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DWELLERS ON THE THRESHOLD

OR

Magic and Magicians

WITH SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF HUMAN ERROR
AND IMPOSTURE.

BY

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PREFACE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

W. H. D. A.

DENMARK HILL,
March, 1864.

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DWELLERS ON THE THRESHOLD

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

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

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

SCHILLER (*translated by COLERIDGE*).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Maury, “La Magie et l’Astrologie.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* De Civitate Dei, lib. xviii.

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

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

* Ennemoser, “History of Magic.”

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

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

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

* Westminster Review, No. xlix.

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

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

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

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

Quæ sidera excantata voce
Thessala, lunamque cœlo deripit.

HOR., *Epis.* v. 45.

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

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

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

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

The prophecies of the Delphic Pythia ob-

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

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

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

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

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

The king from thenceforth believed in the

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

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

Χροίσος Ἄλυν διαβας, μεγάλην ἀρχὴν διαλυσσει.

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

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

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

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

* Herodotus, lib. i. § 85.

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

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

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

* Ennemoser, i. 377.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* “Westminster Review,” xlix. New Series.

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

‡ Hosea, c. iv., v. 12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

THE MAGICIANS OF POPULAR TRADITION.

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

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

BULWER LYTTON (*King Arthur*).

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

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

§ 1. VIRGIL, THE ENCHANTER.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 2. ROGER BACON.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the course of his career the mythical

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

minating compound that somewhat resembled it :—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 3. DR. FAUSTUS.

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

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

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

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

a sin.

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

freshness not enjoyed by the traditions of other popular necromancers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANCIENT AND
MEDIÆVAL SORCERY.

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

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

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

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§ 1. THE ORACLES AND SIBYLS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE SIBYLS.*

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

* Ennemoser's “History of Magic.”

counsel of God. Another etymology derives it from *δῖω*, to agitate violently, and *βύλλος*, full — full of the stir and rush of prophecy.

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

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

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

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

* Varro, *Ad Cæsarem*, lib. ix.

of Jupiter Capitolinus by order of the Senate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The coming of Christ was distinctly foretold.

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

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

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

The Fathers of the early Christian Church laid a singular stress upon these prophetic rhapsodies, and St. Augustine defended them with burning eloquence.† He quotes numerous runes of the Erythræan Sibyl, which plainly indicate an acquaintance with the writings of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 2. MEDIÆVAL MAGIC.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* “Analyse des Conciles Généraux,” par Ricard, ed. 1773.

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

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

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

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

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

* "Revue Archéologique," 1846.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

sprung from an egg produced on a Monday, in the month of March. After having cooked this cock, at the very beginning of the night, thou wilt take him with thee, roasted and on the spit, and accompany me to the neighbouring pond. There, whatever thou mayst see, beware thou dost not invoke God, or the blessed Mary, or any Saint.' 'I will do this surprising thing,' replied the other."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Mémoires of Duclos relate the following fact as having taken place at Vienna in the first half of the eighteenth century.

“The Abbé de Sinzendorff, son of the Great

* De Thou, tome i. p. 289.

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

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

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

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

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

* Froissart, book iii. c. 22.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I set my dogs upon him, for I doubt if I shall ever behold him again, since he has several times told me that as soon as I should provoke him I should lose him, and he would return no more.' He spoke truly : never again did Orton return to the lord of Corasse, and the knight died in the following year."

In the sixteenth century a belief in familiar spirits was still in full vigour. It was to their aid that the constant success which attended the enterprises of some men was generally attributed.

"Several Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Italians," relates Brantôme, "said of M. de Salvoyson, and firmly believed, that he had a familiar spirit, which prepared for him all his state papers and designs, and conducted his affairs for him so ably that no one whom I have met in Piedmont but has believed and affirmed that the devil came for him in haste at his death, and carried him away. But this is an absurdity." However, he afterwards adds, "I do not say but that he, who was curious in every branch of knowledge, may have found assistance as much in the natural as the supernatural." Elsewhere the same historian relates the analogous rumours relating to Langeay, Matignon, d'Espernon, and others.

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

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

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

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

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

magical practices to restore health to men or animals.

The 37th canon of the Council of Trèves, in 1238, forbids, under penalty of suspension for clerks, and excommunication for the laity, to prophesy by examination of fire or the sword.

Let us cite also the canon of a Council held in 696 at Berkhamstead, a canon which condemned to a pecuniary fine or corporal punishment those who offered sacrifices to demons. This worship rendered to demons was a natural consequence of the popular belief in their great power, and their constant and minute interference in the affairs of humanity.

If (says M. Lalanne) ecclesiastical power hurled its anathema at magicians and sorcerers, we may easily imagine how blindly and how savagely the civil power raged against those unhappy wretches. The mediæval writers fill their pages with narratives of trials for sorcery—trials which almost always terminated in the punishment by fire. In the fifteenth century there broke out almost all over France one of the most horrible persecutions recorded in history, and whose causes as yet have not been made clear by historians.

In 1453 a doctor in theology, and prior of St.

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

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

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

“And the said Inquisitor did say and declare, that those hereinunder named had been guilty of *Vaulderie* in manner following, that is to say :—

“That when they wished to go to the said *Vaulderie*, they, with an ointment given to them by the devil, anointed a small wooden rod and their palms and their hands ; then they put the wand between their legs, and soon they flew wherever they wished to go, over fair cities, woods, and streams ; and the devil carried them to the place where they should hold their assembly, and in this place they found others, and tables placed, loaded with wines and viands ; and there they found a demon in the form of a goat, a dog, an ape, or sometimes a man ; and they made their oblation and homage to the said demon, and adored him, and yielded up to him their souls, and all, or at least some portion, of their bodies ; then, with burning candles in their hands, they kissed the rear of the goat-devil. . . . [Here the Inquisitor becomes untranslatable]. . . . And this homage done, they trod and trampled upon the Cross, and befouled it with their spittle, in contempt of Jesus Christ and the

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

The eagerness displayed by the Inquisitor and his acolytes so excited the public indignation, that at the close of the year 1460 the judges did not dare any longer to condemn to death the unfortunate wretches accused, it is said only for the purpose of depriving them of their property. The popular feeling was expressed by a contemporary satirist in wrathful verses :—

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

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

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

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

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

In Portugal the penalty for sorcery was not nearly so severe as in France. Thus, a decree returned by the Chamber of Justice at Lisbon, on the 14th of August, 1385—the day of the battle of Aljubarrota—interdicted, in the city and its environs, all kinds of sorcery, diabolical conjurations, magic signs, interpretations of dreams, predictions, supernatural remedies for the diseases of men and animals, under pain of banishment from Lisbon and its territory.

Persecution, by augmenting in the popular mind its belief in the reality of sorcery, had the customary effect of increasing the number of sorcerers. In the sixteenth century, according to Crepet, there were no less than one hundred thousand pretended sorcerers in France. One sorcerer confessed that he had twelve hundred associates. Even at that epoch the most illustrious men were frequently accused of magical practices. Kings were not

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

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

* “Hist. Universelle,” tome xi.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“*E.*—None.”

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

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

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

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

The casuists and theological doctors did not disdain to busy themselves with sorcery and its professors, and Pascal has wittily exposed the singular doctrines which they enunciated. Thus in the eighth of his *Lettres Provinciales* there occurs the following passage:—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 3. ANOTHER PHASE OF HUMAN FOLLY:
OATHS, ORDEALS AND JUDICIAL COMBATS.

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

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

a channel was opened for unfair dealing and collusion on the part of the wealthy or the powerful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

the test, and two or three guards and attendants.

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

An article of the Council held at Worms in

829, under Louis the Débonnair, vainly prohibited recourse to the ordeal of cold water. No heed was given to the Emperor's prohibition, and Hincmar, a celebrated priest of the same age, consulted on this subject by Hildegair, Bishop of Meaux, sought to explain, by mystical reasons, this prejudice so favourable to the accused, that the water would not receive a guilty person into its bosom. He named, among other instances, the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and the Deluge. "Christian wisdom," said he, "has repeated and sanctioned, from all antiquity, the judgment by water, — a judgment whose efficacy was first shown in the ark of Noah, when the innocent were saved and the guilty punished."

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

gave them, pronouncing the words—‘ May the body and blood of Our Lord serve you in this day of trial!’ This done, the devout bishop, and the Archdeacon Peter — a man of the purest piety, and who had rejected all the false pretences by which they had sought to escape the judgment — repaired to the arena where the water was prepared. The bishop, shedding tears, intoned the litanies, and solemnly pronounced the exorcism. The two brothers then made oath that they had never believed nor taught anything contrary to our holy law. However, no sooner had Clement been flung into the water, than he floated like a light twig. At this spectacle, the church resounded with cries of joy ; for this affair had in effect drawn such a concourse of individuals of both sexes, that not one of the assistants had ever seen so numerous a throng. The other acknowledged his error; but, as he refused express any penitence, he was thrown into prison with the brother whom the ordeal had proved guilty. Some time afterwards, the people of the faithful fearing that the clergy would show too much lenity, ran to the prison, raised a scaffold outside the town, and consigned the condemned to the flames.”

The ordeal by cold water was employed in

France even as late as the opening years of the seventeenth century, although it had been forbidden by a decree of the Parliament of Paris, dated the 1st of December, 1601. But the legislative edict was not more effectual than in accusations of sorcery.

We find, in Millin a brief notice of a fanatic ordeal adopted of old in a small town of Vivarais.

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

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

“In the name of God, and by order of

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

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

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

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

The ordeal by fire appears to boast of as great an antiquity as that by cold water. In the "Antigone" of Sophocles, the messenger who apprises Cleon of the recovery of Polynices' body, exclaims, "We were all prepared to handle the burning iron, to traverse the flames, to attest before the gods that we were neither actors nor accomplices in the crime which had been committed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ordeal by fire consisted in passing

through a pile of blazing wood. Although of great antiquity it was not so commonly employed as that by water; but both had undoubtedly their origin in the purifying properties possessed by the two elements. One of the earliest instances of a recourse to it in European history, is that of Pierre Barthélémy, who, during the siege of Antioch by the Saracens in 1097, discovered to the Crusaders, in accordance with a revelation he pretended to have received from heaven, the place of concealment of the spear that pierced the sacred body of the Saviour. Some months later, there broke out an eager discussion on the subject of this imposition; and Pierre, to silence his antagonists, offered to prove the truth of his revelation by undergoing the ordeal of fire. This offer was accepted with equal alacrity by those who hoped to confute, and those who were interested in supporting him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Pachymère, cited by Lalanne.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here is another illustration:—*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 1145 Louis VI. abolished the usage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2nd Herald.—Here standeth Thomas Mowbray, Duke
of Norfolk,
On pain to be found false and recreant,
Both to defend himself and to approve
Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby,
To God, his sovereign, and to him disloyal;
Courageously, and with a free desire,
Attending but the signal to begin.

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

[*A charge sounded.*

Stay, the king hath thrown his warder down.

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

And both return back to their chairs again ;

Withdraw with us ; and let the trumpets sound,

While we return these dukes what we decree.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 4. ORDEALS AND PRIESTCRAFT.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* De Mirabilibus Mundi, ed. Amsterdam, 1760.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. for 1773.

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

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

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

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

‡ Beckmann, vol. iii.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

ALCHYMY: AND THE ALCHYMISTS.

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

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

§ 1. THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE
SCIENCE.

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

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

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

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

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

—*Odyssey*, lib. v.

So Virgil :—

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

—*Æneid*, iv. 242.

* “*Histoire de l’Hermétique Philosophie*,” a most comprehensive and elaborate work upon a subject surrounded with difficulties.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AVICENNA,

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

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

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

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

* Sprengel, “*Histoire de la Médecine*,” ii. 205.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AVERRHOES,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALBERTUS MAGNUS.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This talking statue has completely puzzled the admirers of the early alchymists. Naudé seems willing to believe in its existence, but is evidently unable to classify satisfactorily so peculiar a variety of the *genus homo*. Were they sensitive and reasoning heads, these miracles in metal? They could not be sensitive, for they were unable, like plants, to supply their own nutriment: they could not reason, for they were oblivious of the past and ignorant of the future! “They said,” writes Naudé, “what they had to say, which no one could contradict; and having said their say, you might have broken the head for aught more that you could have extracted from it. If they had possessed any life, would they not have moved as well as spoken? Life itself is but motion; but these had neither lungs nor spleen, and though they spoke, had no tongue. Was there a demon in them? I think not. Yet why should men have taken all this trouble to make, not a man, but a trumpet!”

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

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

gushed forth from the songsters of the neighbouring groves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

left the scholar to pursue his studies uninterrupted.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RAYMOND LULLI,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JEAN DE MEUNG.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NICHOLAS FLAMEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Lenglet du Fresnoy.

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

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

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

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

BERNARD OF TRÊVES.*

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

* Lenglet du Fresnoy, "Biographie Universelle."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Virtue alone is happiness below.

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

TRITHEMIUS.

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

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

He was now desirous of once more seeing

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

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

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

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

§ 2. THE STORY OF PIERRE D'ESTAING.

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

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

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

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

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

This daring violation of the right of sanctuary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 3. THE STORY OF GILLES DE RETZ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

reputation, and were surrounded with an appalling mystery.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BULWER LYTTON, *Zanoni*.

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

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

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

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

Another persevering but deluded student,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE ROSICRUCIANS; OR THE BROTHERHOOD OF
THE ROSY CROSS.

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

TRITHEMIUS, *De Occultis Rebus*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Such were some of the more extravagant

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROBERT FLUDD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are some fantastic passages from his sermons:—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V.

PARACELSUS: A BIOGRAPHY.

[A.D. 1493—1541.]

PART I.

§ 1. HIS LIFE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alberto

È di Colonia, ed io Thomas d'Aquina;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There is more knowledge," he was accustomed to assert, "in my shoe-strings than in the writings of all the physicians who have preceded me! I am the reformer of medicine! You will all follow my new system, you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhazis, Montagnana, Méseré, —you will all follow me, gentlemen of Paris, of Montpellier, of Vienna and Cologne! All you who dwell on the banks of the Danube or the Rhine—who inhabit the islands of the sea—you also, Italians, Turks, Sarmatians; Greeks, Arabians, Jews; you shall follow ME! If you do not freely take service under my banner it is because you are but as the stones that the very dogs defile! Rally, then, unto me, for the kingdom shall be mine, and sooner or later you must swallow the bitter draught of obedience!" Then this splendid charlatan-enthusiast brought forward a vase of fire, upon which he flung handfuls of nitre and sulphur. And as the lurid flames shot upwards he flung into them the ponderous tomes of Galen and Avicenna, and while his audience gazed astonished at this novel *auto-da-fé*, he exclaimed—"Thus, O ye doctors, shall ye burn in everlasting fire! Get ye behind me, Sathanas!

Get ye behind me, Greek, Latin, Arab! Ye have taught nothing but absurdities—the secret of nature is known only to myself!”

A philosopher who dealt so fiercely with his predecessors was sure to incur the hatred of many of his contemporaries. A physician who had had the sagacity to discover the value of mercury and opium—drugs abhorred by the timid and bigoted practitioners of his time—was certain, by the success as well as the originality of his treatment, to arouse the jealousy of his brethren. His manner of life peculiarly laid him open to their animadversions. He was addicted to the wine-cup, according to the testimony of his pupil and friend Oporinus:—“*Adeo erat totis diebus et noctibus, dum ego familiariter per biennium fore convixi, ebrietati deditus.*”^{*} He was sober for scarcely an hour at a time, says his disciple, while he fared from Basle to Alsatia amongst the noble rustics and the rustic nobles, healing them and instructing them, and everywhere welcomed like a second *Æsculapius*. He was the marvel and admiration of everybody. Meanwhile, in his most turbulent moments, he would return home and dictate to Oporinus

^{*} While I lived with him familiarly for about two years he was drinking day and night.

his extravagant philosophy. "Nor," says the disciple of this mad, bibulous, clever, fantastical philosopher, "did he ever put off his clothes at night during the two years I remained with him; but, with his sword belted round him, would fling himself on his bed, filled with wine, towards the hour of dawn. Then he would start up in the depth of the darkness, and deal blows on every side with his naked sword; now striking the floor, the bed, the doorposts, and that so furiously that I often trembled lest he should smite off my head."

This sword had formerly belonged to a headsman; Paracelsus pretended that its pommel was the hiding-place of Azoth his familiar, who lay there imprisoned in a jewel. He often embraced it, and held mad converse with it, and gave out that it had in its charge the famous *elixir vitæ* by which he could prolong the lives of men to the protracted date of the antediluvian fathers. He boasted that his word controlled an entire legion of spirits. Another of his attendants, named Wetterus, relates that he frequently threatened to summon a vast host of demons, and show him how his lightest breath directed their movements. But amidst all these follies and excesses—the follies and excesses of an enthusiast who half believed,

half doubted his possession of the powers to which he pretended—his medical ability asserted itself. He effected numerous cures, and especially one of a certain canon residentiary, which cut short his career at Basle.

The canon lay at the point of death, having been abandoned as past cure or recovery by all the physicians of the town. In this extremity he had recourse to Paracelsus, promising him a magnificent recompense if his treatment should be successful. The doctor administered his favourite three small pills—*tres murini stercoris pilulas*—which the canon swallowed, and—recovered! But with monstrous ingratitude he then refused to pay the fee. What! a “magnificent recompense” for three small black pellets! The canon, like many a modern invalid, estimated the value of the cure by the quantity of the medicine. Paracelsus summoned him before the magistrates, who decided that he could only recover the customary fee. In an access of the most violent rage the discomfited philosopher poured out a torrent of abuse on the hapless heads of the unjust purveyors of the law; and, the next morning, stealthily quitted Basle to avoid their wrath, leaving his laboratory and his chemical treasures in the charge of his pupil Oporinus. With

whom he also left his *magistrale arcanum*—*laudanum*, so called from *laudandum*, on account of its praiseworthy qualities, which some time after saved the pupil's life.

Paracelsus now resumed his erratic course ; wandering from town to town and village to village, traversing Hungary and Germany, and living upon the credulity and ignorance of all classes of society. To such mean ends was this man of genius reduced, who, had his judgment been equal to his imagination might have accomplished many things worthy of a world's gratitude ! He cast nativities ; he told fortunes ; he beguiled dupes into fruitless but expensive search for the Philosopher's Stone ; he effected wonderful cures ; but he did not accumulate wealth. Nothing so surely beggars a man as an unholy greed of gold. At length he came into collision with the Church, as he had already battled with law and physic. Summoned to the bedside of a moribund peasant, he observed that a priest was holding something to his lips. "Has the patient taken anything?" he inquired. "Nothing," replied the priest ; "but I was about to give him the *Corpus Christi*." "Then," quoth the profane Paracelsus, "since he has called in another physician, he does not need me," and he strode out

of the room. This irreverent speech provoked the fierce wrath of the priesthood, and fatal murmurs of "heresy" and "sorcery" warned Paracelsus of the danger he had incurred. He fled to Bavaria, taking with him his drugs and his self-confidence. Oporinus, who had previously rejoined his master, now finally abandoned him, stole what he could of his secrets, and swelled the outcry raised against him.

The itinerant leech, after working some extraordinary cures in Bavaria, passed into Poland, where he healed a sick nobleman. Many opportunities of permanent distinction and wealth presented themselves, but there was a Bohemian taint in his blood which rendered him incapable of steady application or regular habits. He loved to wander from country to country, speculating on the follies of mankind, and giving up his great intellect to vague speculations and confused dreams. He was infected by the restlessness which pervaded all European society; by the spirit of an age which saw the old order breaking up, and was not prepared for the establishment of the new. Something of success gilded the last days of his wild and romantic career. In 1536 he established his claim to his patrimonial inheritance, dedicated his "Chirur-

gia Major" to the Emperor of Germany, and having secured a patron and a believer in the Archbishop of Salzburg, prepared to settle quietly in that city. But when seemingly bent on doing work worthy of his genius, he succumbed to the malice of his enemies or the effects of his own vices.

He was poisoned, it is said, at a debauch of wine; and while labouring in the lethargy of intoxication was deprived of the antidotes which he usually carried about him. When he awoke to a consciousness of his position, the poison had so mastered his enfeebled constitution that remedies were no longer useful.

Such is the vulgar tale, but it lacks authenticity. As Paracelsus at the time of his death, was patronized by an archbishop, it is not likely that he was poisoned by any emissary of the Church. And why introduce the agency of poison at all? A frame shaken by loose living and constant trial would easily give way to an excessive fit of drinking. Howbeit, Paracelsus after his debauch was removed to the Hospital of San Sebastian, where he speedily expired, on the 24th of September, 1541, in the forty-eighth year of his age. By his will he bequeathed most of his property for charitable

purposes, and the hospital wherein he died was rebuilt by his executors. A tablet on its wall thus preserves the name and memory of the charlatan-enthusiast :—

Conditur hic
 PHILIPPUS THEOPHRASTUS,
 Insignis Medicinæ Doctor,
 Qui dira illa vulnera, lepram, podagram, hydropem,
 Aliaque insanabilia corporis contagia,
 Mirifica arte sustulit,
 Ac bona sua in pauperes distribuenda
 Collocandaque honoravit:
 Anno MDXLI die XXIV Septembris
 Vitam cum morte commutavit.
 Aurea pax vivis, requies æterna sepultis.

With this brief outline of the career of a remarkable man we are fain to be satisfied, from the absence of fuller details upon any authentic authority. We now proceed to offer a summary of the extravagant speculations and fanciful theories which may be called the Paracelsian Philosophy.

