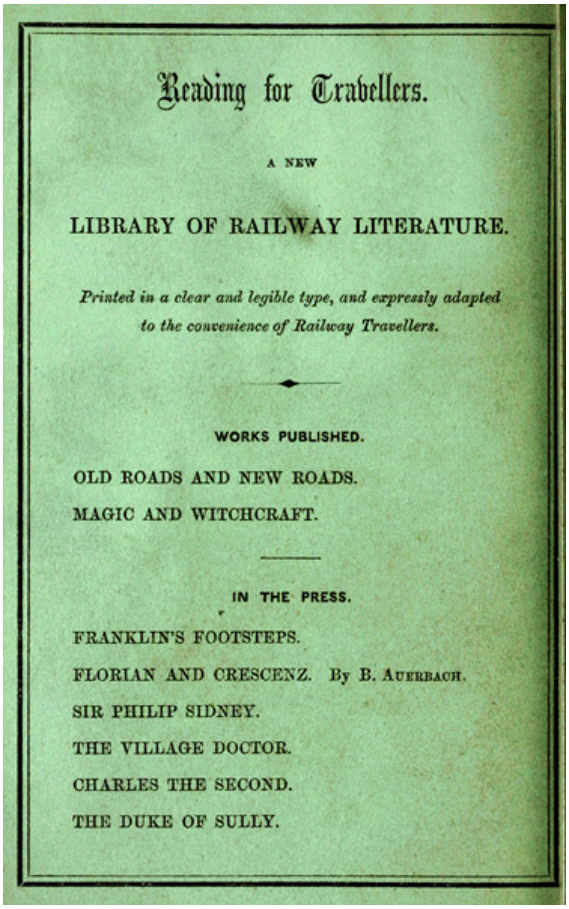
[60] This seems to have been a common practice in the Infernal ritual. Law gives the nicknames of the Renfrewshire witches, in the Bangarran Case. (Memorials, p. 122.)

[61] Taking the form of foul and ominous birds was a favourite practice of witches in all ages. Apuleius, in his character of Lucius, thus describes the metamorphosis of his hostess at Larissa:—

“Pamphile divested herself of all her garments, and opening a certain cabinet took out of it a number of boxes. From one of these she selected a salve, and anointed herself from head to foot; and after much muttering, she began to rock and wave herself to and fro. Presently a soft down covered her limbs, and a pair of wings sprang from her shoulders: her nose became a beak: her nails talons. Pamphile was now in form a complete owl. Then uttering a low shriek she began to jump from the floor, and after a brief while flew out of the window and vanished. She winged her way, I was assured by Fotis, to some expectant lover. And this was the last I saw of the old lady.”

[62] Just. Records. Jan. 27, 1662.

[63] Vol. i. Decisions, p. 14.



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