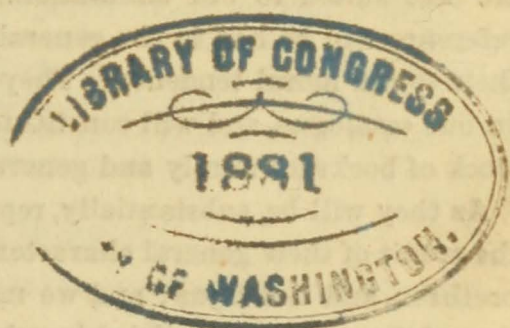


REMARKABLE DELUSIONS;

OR,

ILLUSTRATIONS OF POPULAR ERRORS.



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REMARKABLE DELUSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Belief and credulity—General prevalence of error—Delusions originate in the fall—Are fostered by ignorance—Incomplete knowledge—Prejudice—Morbid sensibility—Interested priestcraft—Hypocrisy—Covetousness.

THERE is no moral attainment which has not its negative as well as its positive side. Man has not a nobler prerogative than that which is embodied in the words—to believe. This is at once his privilege and his power. It enlarges his sphere of contemplation, prompts him to the highest action, binds each individual to his kind, soothes him with the most lasting enjoyments, and constitutes at once the food and medicine of the soul. But faith is a good only when reason has demanded and secured adequate grounds for its exercise. When these are present, belief ennobles and invigorates man; when they are wanting, it proves a disgrace and a curse. The ruin of our first parents was,

that, forsaking their confidence in God, they cherished faith in the promises of the evil spirit. They were thus seduced to destruction. The instrument which, when tuned according to the rules of truth and rectitude, uttered the sweetest melodies, became, when these were wanting, a fractured thing, from which nothing could proceed but a chaos of wild sounds, full of discord. Credulity was man's first sin—a sin which, since that moment, has been continually repeated.

Error has thus become an element inseparable from the existence of human nature. As, in his first fall, man had been allured by the lying promise, "Ye shall be as gods"—so he has since that period been ever deceived by some ambitious hope, as brilliant and as false as that which constituted his earliest temptation. Some of the errors into which our fellow-creatures have been led will be recorded in the following pages. But those which we can here enumerate are only specimens, and many of them specimens of delusion in its mildest form. The greater developments of credulity are not within our present scope. But *all sin is credulity of the false*; all *virtue* springs from *belief of the true*.

Regarding the subject, however, as we now do, in its secondary manifestations alone, it is both vast and distressing. The idolatry which clings to a material representation of the Divinity; the intolerance which demands homage to the past, and refuses to acknowledge all advance of intelligence; the mad hopes by

which mankind have been disgraced, and the wars by which they have been desolated; the fruitless projects of the ignorant and designing; the intemperance which has proved the bane of one crowd, and the licentiousness which has proved the ruin of another; the idle amusements of the frivolous, and the dark passions of the malignant; the desire for the undue prolongation of human life; the baseless dreams of the covetous, and the desire of the dissatisfied to pry into the secret and unknown;—these, and a thousand kindred errors, all have their origin in a single principle, the proneness of man to be flattered by his wishes, and to believe in the immediate and the sensible, rather than in the remote, however real.

Many circumstances, superadded to the tendencies derived from the fall, co-operate in fostering such manifold delusions.

It is almost superfluous to remark, how this propensity to be deceived is increased by ignorance; for as knowledge is the apprehension of truth, whilst credulity is the apprehension only of the semblance of truth, knowledge and credulity must be ever opposites. We cannot, therefore, wonder that the least civilized ages of society have ever been most prolific in certain errors. They have swarmed in the dark hotbeds of vicious ignorance. Whilst external knowledge will not correct errors of the first magnitude, and the only remedy for them is the knowledge which is of heavenly origin, lesser mistakes like these lie within the reach

of more ordinary applications, and decrease in proportion to the intellectual advance of society around them. The revival of letters, and what was still more potent, the reformation of religion, sent a hundred dire forms of infatuation shrieking to their hiding-places.

“So, when the sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th' infernal jail,
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted rays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.”

Milton's Ode on the Nativity.

“When I recall to mind,” says the author of these lines, in one of his imperial prose productions, “after so many dark ages wherein the huge overshadowing train of error had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the church, how the bright and blissful Reformation (by Divine power) struck through the black and settled night of ignorance and antichristian tyranny, methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears.”

Montaigne has well observed, that “as there is an abecedarian ignorance which precedes knowledge, so there is a doctoral ignorance which succeeds it—an ignorance which knowledge begets at the same time that she despatches and destroys the first.” The progress of human society amply justifies the truth of this very profound observation. Indeed, of all the delusions to which mankind has been liable, none

have been more remarkable than those which have followed in the wake of a commencing period of human enlightenment. To this class may be referred such superstitions as astrology, alchemy, and the El-Dorado. To this also we must refer the various absurdities of the schoolmen. The common mind of that day was, indeed, grossly dark; but the scholars were in comparative light. Yet, absurd and trifling in the highest degree were the studies to which even the best of them were addicted. Specimens of such delusions may be observed in the following pages. In this connexion lord Bacon appropriately observes, that, "like as many substances in nature which are solid do putrify and corrupt into worms, so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrify and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and, as I may term them, vermiculate questions, which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality."*

Nor is it unnatural that the progress in knowledge gained by the more advanced should be greatly disbelieved and abundantly misconstrued by the vulgar mind. Spirit, as well as matter, has its *inertia*, or love of rest, and tends, like every heavy body, to retain its original position; whilst whatever would disturb that condition is readily resolved into the miraculous, and therefore unlawful. We are not surprised if the first invention of printing

* "Advance of Learning."

appeared to our forefathers a piece of monstrous magic, or if that of gunpowder appeared, just in the sense in which the imputation was *not* true, attributable to infernal agency. Men resist the progress of knowledge, not only because it sometimes opposes their own pecuniary and other interests, but because they have a disinclination to admit society to be in advance of themselves.

It will be easily apparent, moreover, how many of the prodigious wonders admitted by human credulity have arisen out of that morbid curiosity and false sensibility which is one of the most degraded forms of our fallen nature, especially when, as developed in ill-regulated minds, it puts on the form of a passion of incredible strength. Of this disease our journals furnish continual evidence. To-day it is the inclination to pry into the details of some tale of domestic sorrow, and to-morrow it is an insatiable appetite after the details of some ghastly murder, in each case demanding particulars with an eagerness which respects no bounds, and with a voracity which no amount of circumstantials can satisfy. For the moment, and in repudiation of every principle and of every fact, the notorious criminals of the day become deified, and the very attention excited by their enormous crimes, drives the weak or the wicked to become their imitators.

Nor can we wonder how, during past ages, and at the suggestion of an interested priesthood, from whose devices and intrigues many

of these delusions sprang, tales of supernatural dealings assumed a form absolutely horrific. The advance of daylight has dispersed such forms into air; though let it be carefully observed, spectral terrors are fainter in the light of modern Protestantism than in that of any other religious system.

It is painful to add to these instances those in which absolute hypocrisy has had a commanding share. But it is impossible to exempt some cases related in the following pages from that dark and dread charge. Every strong will has a power greater than that of magic itself over the ignorant and inexperienced. And if it happen that the deceiver shall, under the awful names of God and religion, hold out lures which appeal to the passions or foster the caprices of the multitude, especially if his system be a strongly imaginative one, (an essential ingredient in most similar cases,) his success will be probably in proportion to the venerableness of the names he invokes. The very craving after spiritual food becomes thus a vehicle for every unwholesome and baneful poison.

There is, however, no form of error which has more decidedly outlived the appliances of knowledge than those which are associated with an inordinate desire of gain. The limits within which the good things of this world should be acquired and possessed, are distinctly marked out by the great Proprietor himself. Let men overstep these bounds, and the result is unutterable confusion and distraction. It is true that

the greatest sinners often themselves escape the snares their own hands have laid — for the judgments of God bear always more or less reference to a life to come ; but such overstrained expectations ever end in an extensive, and sometimes in a fatal reaction. When man will erect for himself “a tower, the top whereof shall reach unto heaven,” it will often follow that he will lie, in the issue, crushed beneath the weight of his ill-founded superstructure.

But we will detain the reader no longer upon the threshold. Many of the following narratives will speak for themselves. Our object has been far higher, than merely to occupy an idle hour by disinterring from oblivion fallacies and delusions long since exploded. From the nature of the subject, matters, apparently trivial in character, must sometimes be recorded ; but they will be viewed by the reflecting mind as landmarks, by which our onward progress may be marked ; and will serve, we trust, under God’s blessing, to animate the reader to greater exertion, in diffusing the knowledge of that true light before which the shadows of error are dispersed and flee away.

CHAPTER II.

DELUSIONS GENERALLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF PREVALENT POPULAR IGNORANCE.

Superstitions of ancient nations—Of Rabbins—Of Anglo-Saxons—Of aboriginal descendants—Of sailors—Sir T. Browne—Miscellaneous superstitions—St. Paul's-day—St. Swithin's—Bees in mourning—Charms in numbers—The hand of glory—Influence of moon—Marriage ring—Spots on finger-nails—Other portents—Fern seed—Deadly nightshade—Mandrake—Glastonbury thorn—Candlemas-day in the Highlands.

THE maxim that "ignorance is the mother of devotion," however in accordance with the principles and practice of the church of Rome, is one which will be unhesitatingly rejected by the true Christian. Pure scriptural religion, he knows, invites instead of shunning the light. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good," is a rule which he applies, not only to the life to come, but to that which now is. Never, perhaps, at any former period of our country's history, were such laudable efforts made as at the present day, to extend the benefits of education to all classes of the community. Amidst much which these have failed to do, they have also accomplished much at which we rejoice. It is only, however, when we take a

backward glance at society, that we see the full contrast between the results of knowledge and ignorance, and can recognise aright the obligations we owe to the former. The facts recorded in the present chapter will tend, we hope, practically to impress this truth upon our readers.

The pagan religion of the Greeks and Romans was replete with omens. Days, lucky or unlucky; imaginary prognostics, afforded by the entrails of sacrificed victims; the act of sneezing at certain periods of the day, or in certain directions from the body; the salutary virtues of spittle in averting evil influences; the flight of birds; the rolling of thunder; the ravings of maniacs;—these, and many similar occurrences, interpreted by priests who did not fail to employ them for their own purposes, occur perpetually in the pages of ancient authors. They thus transmitted a legacy of credulity to a posterity sufficiently eager to turn it to account. Many of these superstitions were derived from Jewish sources, especially from the Rabbins, a remarkably fantastical and imaginative tribe. The Druidical religion of ancient Britain and the contiguous parts of the continent was not less credulous. All readers of ancient British history are familiar with the name of the *mistletoe*, (*viscum album*,) a parasitical plant, which took root within the bark of the oak, though now very rarely found on that tree, and bears flowers and fruit. It is believed to have derived its sanctity, not

only from the peculiar position in which it was found, namely, on the wood of the tree then commonly selected for their worship, but also from the circumstance that its leaves and berries grow in clusters of three, deemed by the Druids a mystical number. At the close of the year, the priests went in solemn procession to gather this plant, and peculiar ceremonies attended its removal from the oak. It was required to be cut with a golden knife by a priest habited in pure white, and it might be gathered only when the moon was six days old, whilst the detached branch was received with peculiar solemnity into a napkin held beneath the tree. Subsequently, it was identified by many with the forbidden tree of Eden, and was supposed to be a specific for peculiar disorders. The shamrock, or trefoil, was regarded by the Irish Druids as possessed of a similar sanctity.

The Saxon conquerors of these islands brought over with them, as elements of their ferocious religion, many similar superstitions. The descendants of the more ancient inhabitants of these islands, namely, the dwellers in the Highlands, in Wales, in Cornwall, and in the Isle of Man, still preserve similar delusions in their fullest force. Many of these notions were retained, scarcely modified, by the Anglo-Saxons when Christianized, (to use that word in a very popular sense,) and the imperfect knowledge of religion possessed by our forefathers is shown in nothing more strongly than

in the laws enacted to repress the spells and incantations prevalent in those days of imperfect enlightenment. So far, indeed, was Popery from obliterating these prepossessions in favour of the miraculous, that it even adopted into its own ritual many of the most gloomy notions of pre-existent heathenism. Errors of every form and degree abounded. The falling of the salt; the bleeding of the nose; the crossing of one's path by a jay, a squirrel, or a hare; the killing of animals designed for food, at any other season than that of the full moon; the putting of the foot into the wrong shoe; stammering in the beginning of a speech; washing hands in the water used by another; the breaking of a mirror; the croaking of ravens or of crows; the appearance of magpies, especially if there were a pair; the ticking of the scarabæus, called the *death-watch*; the withering of the bay-tree;—were in those days omens of peculiarly sinister import. In days a little later, the notion which men had of education was that it was something akin to a Divine inspiration, and it was a practice with many parents, and those probably of the better sort, to interrogate their sleeping children on St. George's-day as to whether they would study their book or not. If the half-sleeping child uttered something affirmative, he was devoted, when the parents could afford it, to some learned profession; if the reply was unfavourable, a handicraft occupation was selected. To beat a child with an alder stick was ominous,

as it was the infallible way of stopping his growth. Prejudices of this order are indeed scarcely extinct. Who of our ancestors wondered at the misfortunes of Charles I., when he remembered the tottering of the crown on his head on the day of his coronation, or his rent flag on the White Tower of London? * or could any one be surprised at Cromwell's death who was told that, just at that time, a great whale had come up to Greenwich? The misfortunes of James II. were intimately connected, in the opinion of many, with the rending of the cloth of gold on the day of his inauguration; and that no good could come from the number two was incontestably proved by the misfortunes of William II., Henry II., Richard II., Charles II., and James II.

The minds of sailors—men peculiarly removed from the ordinary advantages of education—are still extremely full of such superstitions. They prefer to set sail on Sunday—as if that voyage *must* prove fortunate which begins by the violation of God's authority; if wind be wanting, whistling is the approved mode of praying for it, and they will seriously check an unwary passenger if he shall happen to whistle when the wind is high; they regard the presence of children on board ship as peculiarly favourable to the success of their voyage; and the hornedness of the moon is an

* Or Nottingham; Clarendon describes the setting up of the king's standard on the castle hill in that town as accompanied by a similar portent.

infallible sign of the approaching weather. How many vessels, even now, have a horse-shoe nailed to some part of the rudder, as a token of good luck!

Sir Thomas Browne, in his book entitled "Enquiries into Common and Vulgar Errors," (1686,) presents a curious picture of the credulity which anciently swayed the minds of the people. He appears to have taken for his model the somewhat similar work of Palæphatus, a Greek classical author, who, in his day, endeavoured to disprove or to account for some of the incredible things which, at a still older period, possessed men's minds. A glance at Browne's pages is extremely interesting. That crystal is nothing but congealed ice; that a diamond is made soft or broken by the blood of a goat; that an elephant has no joints; that a kingfisher, hung up by the bill, shows the direction of the wind; that men weigh heavier when dead than alive; that the sun dances on Easter-day, etc., etc.—these were then marvels. And that a grave physician should seriously, in the seventeenth century, let himself down before such errors, to treat many of them with respect, and worthy of an elaborate refutation, is to us, in the nineteenth century, the greatest marvel of all!

Among miscellaneous charms, much believed in by our forefathers, the following may be cited. Purslain, laid in the bed, was a remedy against visions. A nail from a coffin, placed on the threshold of a chamber, drove away

phantoms. A handful of asmart placed under a saddle caused the horse to carry his rider easily. Docks boiled with meat made the toughest viand tender. Moonwort trodden on by a horse loosened his shoes from his feet. Rue was a preventive of witchcraft. A bay-leaf was a preservative against thunder. Such specimens might be indefinitely extended.

The 25th of January, St. Paul's-day, was regarded by our forefathers as a crisis of great importance, because it was believed that the weather of the whole year might be predicted from the meteorology of that day. "If the sun shine, it betokens a good year; if it rain or snow, an indifferent one; if misty, it predicts great dearth; if it thunder, great winds, and death of people that year." This prognostic was afterwards reduced to rhyme:—

"If St. Paul's-day be fair and clear
It does betide a happy year;
But if it chance to snow or rain,
Then will be dear all kinds of grain.
If clouds or mists do dark the sky,
Great store of birds and beasts shall die;
And if the winds do fly aloft,
Then wars shall vex the kingdom oft."

Modern opinions have ignored the portents of St. Paul's-day; but those of St. Swithin (July 15) still survive. The legend which pertains to this day is curious. Swithin was a Danish bishop of Winchester, who, at his death, expressed his desire to be buried in the churchyard instead of the chancel of his minster. The monks of Winchester, however,

zealous for the glories of so bright a saint, and desirous of securing for his remains a better place of sepulture, determined that his body should be removed into the choir of the cathedral. But on the day fixed (July 15) for its removal, and during the forty days succeeding, it rained so violently as to impress them with the conviction that what they intended was a forbidden act, and they contented themselves with erecting a chapel over his grave. Poor Robin's Almanac (1697) has the following dog-grel, in which, however, a moral may be found:—

“ In this month is St. Swithin's-day,
On which, if that it rains, they say,
Full forty days after it will,
Or more or less, some rain distil.
This Swithin was a saint, I trow,
And Winchester's bishop also ;
Who in his time did many a feat,
As Popish legends do repeat.
A woman having broke her eggs,
By stumbling at another's legs,
For which she made a woful cry,
St. Swithin chanced for to come by,
Who made them all as sound, or more,
Than ever that they were before ;
But whether this were so or no,
'Tis more than you or I do know.
Better it is to rise betime,
And to make hay while sun doth shine,
Than to believe in tales or lies
Which idle monks and friars devise.”*

Most of our readers will remember sufficient instances of failure to prove that this prognostic of St. Swithin's-day is by no means infallible ; and it is a somewhat remarkable circumstance that though, in 1752, the new style was adopted in place of the old, (to cause the nominal to

* Brande's Popular Antiquities, vol. i. pp. 340, 341.

agree with astronomical time,) and though eleven days were thereby sunk in the calendar, it made no difference to St. Swithin's credit. The superstition appears to have no other foundation than this, that at certain parts of the year the weather, whatever it may be, extends over somewhat long periods, and that at the time of St. Swithin it is more than usually uniform. A similar notion seems to have formerly prevailed relative to St. Vitus's-day, (June 15.) Candlemas-day also (Feb. 2) once enjoyed the same prerogative.

In some parts of England, a singular superstition formerly prevailed, that when any one of a family died, the members of the household must inform the bees, if there were any, of the event, or else that some calamity would afterwards befall those poor insects themselves. This opinion is still current in some neighbourhoods, and is marked by hanging, in such a case, black crape upon the hive, or suspending the mourning somewhere in its vicinity. It is related in a London newspaper, that at a funeral of a rich old farmer, which took place in Devon, the following circumstance occurred: "Just as the corpse was placed in the hearse, and the horsemen to a large number were drawn up in order for the procession of the funeral, a person called out, 'Turn the bees;' when a servant, who had no knowledge of such a custom, instead of turning the hives about, lifted them up, and then laid them down on their sides. The bees, thus hastily invaded, instantly

attacked and fastened on the horses and their riders. It was in vain they galloped off; the bees as precipitately followed, and left their stings as marks of their indignation. A general confusion took place, attended with loss of hats, wigs, etc., and the corpse during the conflict was left unattended, nor was it till after a considerable time that the funeral attendants could be rallied, in order to proceed to the interment of their deceased friend."*

It was deemed essential by our ancestors, that certain remedies should be applied three, seven, or nine times. The importance of these numbers is also shown in other connexions. A royal salute with cannon is to this day composed of three times seven, or twenty-one guns. A superstition was prevalent, that a company of thirteen was unlucky, and that one of the number was certain to die within the year. The fact might be so, as the probabilities of life are in something approaching to that proportion. The seventh son of a seventh son (an occurrence, the infrequency of which would necessarily place it beyond the opportunity of frequent observation) was supposed to be born a genius, and some even averred that he had the power of healing scrofulous disorders, like former monarchs, by his touch. At all events, it was deemed essential that he must be brought up to the study of medicine. These notions were doubtless derived from the frequent use of the perfect number *seven* among the Jews.

* Brande, vol. ii. p. 301.

"The hand of glory," as it was called, though a phrase almost unintelligible to modern ears, was regarded by our forefathers as endowed with strangely mystic virtues, and was frequently employed by thieves and housebreakers in their depredations, since it was supposed to confer the power of entering houses without obstruction from any who might encounter it. The hand of a malefactor exposed on the highway was to be obtained. The effect of this, when duly prepared, was, that it took away (so it was believed) all power of motion from the person before whom it was held.

The singular influences ascribed by our forefathers to the moon, are evidently remnants of the more ancient pagan worship of that luminary. Pigs were to be killed and sheep shorn at the period of its fulness, and wood was to be cut at the same fortunate conjuncture. Peas and beans were to be sown, according to Tusser's husbandry, in the moon's wane. Among the caricatures to be found in an antique book, a superstitious man is thus satirized: "He will not commit his seed to the earth when the soil, but when the moon requires it; he will have his hair cut when the moon is either in Leo, that his locks may stare like the lion's shag; or in Aries, that they may curl like a ram's horn. Whatever he would have to grow, he sets about when she is in her increase; but for what he would have made less, he chooses her wane."

Sir T. Browne, to whose book against vulgar

errors we have already referred, allows the legitimacy of vaticinations from spots on the finger nails. Burton, in his *Anatomy*, says that a black spot is a bad omen. It is certainly a sign either of previous injury or advancing disease.

A common superstition is still current, that in marriage the ring is put upon the fourth finger of the left hand because an artery goes from that finger to the heart. This is a perfect delusion, though once seriously believed by very grave persons. The popish superstitions once connected with the wedding-ring are well known to have led the early Puritans to desire that its use might be abolished.

Spirits were supposed to be detected by the blue burning of candles; whilst a knot of tallow near the flame was called a winding-sheet, and regarded as a presage of approaching death to one of the family. The howling of dogs (perhaps derived from some afflicted animal being found grieving over the dead body of his master) was regarded as a similar prognostic. If crickets forsook a house they had been long accustomed to inhabit, it boded deep calamity. To kill a spider, and not to kill a snake, were deemed equally disastrous. A very ancient superstition was, that the dead body of a murdered man would gush out blood if the murderer approached it. It is not very easy to conjecture from what this evidently false superstition arose. Its original invention was designed, perhaps, to terrify the guilty man into

confession. It is accounted for, however, in another way, by a well-known work, called "The Athenian Oracle." "Blood is congealed in the body for two or three days, and then becomes liquid again, in its tendency to corruption. The air being heated by many persons coming about the body is the same thing as motion to it; it is observed that dead bodies will bleed in a concourse of people, when murderers are absent as well as present."

It is well known to all who have the slightest acquaintance with the elements of botany, that there is a certain class of vegetables which derive the name of "*Cryptogamia*," from the seeds being produced in a manner which is not readily apparent. The fern, for instance, bears its seeds on the underside of its leaf, where they are beautifully arranged, and may at the proper season be distinctly observed. It was once supposed that the seed of the fern was actually invisible, and that those who possessed it (though according to this supposition they could by no means become certified of its presence) were, by its means, gifted with the faculty of invisibility. But in order that this virtue might be imparted, it was necessary to gather it on midsummer eve.

The deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*) was supposed to derive its poisonous qualities from its growing, as it often did, among the dark deposits of death and corruption. These invested it with an imaginary horror, and great magical virtues were attributed to it.

But the mandrake (*Atropa mandragora*) was associated with even more deadly and portentous attributes. It was imagined to grow under the gallows, and to be nourished by the distillations of executed malefactors, and it was believed that when it was eradicated it uttered a great shriek, as if possessing sensibility. To guard against the potential effects of gathering it, some authors recommended that the plants should be tied to a dog, who, being driven away, would pull up the plant with him. We can scarcely wonder at the feelings with which, in the dark ages, this plant was regarded, when we are aware of its botanical peculiarities. Its root, severed in some directions, bears a considerable affinity to the human form. Its smell is extremely foetid, and its properties venomous to a high degree. It is, however, a native only of the south of Europe. But its peculiarities became identified in England with the root of the briony, which was, by a juggle, often cut so as to imitate its form.

The Glastonbury thorn was also, in the olden time, an object of great notoriety. It was reported to blossom only on Christmas day, and some said that it budded in the morning, flowered at noon, and decayed on the night of the 25th of December. Its virtues were ascribed to Joseph of Arimathæa, said to be the founder of the first Christian church in England, (which a foolish tradition placed at Glastonbury,) and was believed to have sprung from the staff which he stuck into the ground

whilst laying the foundation. When the style was altered, this thorn was believed to have so far protested against the innovation on the calendar, as to blossom on the 5th of January instead of the 25th of December—its corresponding, though not nominal anniversary. The miraculous character of this tree survived the Reformation, and king James I. and queen Anne are said to have visited it, and to have taken away cuttings from the spot. The only foundation for the legend is, that at Glastonbury and its vicinity grow certain thorns, which, like the *Helleborus niger*, or Christmas rose, blossom at a very early period of the year.

Such superstitions as those we have narrated above are not as yet, as we have remarked, altogether obsolete. We believe that even yet, in London, a shop exists in which certain beads are sold, made from the root of the white briony, and once supposed to possess a singular virtue when hung around the necks of children cutting their teeth. But such delusions are fast disappearing before the increasing light of intelligence; and though persons are still to be found who transmit to ignorant men and simple women the traces of such old-fashioned superstitions, they are destined soon to share the fate of the broomstick of the witch, and the terrors of St. George and the dragon. It is the happiness of Britain to possess, above many nations, an enlightened community. It will be a happier day still, when her population shall

learn that charms, omens, and prodigies are not the most deadly forms of superstition ; that its worst form is exhibited when men set up, as they are ever prone to do, the outward and sensible as protections, instead of the inward and spiritual ; and when they believe that any man is safe without the guardianship of an almighty Providence, or happy without a consciousness of being reconciled to God through faith in his Son, and doing the things which please him. And then will be the period of Britain's glory, when her sons shall be taught to seek, in a firm reliance on truth and a living practice of vital piety, the only education which can effectually disperse the darkness of error, ennoble the mind, and prepare man for a life which never dies.

CHAPTER III.

DELUSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPERFECT DISCOVERY.

Marvels of early ages—Geography—Rabbins—Herodotus—Strabo—Mela—Arabians—Monks of dark ages—Ibn Bathuta—Influence of Crusades—El-Dorado—Natural philosophy—Roger Bacon's brazen head, etc.—Magic lantern—Galileo—Invention of printing.

THE infancy of society is always conspicuously distinguished by a love for the marvellous. Wonder is but the voracious appetite of a starving mind, and, like other resistless cravings, will submit to be fed with unwholesome food rather than not to be fed at all. In estimating the figments and hallucinations of past ages, we must remember that the sympathies of mind are rarely retrospective. It is more easy to conceive of increased knowledge in the future than of defective knowledge in the past. However reluctant we may be to admit of the progress which shall render our present attainments childish and obsolete, it is still more difficult to make due allowance for the errors of those who fell far below the point which, with a natural self-flattery, we suppose ourselves to have reached. But the history of mankind is the narrative of growth attained by very slow and

often very irregular advances. There have been certain periods when (to use a well-known metaphor) the day has broken upon the mountain tops of more intelligent minds, whilst the valleys below have been shrouded in darkness; and there have been other periods when, to use Milton's fine image, "the overshadowing train of error has swept the lights out of the firmament" again. The Aristotelian philosophy was, in the days of Alexander the Great, like the invention of stage-coaches, an immense improvement on the clumsy wagons which preceded them; the same philosophy, in the fifteenth century, was like the preference of such stage-coaches to the greater facilities of a modern railway. But few truths, if any, are intuitively apprehended. The mind gropes its way in darkness long before it understands the true value of light. The march of intellect is, to a considerable degree, the march of error:—

*"We think our fathers wrong, so wise we grow;—
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so."*

The progress of geographical discovery will illustrate these observations. It is our happiness to live at a time when this department of knowledge has been largely and successfully prosecuted. The travellers of England will yield the palm to no other country for patient and persevering enterprise. They have penetrated almost all lands, toiled through the burning deserts of the Sahara, and shivered under the ice-bound regions of the northern pole. Nor have their efforts been purely of a useless

character. They have enlarged our sphere of knowledge, multiplied our social comforts, and opened new paths for commerce. In other instances, they have accomplished still higher results by proving the pioneers for the missionary, and paving the way for the introduction to benighted countries of the glorious gospel. It will now be our office to point out to our readers the path of error through which this, and other departments of science, have had to struggle.

When the ancients stepped out of the circle of their positive knowledge, they involved themselves in a maze of the most palpable errors. The fables of the Cimmerians, who dwelt at the ends of the ocean clouded in perpetual night; the story of *Æolus* and his bag of winds; the island of *Circe*, peopled by enchanters—were delusions which, propagated by the idle and believed by the credulous, would very naturally take root in barren and uncultivated soils. The notions of the later Jews respecting the productions of the earth may be learned from many passages of the *Talmud*. Enormous birds, capable of seizing elephants and flying away with them, were supposed to abound in certain remote districts. One of these birds is represented in Rabbinical story as standing up to the lower joint of the leg in water, and thus to have been seen by certain mariners. Imagining that the water could not have been very deep, from the small portion of the bird's body immersed in the

water, these mariners were about to bathe in the spot, when a supernatural voice addressed them, "Step not in there; for seven years ago, a carpenter dropped his axe in that water, and it has not yet reached the bottom."*

Among other wonders were those related by Herodotus, to whom we are indebted for so much veritable ancient history. He speaks of ants like foxes, who, burrowing in the golden sands of India, first turned up its treasures to the view. Plutarch speaks also of little snakes, which crept into men's bodies—only an exaggeration of the tortures still inflicted in the marshy lands of Africa by the guinea-worm.

The ancient geographer, Strabo, represented Britain as a land not worth the conquest, and Ireland as a region of eternal snows, peopled by cannibals. Even so late as the time of Claudius, Mela, a Roman geographer, supposed that all the southern parts of the world were inaccessible, because of the extreme heat of the sun and the intervention of the torrid zone. He placed in Africa the region of the Antipodes of Antichthones, where he supposed the Nile to rise, and to flow under the ocean till it reached the upper hemisphere. Travellers of that day spoke of trees which bore flowers like water-pots; whilst the most energetic efforts were made to discover the site of the ancient Paradise, the western nations assigning its position eastward, and the eastern nations westward—both agreeing in believing that it

* D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*.

was equally distant from themselves. Had half the amount of spiritual exertion been directed to the real paradise, it would not have so constantly eluded their search.

When, after the destruction of the Roman empire by the Goths and Vandals, Arabia became the most learned nation of its day, and took under its protection the discarded literature of Europe, the geographical notion of the period was, that the earth, like an egg, lay floating in an ocean of unmitigable gloom. India was then spoken of as abounding in gold and silver islands. Mention was made of a fourth continent, not discoverable because of the power of the sun. Ethiopia was represented as remarkable as the land of Prester John, whose territory was divided into islands by the rivers running from Paradise. The palace of this redoubtable king, men were told, was built of precious stones, and lighted by carbuncles. At the same time, Gog and Magog were exhaustless topics of interest. A traveller was sent out by one of the caliphs, with strict injunctions not to return till he had seen Gog's dwelling. Under such a stimulus, can we wonder that he speedily discovered it? He found it—so he said—built of iron, cemented with brass, and its gates were fifty cubits high. In subsequent maps, this castle was made to tower at the extremity of Asia.

It would scarcely be imagined, except by those who have witnessed the avidity with which minds of a vulgar order seek for

prodigies, how eagerly the monks of the dark ages, secluded and uninformed as many of them were, sought for similar inventions, with which to beguile the tedium of their weary hours. The most absurd fables passed under the name of "the wonders of the world." It is upon record that, in those days, eight hides of land were given for a book filled with such tales of geographical marvels. Stories of red hens found near the Red Sea, which consumed any one who touched them; of human beings eight feet broad, who wore their heads on their breasts; of women with boars' tusks and camels' feet; and of other beings, with mouths like the sails of a windmill. Ibn Bathuta asserted that he had seen Adam's footprint left on the top of a mountain in Serendib; also that he had beheld rubies as large as hens' eggs; and, more wonderful than all, that, in some far distant part,* leeches sprang from trees upon unwary travellers, so that the natives were compelled to carry lemons, that by squeezing their juice on them, they might be detached from their hold. Tales like these—

"Such as take lodgings in a head
That's to be let unfurnish'd"—

were the delight of the ignorant during the dark ages, and were not entirely abjured even by

* Oysters on trees are less fabulous. We are told of certain districts liable to inundations which cover the lower boughs of trees to which oysters become attached. When the water subsides, these poor victims of delusion are hung in air. The leeches of Ceylon, so poisonous in their bite, may in part have been the foundation of the superstition mentioned in the text.

the better informed. The Crusades, by bringing men into real acquaintance with distant lands, gave the first shock to the lethargy of monkish superstition, and contributed much to the improvement of geographical science. The application of the magnetic principle to the formation of the mariner's compass, and the discovery of America by Columbus, rapidly reduced the remaining ignorance. But all marvels had not yet grown obsolete. One of the great difficulties which Columbus had to overcome in the prosecution of his maritime discoveries, was the notion entertained by Spanish divines as to the shape of the sea. He was gravely assured, that his vessels would, if they proceeded in a certain direction, sail down a declivity, which they would not be able again to ascend.

What wonders were not related of the El-Dorado, or the Golden Country, in the sixteenth century! This region, supposed to lie somewhere between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers, was regarded as prolific in gold and jewels, which were as plentiful as the pebbles on our roads. It was true that the treasures themselves eluded the search of travellers, but they were always imagined to be a little in advance of the regions then penetrated. Stimulated by these tales of the exuberant riches of El-Dorado, or using them as a pretext for covering over his own purposes, sir Walter Raleigh proposed the conquest of Guiana, and the discovery of this country, in which the

temples were roofed over with gold, and where the natives, whilst celebrating their feasts, were accustomed, it was said, to roll their bodies, previously rubbed with a precious balsam, in gold dust. The expedition failed, of course, in its immediate object, but it led to some geographical discoveries of much importance. Even so late as the publication of sir T. More's "Utopia," that book was taken for a genuine history, and some readers thought it highly important that missionaries should be sent to teach so intelligent a nation the truths of Christianity.

The discoveries made in natural philosophy by Roger Bacon, who died in the year 1292, were greatly in advance of his age. As an astrologer and alchemist, for to both these sciences he was addicted, he might appropriately find a place in a later chapter; but his reputed invention of gunpowder, (though the inhabitants of China and of India lay a claim to it,) his conception of the telescope, (though other hands perfected the machine,) and his treatises on optics and experimental philosophy, justly entitle him to be regarded as the greatest philosopher of his age. Such studies were regarded as extremely inconsistent, however, with the duties of a Cordelier friar, and popular indignation accused him of extensive dealings with the devil.

The following is (as nearly as we can translate it) the mysterious sentence in which Bacon's knowledge of gunpowder is supposed to

lie concealed. It occurs in his "Epistle on the secret operations of art and nature, and on the nullity of magic":—

"But yet of saltpetre LURU. VOPO. VIR. CAN. UTRIET. of sulphur; and so you may make thunder and lightning if you know the trick."

This information greatly resembles the vague directions which distinguished alchemy in general. But if we suppose the hieroglyphical words to denote charcoal, and the "trick" the granulation of the mass, we shall certainly arrive at gunpowder. In Bacon's *Opus Majus* we have the following passage, supposed to be designed to describe this disastrous and death-dealing invention:—

"Some things disturb the ear so much that if they were made to happen suddenly by night and with sufficient skill, no city or army could bear them. No noise of thunder could compare with them. Some things strike terror on the sight, so that the flashes of the clouds are beyond comparison less disturbing. And an instance we take from a childish amusement which exists in many parts of the world, to wit, that with an instrument as large as the human thumb, by the violence of the salt called saltpetre, so horrible a noise is made by the rupture of so slight a thing as a bit of parchment, that it is thought to exceed loud thunder, and the flash is stronger than the brightest lightning."* This certainly has some appearance of being an anticipation of the effects of gunpowder.

* "British Worthies," vol. i. p. 41.

Roger Bacon was reported also to have formed, by the assistance of friar Bungay, a brazen head, which is not improbable. That some attempt may have been made to produce, by automatic agency, a few articulate sounds, is also very credible; nor is it unlikely that Bacon's servant, terrified at such a machine, may have broken the head in pieces. Many of the feats ascribed to Roger Bacon are traceable, we may observe, to the use of the magic lantern, which is stated to have been one of his inventions.

The prejudiced delusions with which the advances of science have, in many ages, been called to contend, are in no case more strikingly illustrated than by the history of Galileo, who lived in the sixteenth century. His discoveries were of the highest philosophical importance, and led him to the conclusion that the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, though upheld by Aristotle, the fathers, and misconceived quotations from the Bible, was inadequate to account for the phenomena of the universe. He was the first who constructed a perfect telescope; he determined the nature of the moon's surface, discovered Jupiter's satellites, and imperfectly perceived the ring by which Saturn is surrounded. But his disclosures awakened the enmity of the Jesuits, and he was summoned before the Inquisition, who declared his propositions to be erroneous and dangerous. He was compelled, therefore, to sign a recantation, of which the following is a portion:—

“With a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and I swear that I will never, in future, say or repeat anything, verbally or in writing, which may give rise to a similar suspicion against me.”

As Galileo rose from his knees, however, after this abjuration of his doctrine concerning the motion of the earth, etc., he muttered to a friend who stood near him, “It does move, though, notwithstanding!” A more heroic maintenance of truth would have better become so distinguished a philosopher.

The invention of printing offended, in a similar way, the prejudices of the fifteenth century. Fust was the assistant of Guttenberg, the first projector of the art of printing with movable types. Like many other inventors, Guttenberg left the harvest of his invention to be reaped by subsequent hands. It is said that, in consequence of Fust’s employment of this art in combination with coloured ink, the vulgar concluded that he had signed a compact with the evil spirit in blood. The delusion took a strong hold on the popular imagination, and is frequently reproduced even at this day. Other accounts, however, state, that Fust and Faust, to whom a somewhat similar notoriety is attached, were distinct personages, and that the enormities ascribed to the latter originated in his having greatly outstripped his age in pursuit of the physical sciences.

Whatever be the degree of truth actually

involved in some of these stories, it is evident that he who is, at any period of the world, greatly in advance of his age, is liable to no small amount of misconception and misrepresentation. Perhaps, however, such men as those we have enumerated, rendered themselves liable to the imputations circulated against them, by veiling their real knowledge under semblances which they must have known to be fallacious. If so, the fact may supply a lesson of some force to those who, having been intrusted with truths of value, seek, by a paltry conformity with the maxims of the ignorant or the vicious, to render them palatable to others. Let the Christian especially beware how he tricks his heaven-born principles in the meretricious guise which is "of the earth, earthy." Whilst no cringing to the world can render spiritual religion acceptable to those who know not its value, such an accommodation will infallibly awaken suspicion, and land its professors in deserved contempt. Only one defence will avail the Christian: "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

CHAPTER IV.

DELUSIONS INVOLVING HEALTH AND LIFE.

Ancient remedies and prescriptions—Death of king John—
Diseases presided over by saints—Charms—Aurum potable
—Bezoars—Dead man's touch—Touching for king's evil—
Gold bullet—Harvey—Jenner—Animal magnetism.

AMONG the choicest temporal blessings which God bestows upon man must be reckoned good health. While the laws by which it ought to be preserved are now more generally studied and understood than perhaps at any former period, the remedies and processes by which it may be recovered when lost have also been proportionately multiplied. It is no exaggeration to assert, that the humblest peasant in our country has now afforded to him, through the means of our noble public institutions, an amount of medical care, skill, and tenderness, which, a few centuries ago, a monarch could not have purchased with all the wealth of his kingdom. Medical science, however, has been a plant of slow growth. As in the present chapter we review the mass of errors and delusions through which the healing art has had to make its advances, we call upon

our reader to lift his heart in thankfulness to God, for the abounding mercies which distinguish the period in which his lot has been cast.

At the time of the Trojan war, the administration of remedies was principally in the hands of the priests, who believed that their prayers accomplished more than their prescriptions. The remedies of the Orientals and the Romans consisted mainly in charms; the Greeks alone surpassed their contemporaries in science. Cato proposed that, in cases of fracture, the limb whilst bound up should have the following charm daily sung over it: "*Huat, hanat, ista, pista, fista, dominabo damnastra et luxata.*" The Druids appear to have accompanied their medical appliances by religious ceremonies, which it was imagined gave them their chief virtue. The manner in which the medicinal herb was plucked, whether by the right hand or the left; the metal of the instrument by which it was cut off from its stalk; the time of the day at which it was procured; and even the dress of the person collecting the simples, was carefully prescribed; and the alleged absence of some parts of the given formula often saved the credit of the operator.

Some of the ancient monkish legends describe king John of England as poisoned by the administration of a venomous reptile in his drink. "Then went the monk into a garden, and found a toad therein, and took her up, and put her in a cup, and filled it with good ale, and pricked her in every place in the cup till the venom

came out in every place, and brought it before the king, and kneeled, and said, 'Sir, wassail ; for never in your life drank ye of such a cup.' 'Begin, monk,' quoth the king. On which the monk drank of the potion, and retiring from the king's presence, died immediately." The king himself only survived him two days. So runs the legend, which, however untrue to fact, sufficiently describes the superstitions of the period. Similarly, one of the stories of the Scottish borders represents a young man as poisoned by partaking of a dish of stewed adders, which he mistook for eels. We need scarcely say that the toad is not venomous, and that the poison of the adder is confined to its fangs.

About the fifteenth century, Jewish medical practitioners were much employed in Europe. One of these, John of Gadesden, the court physician of England, ordered the king's son, then sick of the smallpox, to be rolled up in scarlet cloth, and his room to be hung with the same material, as an infallible remedy.

The various diseases of the human body were, after the introduction of Christianity into England, supposed to lie at the mercy of corresponding saints. St. Anthony presided over inflammations ; St. Appolonia and Lucius over the toothache ; St. Osillia and St. Clara over sore eyes ; St. Ruffin over madness ; St. Valentine over epilepsy ; St. Wolfgang over lameness, etc.

Roger Bacon's notions of medicine were full

of the errors of his age. He tells us of a Parisian sage who cut a serpent nearly in pieces, and then watched what it would do. Observing that it dragged its body to a plant, the leaves of which immediately made it whole, he regarded the circumstance as an infallible indication of the medicinal virtues of the indicated plant. The story is, however, only a reflection of a similar one in the pages of ancient mythology. The same author asserts that the flesh of dragons, ripened by severe hunting, possesses the greatest virtue in prolonging life.

The middle or dark ages abounded with a countless variety of charms, supposed to possess efficacy in the removal of various diseases. As a cure for the ague, the word A B R A C A D A B A R A was believed to possess great mystical virtues. It was thus written :—

A B R A C A D A B A R A

B R A C A D A B A R

R A C A D A B A

A C A D A B

C A D A

A D

It was worn round the neck as an amulet.

The following was a recipe for a wart :—
 “ Take a piece of twine; tie it in as many knots as you have warts; touch each wart with a knot, and then throw the twine behind your back into some place where it may soon decay—a pond or hole in the earth; but tell no one what you have done. When the twine is

decayed, your warts will disappear without any pain or trouble."

"*Against the biting of a scorpion,*" this was the remedy:—"Say to an ass secretly, and as it were whispering in his ear: 'I am bitten with a scorpion.'" *

The leaves of an alder tree on which the sun never shone were prescribed for erysipelas, and a cross made of the alder and sallow for epilepsy. To cure consumption, certain inhabitants of Scotland tied a rag to the finger and toe nails of the sick person, and then, having waved it thrice round his head, buried it privately. This appears to be a relic of Druidism. Ricketty children were drawn through a split tree, which was afterwards bound up so that its several parts might grow together, and the recovery of the diseased child was believed to correspond with the restoration of the tree. A cure for hooping-cough was found in mounting the patient on a black ass, led nine times round an oak tree, or sometimes in giving the hair of the child, rolled up in butter, to a dog. It was believed in some parts of Berkshire that a ring made out of communion money was a sovereign remedy against convulsions.

Sometimes these charms assumed a religious form, which, if not invented by priests, were not at least forbidden by them.

All this is deplorable, and exhibits an amount of ignorance and infatuation of which the present enlightened age would be ashamed.

* Scott's "Discovery of Witchcraft," p. 176.

Some of these charms approach so near to the blasphemous, as to forbid their insertion in our pages. If the reader will turn to the last chapter, to which such instances more appropriately belong, he will ascertain enough of the darkness of our forefathers respecting religion, to render the most absurd practices employed in its name by no means incredible.

Writers in medicine about two hundred years ago, made frequent mention of certain potations of gold prescribed for various disorders. Little doubt can exist that the *aurum potabile** was meant to throw the precious metal, not so much into the throat of the patient as into the pocket of the physician. At the same period, great virtues were ascribed to *bezoars*, that is, certain hard substances found in the interiors of land animals. These stones were supposed to expel poisons, and were sold at enormous prices. One variety of this medicine was formed from the heart and liver of vipers. But at that period, the more disgusting the medicine the greater were its reputed virtues. The reader who has perused the thrilling narrative of the deathbed of king Charles II., may remember the nauseous and revolting character of the remedies adopted for the relief of the royal patient. There was a celebrated prescription, called "treacle of mummy," which was compounded, as its name imports, of the dust of ancient Egyptian bodies,

* Lord Bacon, in his *Sylva Sylvarum*, approves this prescription.

considered to be sovereign when taken fasting against all danger of poison.

The well-known custom of touching for the king's evil, as scrofulous complaints were once termed, originated in the practice of Edward the Confessor, though the manner in which it was treated by that monarch was somewhat different from that which afterwards became the custom. It appears that Edward employed sundry manipulations, and did not exclusively rely upon the efficacy of the royal touch. Referring to a subsequent period, Aubrey says: "The curing of the king's evil by the touch of the king does much puzzle our philosophers, for whether our kings were of the house of York or Lancaster, it did the cure for the most part." The following description of the religious ceremonial, as employed by Charles II., is given by Evelyn: "His majesty began to touch for the evil, according to custom, thus—His majesty sitting under his state in the Banqueting House, the chirurgeons cause the sick to be brought or led up to the throne, where, they kneeling, the king strokes their faces or cheeks with both his hands at once, at which instant a chaplain in his formalities says, 'He put his hands upon them and healed them.' This is said to every one in particular. When they have all been touched, they come up again in the same order, and the other chaplain kneeling, and having angels of gold strung on white ribands on his hand, deliver them one by one to his majesty, who puts them about the necks of the touched

as they pass, whilst the first chaplain repeats, 'That is the true light who came into the world,' etc. Dr. Johnson, it will be recollected, was thus touched by queen Anne.

It is related that an old man, a witness in a cause before a court of justice, having declared that he had been touched by queen Anne for scrofula, was asked by the judge whether he were really cured. He smilingly replied, that he did not think he ever had the complaint, but that his parents were poor, "and had no objection to the bit of gold." It will be readily believed that such an occurrence was by no means a solitary one.

"Squire Morley, of Essex," says the rev. G. Asby, "used to say a prayer, which he hoped would do no harm when he hung a bit of vervain-root from a scrofulous person's neck. My aunt Freeman had a very high opinion of a baked toad in a silk bag, hung round the neck. For live toads thus used, see Pennant's *British Zoology*."*

The devout and holy Richard Baxter, whose life and labours remain as a precious memorial of the highest style of piety, had some points of superstitious weakness. He relates in his *Autobiography*, a nostrum prescribed for one of his many ailments, which gives a curious notion of the state of medical knowledge in his day—unless, indeed, it were merely a piece of charlatanism. The account is thus given in Calamy's abridgment of his *Autobiography*: "Having

* Brande, vol. iii. p. 301—303.

read in Dr. Gerhard the admirable effects of the swallowing of a gold bullet upon his own father in a case much like his, he got a gold bullet, between twenty and thirty shillings' weight." But the good man found that the bullet, instead of producing the cure he had anticipated, was itself a sore and prolonged disorder.

Till the end of the sixteenth century, so firmly was the authority of the ancients established among members of most learned professions, that the authority of Aristotle, through the medium of Arabic translations, was quoted as decisive of medical questions. When, however, men devoted themselves to the study of anatomy, the errors of their previous conclusions became distinctly obvious. None signalized himself more remarkably in this department than William Harvey. Previously to his day, a suspicion had been entertained that the blood contained in the human body was not entirely stagnant. But it was reserved for Harvey to place before the world the whole theory of its circulation; to demonstrate how it was purified by passing through the lungs; to distinguish between the office of the arteries as the channels from the heart, and the veins as the channels to it; and to explain the action of the ventricle, or forcing pump, and of the auricle, or sucking pump, of the central organ. This discovery was published in 1628. So unprepared was the public mind at that time for such an announcement, that Harvey received much

personal abuse, and lost much of his medical practice.

One of the most deadly diseases which, until recently, desolated the community was the smallpox. Upwards of 200,000 persons annually fell victims to its ravages. The useful introduction of inoculation (or the communication of the disease itself in a mild form) by lady Mary Wortley Montague, learned by her in Turkey, was the signal for a tremendous opposition, both medical and theological. The practice was censured as wicked and diabolical, diminishing "the salutary terror which prevails respecting the uncertain approach of the disease;" it was anathematized from the pulpit and denounced from the press. When, at a later period, Dr. Jenner introduced his system of vaccination, (having discovered that milk-maids, who catch a certain disease common among cows, escaped the dread infection of the smallpox,) one of his opponents asked, "What might be the consequence of introducing a bestial humour into the human frame after a long lapse of years?" The pertinent rejoinder was, "What may be the consequence, after a long lapse of years, of introducing into the human frame cows' milk, beef-steaks, or mutton-chops?" The sanitary benefits of the invention, however, speedily reconciled the world to what was at first regarded as a disgusting innovation.

The extraordinary qualities possessed by the magnet, though not absolutely unknown, were

not brought into the use of commerce till the sixteenth century. Before that period, however, magnetism was applied in medical cases. Paracelsus and others ascribed to it peculiar virtues. When it had attained notoriety as a means of navigation, it also rose into repute as a cure. At the end of the seventeenth century, pains in the teeth and ears were treated by the use of magnetic toothpicks. In cases of rheumatic pains, also, patients were supposed to obtain great relief by being rubbed in the proper direction with magnets prepared for that purpose. Unquestionably the magnet has great value in relieving the eye, if troubled by the presence of particles of iron and steel. But this has no connexion with its medical, but only with its mechanical powers. Paracelsus, however, extolled its virtues in cases in which it might be supposed to exert no influence whatever. Was a man severely wounded? he proposed to anoint by a certain unguent, not the wound itself, but the weapon which had caused the wound. This was a happy escape for the patient, for whom nothing was to be done but to wash the cut with cold water and cover it with a linen rag, taking care to keep it clean, and daily to remove all offensive matter. If the recipe for the anointing salve were written out according to a modern medical formulary, some of its ingredients would surpass the powers even of Apothecaries' Hall. Moss, growing on the head of a thief left hanging, powder of real mummy, human

blood, etc., were its principal ingredients. The disorder itself was mainly let alone.

This sympathetic mode of cure was subsequently practised with great success, if we may believe himself, by sir Kenelm Digby, secretary to Charles I. We have recently perused "A late discours made in solemne assembly of nobles and learned men at Montpellier, in France, by sir Kenelm Digby, knt.," etc., (1658.) This "exquisite philosophical discourse," as the preface to its translation calls it, "relates the cure of a very sore hurt, which was perfected by the power of sympathy," in the presence of king James, his son, and the duke of Buckingham. Mr. Howell, who had attempted to part two men when fighting a duel, got his hand severely wounded. "I asked him," says sir Kenelm, "for anything that had the blood upon it. So he presently sent for his garter, wherewith his hand was first bound, and as I called for a basin of water as if I would wash my hands, I took a handful of powder of white vitriol, which I had in my study, and presently dissolved it; as soon as the bloody garter was brought me, I put it within the basin, observing in the interim what Mr. Howell did, who stood talking with a gentleman in the corner of my chamber, not regarding at all what I was doing; but he started suddenly as if he had found some great alteration in himself. I asked him what he ailed. 'I know not,' said he, 'what ails me, but I find that I feel no more pain. Methinks that a pleasing

kind of freshness, as it were a wet cold napkin, did spread over my hand, which hath taken away the inflammation that tormented me before." To demonstrate still more the nature of this sympathy, sir Kenelm relates that, after dinner, and in Mr. Howell's absence, he took the garter, and held it before the fire. In a short time, Mr. Howell's servant came to say that his master was in a great fever. The connexion hinted at in the last paragraph may be well regarded as somewhat apocryphal. But whatever might be the merit of the powder of sympathy, the treatment of the wound by sir Kenelm, who, contrary to the practice of those days, ordered the patient to keep it clean, and to throw away all plaisters, were well adapted to effect a cure. Some notion of the "philosophy" of sir Kenelm may be derived from the fact, that this knight recommends the washing of the hands in a basin shone into by the moon without water, saying, that "the moonshine would have humidity enough to cleanse the hands because of the star from which it is derived." He declares that this is also an infallible way to remove warts.

Lord Bacon refers to the sympathetic powder, in his Natural History, with approbation. The secret of composing similar powders, had it been known to the public, would probably have caused many more diseases than cures. It is a singular phenomenon connected with the evidence of testimony, that remedies praised by a thousand mouths in one age as infallible, should

be ascertained in the next to possess no virtue whatever. All charlatanism, however, exhibits a succession of similar changes, and has cycles of recurrence too.

In process of time there arose a new method of applying this magnetizing influence. Mr. Valentine Greatraks, once a soldier of the Commonwealth, professed to effect astonishing cures by stroking with his hands the parts affected. Headache, palsy, rheumatism, epilepsy, convulsions, were said to yield to this remedial treatment. In 1766, this mode of cure was taken up by Mesmer, who was half an astrologer and wholly a quack. He gave similar applications the name of a science, and called it animal magnetism, to distinguish it from mineral magnetism, in which it originated.

The mode in which Mesmer operated in Paris was extraordinary. He placed in the centre of a room a vessel, about four feet in diameter and one in depth, containing a number of bottles filled with magnetized water. From the cover of this vessel proceeded various rods of iron, each of which was held by a patient, who made one in a circle placed around the *baquet*, whilst every patient was united to the neighbouring one by a chain of connexion. Certain "magnetizers" then went round, and directed to the patients various passes, till the expected hysterical symptoms began to appear. All this was done in perfect silence. Mesmer himself then appeared, dressed in robes of flowing silk, and holding in his hand a long

wand. He professed to regulate the *crises* of his patients, and when he found them in a convulsed state, he made passes upon or towards them. At his pleasure, calmness succeeded to the energy of intense action, and the patients described themselves as feeling streams of cooling vapour at his touch.

Mesmer now became the talk of the *salons* of Paris. Wealth seemed within his grasp, and he was offered by the king (Louis XVI.) a large sum to make known his discovery. He had, however, no desire to submit his empiricism to investigation, and removed precipitately to Spa. He left behind him a partner, M. D'Eslon, who afforded to the Royal Commissioners all the explanations he could give, and an inquiry was forthwith instituted into the alleged phenomena. It was conducted by scientific men of the highest reputation. Their conclusion was, that animal magnetism had no proofs to sustain it except the effects apparently produced on the human frame—that these effects could be produced without passes at all—and that whatever manipulations were employed depended for their success on the patient's real though unconscious knowledge. The conclusion was, that the whole process was purely imaginative.

The revival of animal magnetism in our own day, is a subject of too modern a character for us appropriately to handle. The history of this art, we may only observe, illustrates very strikingly one great fact—the power of will possessed by the resolute and determined over the weak

and diseased sensibilities of an inferior physical nature. This, properly resolved, is no matter of surprise, and is in entire accordance with the ordinary laws of man's being, which prescribes that some shall be stronger and some weaker. But there is a moral exemplification of this power of will, which is not only pitiable, but awful, and which is the most guilty infraction of the laws which God has prescribed for man's character and conduct. Fearful are the exhibitions afforded, when some human being, strong to do evil, controls and tyrannizes over his fellow-man, seducing by his own example, and using the victim as the tool for his own base and degrading purposes. And terrible is the case of him who, permitting himself to be led away by a mightier than himself, abandons the principles which would have saved him, forgets the God who is almighty to deliver, and yields himself or herself a prey to the deluder. Reader, whoever you may be, young man or young woman, beware! Dare to resist, however difficult, the power which would enthrall you! To say "no" in the hour of strong temptation is the noblest exercise of Christian virtue. But God alone, by his Holy Spirit, can give you grace to pronounce that sometimes omnipotent word. That Spirit is freely offered to all who ask it aright. The promise has gone forth, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to

him that knocketh it shall be opened. . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask them," Matt. viii. 7, 8, 11.

CHAPTER V.

DELUSIONS INVOLVING SUPERNATURAL VISITATIONS.

Old English legends—Vampyres—Ordeals—Ghosts—Dreams
—Somnambulism—Practical Reflections.

THERE is no part of man's organization more distinctly marked than his longings after the unseen. To commune with the invisible, and to expatiate in the eternal, are original instincts of man's nature—noble when taking the direction which God himself indicates ; but paltry and puerile when employed for purposes different from those which he has prescribed. All who are not abandoned to entire thoughtlessness, are conscious of periods when deep solicitude about things invisible fills the soul. It is felt at such seasons that man is more than a material thing, and that the grave cannot be the limitation of his existence. Hence the anxiety of the soul to know what awaits it beyond the tomb. The word of God, while refusing to gratify idle curiosity, has met the cravings of man's nature by revealing to him the momentous truths of his eternal existence in a world to come ; the misery or bliss that

must characterize that existence, as he dies at enmity against God or in state of reconciliation with him; his lost and ruined condition by nature; the need of his being born again by the Holy Spirit; and the necessity of faith in the atonement and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sole ground of a sinner's acceptance before God. The carnal heart, however, while refusing faith to God's testimony on these points, is too often distinguished by childish credulity with respect to facts respecting the unseen world, which are only man's erroneous invention. In the following chapter some of these will be enumerated by us. While carefully desirous of avoiding all appearance of dogmatism, we feel it in the outset our duty to call upon our reader to test all narratives of popular superstitions by the severest and strictest laws of evidence. A spirit of credulity, however it may be fostered by the Romish church, is the very opposite of the spirit of true faith. It is curious, indeed, to observe how those who forsake the latter are generally prone to indulge the former. Napoleon Bonaparte believed on the presiding star of his destiny; and many of the literary circle that surrounded the "philosophical" king, Frederick the Great, while they derided the truths of revelation, could yet perpetrate such follies as those which are recorded in the following extract. "Lanethrie, an avowed atheist, used to make the sign of the cross if it thundered. D'Argens would shudder if there were

thirteen seated round the table. Others were the dupes of fortune-tellers, and full half of the court believed that a woman, all in white, appeared in one of the apartments of the castle, holding in her hands a large broom, with which she swept the room when any of the royal family were about to die. Several persons of distinction, occupying high places under government, were duped by a person who pretended to have the power of intercourse with evil spirits so as to discover hidden treasure. They even went the length of offering sacrifices to the devil, and procured at a great cost, as an acceptable offering, a goat which had not a single hair that was not black. Such are the inconsistencies of infidelity, and such are the aberrations into which men are seduced, when, for the delusions of their imaginations, they forsake the word of the living God."

In proportion as we recede towards the infancy of society, especially where Divine revelation has not poured its light upon the mind, we find the passion for the unseen ungovernable and dangerous, and early history is crowded thick with portents, many of which may have originally possessed some concealed foundation, though, as they meet our eye, they are absolutely mythological and untrue. We will not, however, venture on the subject anterior to the date of modern history. The reader of the Old English Chronicles will be familiar with numerous exemplifications of this credulous taste. The history (as it is called) of

Geoffrey of Monmouth, abounds with incidents of this fabulous character.

Among the superstitions which paganism transmitted to nominal Christians, was one of which scarcely any traces are now extant, though in its day it exerted a horrifying influence. It was known under the name of Vampirism. A vampyre was represented as a dead man, quickened by magical processes into supernatural life, which was sustained by preying upon the bodies of the dead. The Greek Christians appear to have been specially addicted to this delusion, and in various countries of Europe, as in Bohemia and Hungary, such superstitions were prevalent even during the last century. To such an extent did credulity on this subject prevail, that not only were vampyres imagined in every district, but assemblies of soldiers and ecclesiastics gravely met to deliberate how the enormity could be stayed. One mode of discovering a vampyre was to pace a jet-black horse up and down the churchyard between the graves. If the animal turned restive, and refused to proceed, it was concluded that a vampyre existed somewhere in the vicinity.

The process of ascertaining the innocence or guilt of an accused person by the trial of *ordeal* is of great antiquity. The followers of Zoroaster, the Hindoos, and the Tartars, alike practised it. It has been already shown, in one of the volumes of the Monthly Series, how the human body may be rendered capable of resisting

the effects of intense heat.* Such preparations were well known to the ancients, and to those who lived in the dark ages. Accused persons often handled red-hot iron without sustaining injury. Harold, king of Norway, in order to prove his title to the crown, walked over metal in this state unscathed. Popon, to convince the Danes of the truth of Christianity, (a wretched proof of so important a theorem,) put his naked arm into a gauntlet heated to a white heat, and drew it forth entirely sound. At Dydmothèque, in France, a wife, suspected by her husband, lifted a bar of red-hot iron, which she carried three times round a chair. She then dropped the iron on the chair, which was instantly in a blaze. The husband was satisfied; but the wife declared to the bishop that she was, nevertheless, guilty. In such instances there can be no doubt of a familiarity with certain secrets known only to the initiated.

Under the Anglo-Saxon government of these islands, the imperfection of knowledge in the use of circumstantial evidence rendered such trials of frequent occurrence. The principal ordeals were two—by water and by fire. If the trial was by the former, a caldron of water was made to boil in some part of a church, varying in depth according to the presumed guilt of the accused person. A heavy weight was then placed within the caldron, to be drawn out by the prisoner with his arm bare. The arm was afterwards covered over and sealed up by the

* Magic, Pretended Miracles, etc.

priest until the third day. If, at the expiration of that time, the limb was healed, the accused person was deemed innocent; if otherwise, he was punished as unquestionably guilty. The corresponding ordeal was similar. A red-hot piece of iron being produced, was to be lifted by the hands of the accused, who was required to take three prescribed steps whilst holding it. The hand was then bound up and sealed as before. It is evident that such cases afforded much opportunity for connivance and collusion, and that the interested or party prejudices of the judges would materially modify the results.

Many other ordeals are mentioned by various authors. At St. Sané, in Bretagne, was an iron collar, which, bound round the neck, left (it was said) the innocent uninjured, but strangled the guilty. The action of the collar was regulated, in all probability, by the opinion the operator might have of the merits of the case before him.

Credulity has, however, found no more extensive field for the exercise of its powers, than that which is associated with the idea of forms from another world. What terrors have not been excited, what idle and worthless volumes have not been written, on this engrossing theme? The subject is too prolific to receive in these pages more than a very epitomized notice. It is unnecessary to analyse the accounts given of such appearances in the pages of Holy Scripture. We have no reason to expect, in the ordinary government of the world

by the providence of God, those manifestations which, in his wisdom, he deemed necessary under a dispensation attended by miracles. That such appearances have been, is no proof that such things now are, any more than the fact that miraculous operations once took place is an argument for believing in their now daily recurrence. Such appearances in modern times will, it is evident, depend for their frequency very greatly on the degree of popular credulity which may be prevalent. In certain states of mind, the unexplained passes readily into the supernatural or even into the terrific.

It would be clearly impossible to undertake the elucidation of every occurrence which seems to favour the belief of this superstition. Yet the explanation of a few cases may afford a light by which to estimate the force of others yet involved in mystery.

That some of these alleged cases are the simple effect of error or misapprehension is what will be denied by no judicious inquirer. A friend of the writer told him the following incident:—

He had been kept out by some business far beyond his usual hour, and was returning home in very early morning, at a time when objects were indistinctly seen, and when the mind, it may be added, overstrained by undue exertion, is in a condition very favourable for the reception of ideas of the supernatural. His path lay by a churchyard. Just as he reached it, he saw, though indistinctly, a white figure

slowly moving to and fro close to its precincts. If, alarmed by terror, he had fled from the spot, his tale might have added a new item to the catalogue of spectral appearances. But he went on, and as he drew nearer, he ascertained that the supposed apparition was only the inhabitant of a cottage hard by the church, who, unable to sleep, and half-undressed, was taking an airing, certainly at a very unseasonable, and, as it would have proved to most, at a very uncomfortable hour in the morning.

The following is the narration of a Newcastle sea-captain: "His cook," he said, "chanced to die upon his passage homeward. This honest fellow, having had one of his legs a little shorter than the other, used to walk in that way which our vulgar idiom calls *with an up and a down*. A few nights after his body had been committed to the deep, our captain was alarmed by his mate with an account that the cook was walking before the ship, and that all hands were on deck to see him. The captain, angry at being disturbed in his sleep, ordered them to let him alone, and try which, the ship or he, should get first to Newcastle. But turning out on further importunity, he confessed that he had like to have caught the contagion; for, on seeing something move in a way so similar to that which the cook was wont to do, and withal having a cap on so like that which he was used to wear, he verily thought that there was more in the report than he was at first willing to believe. A general

panic diffused itself; he ordered the ship to be steered round towards the object, but not a man would move the helm. Compelled to do this himself, he found, on a nearer approach, that the ridiculous cause of all their terror was part of a main-top, the remains of some wreck floating before them." *

There is something to be learned from the following conversation between Dr. Fowler, a former bishop of Gloucester, a great believer in the supernatural, and Mr. Justice Powell, who had less credulity. The latter one day told the former that we had now ocular demonstration to convince him of the existence of ghosts. The bishop congratulated him on his discovery of the truth, and the justice told how, as he lay in bed one night, he heard something come up stairs and stalk towards his room. "I drew," said he "my curtain, and saw a faint glimmering of light enter my chamber." "Of a blue colour, no doubt," said the bishop. "Of a pale blue," answers the justice; "the light was followed by a tall, meagre, and stern personage, who seemed about seventy, in a long, dangling gown, bound round with a leathern girdle, his face wrinkled, and of a dark sable hue." "And did you not speak to it?" interrupted the bishop. "My lord, I did speak to it." "And what answer, Mr. Justice?" "My lord, the answer was, that he was the watchman of the night, and came to give me notice that he had found the street door open, and that

* Hibbert.

unless I rose and shut it, I might chance to be robbed before break of day."

After the marriage of Mr. Matthews, a comedian, he took lodgings in York, in a room which had been formerly occupied by Sterne, but which was reported to be haunted, though the ghost was only to be heard in the best bedroom. When night came, and just as the Minster clock struck twelve, the sleepers were awaked by three blows, *as they believed*, upon their heads. Nothing, however, appeared which might afford a clue to the explanation; but every night, precisely at the same witching hour, the same knocks were repeated. The pair became uneasy, but the cheapness of the lodgings still tempted them to remain. At length the noises suddenly ceased, and were never renewed. It may be easily supposed that the silence was almost as awful as the sounds. Some weeks after this, as Matthews and his wife were sitting in a room in company with a widow, the conversation turned on the *Stonegate ghost*. As a Mrs. Long, who was present, heard it, she said, "Why, that was my dear Billy Long!" In the issue, it appeared that her husband, a bed-ridden man, lodging in the adjoining house to Matthews, was much annoyed through fear of thieves, especially dreading that they should come from behind his bed. As he was remarkable for his love of punctuality, he had been accustomed, just as the Minster clock struck twelve, to deal three heavy blows upon the arras which hung

behind his pillow. His death was followed, of course, by a cessation of the sounds.

Sir Walter Scott, in his "Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft," relates the following occurrence, which we imagine refers to himself and to the supposed apparition of his deceased friend, lord Byron:—

"Not long after the death of a certain illustrious poet, who had filled, when living, a great station in the eye of the public, a literary friend, to whom the deceased had been well known, was engaged, during the darkening twilight of an autumn evening, in perusing one of the publications which professed to detail the habits and opinions of the distinguished individual who was now no more. . . . A visitor was sitting in the apartment who was engaged in reading. Their sitting-room opened into an entrance hall, rather fantastically fitted up with articles of armour, wild animals, and the like. It was when laying down his book and passing into the hall, through which the moon was beginning to shine, that the individual of whom I speak saw, right before him, and in a standing posture, the exact representation of his departed friend, whose recollection had been so strongly brought to his imagination. He stopped for a single moment, so as to notice the wonderful accuracy with which fancy had impressed on his bodily eye the peculiarities of dress and posture of the illustrious poet. Sensible, however, of the delusion, he felt no sentiment save that of wonder at the extraordinary

accuracy of the resemblance, and stepped onwards towards the figure, which resolved itself as he approached into the various materials of which it was composed. These were merely a screen, occupied by great coats, shawls, plaids, and such other articles as are usually found in a country entrance hall. The spectator returned to the spot from which he had seen the illusion, and endeavoured with all his power to recall the image which had been so singularly vivid. But this was beyond his capacity; and the person who had witnessed the apparition, or, more properly, whose excited state had been the means of raising it, had only to return, and tell the young friend he had left under what a striking hallucination he had for a moment laboured."

The narration which follows presents a striking case in illustration of our subject:—

A club of persons in the town of Plymouth was accustomed to meet during the summer months in a secluded summer-house, accessible to many of the members by a pass-key. On occasion of one of its meetings, the president for the evening was taken dangerously ill, and, as a mark of respect, the chair designed for him was left unoccupied. His absence naturally led to a conversation on the talents and character of the absentee. Whilst the members were thus speaking, the figure of the president entered the room. It was ghastly pale, and clothed in white. Gliding to the vacant chair, it lifted the empty glass before him, bowed to the company,

and put it to his lips—then, in dead silence, disappeared as it had entered. The effect on the club was horrifying. After remaining for some time together conversing on this appalling incident, two of the number went to the house of the president, and found him dead.

Long after the news of the supernatural visitation had been circulated and obtained an awful credence, it was discovered that the deceased man, immediately before his death, and whilst the nurse appointed to watch by his bed-side was asleep, had, in a fit of delirium, actually gone to the summer-house, and had only returned to his own bed to die. If that explanation had been wanting, the whole scene, witnessed as it was by many spectators at once, might have passed for one of the best attested ghost stories on record.

The phenomenon of the spectre of the Brocken, a range of mountains in Hanover, may be already familiar to many of our readers. As, however, it is illustrative of certain delusions on the subject of spectral appearances, a slight reference to it may be allowed. M. Hane visited it for the thirty-first time at a period when the eminence was surrounded by “transparent vapours not yet condensed into clouds.” He observed at a great distance a gigantic human figure. The wind blowing briskly, he raised his hand to protect his hat. The figure did the same. He moved his body, and threw himself into various gestures. So did the figure. He called the landlord of an adjacent inn; there were

now two figures instead of one. These figures afterwards increased to three, and "every movement they made was imitated by the three figures, but the effect varied in its intensity, being sometimes weak and faint, and at other times strong and well-defined." The clouds were but a kind of imperfect mirror, in which the spectators saw their own reflection.

Dr. Clarke, the traveller, relates, that being in the vicinity of Constantinople, he was looking out of his cabin window, having an officer by his side, when he witnessed a horrible apparition. There floated before him a corpse, sewed up in a hammock, in almost an upright position, half out of the water, and borne along by the current of the ocean. "Nothing," he says, "could be more horrible; its head and shoulders were visible, turning first to one side, then to the other, with a solemn and awful movement, as if impressed with some dreadful secret of the deep, which from its watery grave it came upwards to reveal." The cause is evident. The process of decomposition had rendered the body light enough to counter-balance the weights with which, at the time of its burial, it had been sunk, and this explained its erect posture.

The stories of the Cock-lane and Stockwell ghosts, which during a considerable period kept London in an uproar, and were at length clearly traced to tricks and confederacy, are too long to be here detailed.

That many supposed supernatural appearances

in past ages have originated in the devices of the clever and designing, and were circulated for the purposes of increasing wealth or influence, is plainly apparent. Some monks availed themselves thus of the superstitions of one of the kings of France, St. Louis. The king had expressed a wish to have a community of the monks of St. Bruno settled near Paris. These monks fixed a longing eye upon the ancient palace of Vauvert, which appeared exactly to accord with their notions of a desirable residence. Vauvert immediately became haunted; sounds issued from it at night; and dancing lights, clanking chains, dreadful howlings, and other frightful phenomena, alarmed its neighbours. These were succeeded by a spectral form in green, with a beard of white, which was nightly seen in one of the palace windows. The monks told the tale to the king, and declared that if they were allowed to occupy the palace, the spectres should soon be exterminated. The king conveyed to them the property, the ghosts disappeared, the noises were heard no more, and the monks of St. Bruno enjoyed the advantages of a quiet residence.

The writer was not long since at Linlithgow, a celebrated palace of the former kings, or rather queens, of Scotland, through whose deserted and fire-blasted walls the wind now sweeps unchecked. Its neighbouring church is the scene of a very famous ghost story. Pitscottie thus relates it: "The king (James IV.) came to Lithgow, where he happened to be for the time

at the council, very sad and dolorous, making his devotion to God, to send him good chance and fortune in his voyage." (He was just about to leave for the battle of Flodden-field, in which he was slain.) "In the meanwhile there came a man, clad in a blue gown, in at the kirk door, and belted about him a roll of linen cloth, a pair of buskins upon his feet to the great of his legs, with all other hose and cloth conform thereto; but he had nothing on his head but long yellow hair behind and on his cheeks, but his forehead was bald and bare. He seemed to be a man of two-and-fifty years, with a great pikestaff in his hand, and came first forward among the lords, crying and speiring (asking) for the king, saying he desired to speak with him. While, at the last, he came where the king was sitting in the desk at his prayers; but when he saw the king, he made him little reverence or salutation, but leaned down gruffly on the desk before him, and said to him in this manner, as after follows: 'Sir king, my mother hath sent me to you, desiring you not to pass at this time where you are purposed, for if thou doest, thou wilt not fare well in thy journey, nor none that passeth with thee.'" The apparition then, after a few more remonstrances, disappeared. But some of the accounts describe it as disappearing towards the queen's apartments. Little doubt can be entertained that the whole was a trick devised by her Scottish majesty, who provided a person to put on the garb of St. John, (the adopted son of the virgin

Mary,) that he might warn the king against what was likely to be an unfortunate, and perhaps disastrous expedition.

The following circumstance will still further illustrate the present subject. During the early part of the last century, some inhabitants of Dorking entertained the notion that a ghost walked at a certain place in their neighbourhood, and that a recently deceased lady was to be seen hovering about her late dwelling with a clattering noise, and in the night walking through the fields with a candle, which the highest winds did not extinguish. The report greatly alarmed the surrounding inhabitants. In the end, it proved to be only the trick of some idle, but wicked boys, belonging to a boarding-school hard by.

The incident is related by Defoe, in his "History of Apparitions." If, as is not improbable from his manner of relating the story, he was himself concerned in this wicked trick, it might prepare the way for a much more reprehensible appeal to superstitious minds perpetrated by him in his later years. The publisher of "Drelincourt on Death" complained that his book would not sell. Defoe undertook to administer what would cure the evil. He therefore wrote as a preface the pretended apparition of Mrs. Veal. The work then sold by thousands.

We cannot sufficiently reprehend the tricks, which, under the name of practical jokes, possess so great a charm for some evil-disposed persons. However ignorant those are on

whom such pranks are played, their sensibilities ought to be regarded with pity; and very serious, and sometimes fatal consequences have often attended similar perpetrations.

Certain physical disorders of the stomach and organs of digestion are well known by medical men to be attended by vivid imagery, as distinct as if the objects of delusion had themselves passed before the eyes of the spectator. Such impressions, often heightened for the time by the effects of anodynes employed for their relief, have been frequently mistaken for something supernatural. Sir David Brewster, in his "Letters on Natural Magic," relates several of these phenomena, as illustrated by the experience of a lady whom he calls "Mrs. A." :—

She once came into her drawing-room, when she saw clearly the image of her husband—then absent from the house—standing with his back to the fire, looking at her seriously and fixedly. After a little time, during which the vision retained its first attitude, she called out, "Why don't you speak?" The figure moved towards the window, and disappeared.

On another occasion, her husband being present, she was annoyed by the appearance of a black cat, and could with difficulty be persuaded that it was only an illusion, although the room was searched without finding such an animal, and a dog, who would have been roused by such a visitant, was reposing quietly on the hearthrug. An apparition, dressed in a shroud, figures of deceased friends—a carriage driving

up to the door—the appearance of a large dog—were also among the spectral visions by which she was successively assailed. Both the lady and her husband were perfectly aware of the unreality of her impressions.

“A highly intelligent friend,” says Dr. Abercrombie, “whom I attended several years ago in a mild but protracted fever, without delirium, had frequent interviews with a spectral visitor, who presented the appearance of an old and grey-headed man, of a most benignant aspect. His visits were always conducted exactly in the same manner; he entered the room by a door which was on the left-hand side of the bed, and seated himself on a chair on the right-hand side; he then fixed his eyes upon the patient with an expression of intense interest and pity, but never spoke; continued distinctly visible for some seconds, and then seemed to vanish into air. These visits were repeated daily for several days, but sometimes he missed a day; and the appearance continued for several weeks. The same gentleman, on another occasion, when in perfect health, sitting in his parlour in the evening, saw distinctly, in the corner of the room, a female figure in a kneeling posture, who continued visible for several seconds.”*

Laplace relates, that a relation of Bossuet, though he had no other symptoms of sickness, saw the figures of men, birds, and boats continually moving and disappearing before him, though perfectly aware that such appearances

* Abercrombie on “The Intellectual Powers.”

were merely delusions. General Thiebault, also, in the state of depletion consequent on an inflammatory attack, distinguished various fantastic objects, which danced before his eyes, and even amused himself by describing them to the friends who surrounded his couch.

Many similar instances might be cited, of visions preceding attacks of apoplexy and of epilepsy, and others precursive of the access of insanity.

We need scarcely add, that the effects of a continued course of dissipation are well known to concentrate themselves into the terrible form of *delirium tremens*—an awful lesson to those who, forgetful of the laws of God and man, are wasting their constitutional powers in such ruinous excesses.

“A young gentleman, who has recently left Oxford, told me that he was one evening at a supper party in college, when they were joined by a common friend, on his return home from hunting. They expected him, but were struck with his appearance. He was pale and agitated. On questioning him, they learned the cause. During the latter part of his ride home he had been accompanied by a horseman, who kept exact pace with him, the rider and horse being close fac-similes of himself and the steed he rode, even to the copy of a new-fangled bit, which he used that day for the first time. He had, in fact, seen his ‘double,’ or ‘fetch,’ and it had shaken his nerves considerably. His friends advised him to consult the college tutor,

who failed not to give him some good advice, and hoped the warning would not be thrown away. My informant, who thought the whole matter very serious, and was inclined to believe the unearthly visit to have been no idle one, added, that it had made the ghost-seer, for a time at least, a wiser and better man."*

The effect of opium, whether taken as a medicine or in compliance with a baneful habit, is not dissimilar. "Sometime ago," says Dr. Abercrombie, "I attended a gentleman affected with a painful local disorder, requiring the use of opiates, but which often failed in producing sleep. In one watchful night, there passed before him a long and regular exhibition of characters and transactions connected with certain occurrences which had been the subject of much conversation in Edinburgh some time before. The characters succeeded each other with all the regularity and vividness of a theatrical exhibition; he heard their conversation and long speeches that were occasionally made, some of which were in rhyme; and he distinctly remembered, and repeated next day, long passages from these poetical effusions. He was quite awake, and quite sensible that the whole was a phantasm; and he remarked that when he opened his eyes the vision vanished, but instantly re-appeared whenever he closed them."†

In professor Gregory's abstract of Baron von

* Mayo's Popular Superstitions, p. 51.

† Abercrombie's "Intellectual Powers," p. 283.

Reichenbach's researches in magnetism, an account is given of some persons, whose extreme sensitiveness enabled them to detect appearances entirely unperceived by others above a grave. He mentions the case of a young clergyman, named Billing, who had discovered a dead body by a certain luminous appearance above the spot. The peculiar form he gave to it was probably, however, only the effect of his own imagination. Billing said, that whenever he went near a grave-yard he always observed many similar appearances. Though the fact is not familiar to most persons, no doubt can exist that a corpse is, as the professor describes it, "a field for abundant chemical changes, decomposition, fermentation, putrefaction, gasification, and general play of affinities;" nor is there any improbability in the belief, that extremely sensitive constitutions may be able to discern a lambent flame accompanying this action, though altogether undiscoverable by the ordinary observer. To put the matter to the proof, professor Gregory induced a young lady, who possessed this sensitiveness in a high degree, to accompany him to a churchyard. This lady saw on one of the graves an appearance of phosphoric light—a kind of "delicate breathing flame" marking its whole length; and its repetition, in a weakened form, on an adjacent grave. Being subsequently carried to a burying-place in Vienna, where interments were daily taking place, she saw the same luminous appearances in all directions,

observing that they were specially vivid where there were recent graves.

Perhaps, however, of all the narrations regarding apparitions, there are none so striking as those which owe their existence to the power of *conscience*. How that extraordinary mental or moral power can excite the mind into the most vigorous action, can quicken sensibility, can invigorate memory, can rouse the imaginative faculties of the guilty, we need scarcely tell. The sinner carries thus within himself a phantasmagoric instrument of fearful and portentous power. Would that criminals could read the lesson which this fact teaches, sometimes in lines of blood or of fire—"Be sure your sin will find you out!"

It is astonishing how the slightest circumstance may, by this apparatus of mental torture, become associated with the impressions which lie uppermost within. One incident, related by a late writer, will sufficiently illustrate this division of our treatise:—

"It was about the eventful year 1800," says the narrator, "when the emperor Paul laid his ill-judged embargo on British trade, that my friend, on a journey to London, found himself in company in the mail-coach with a seafaring man, of middle age and respectable appearance, who announced himself as a master of a vessel in the Baltic trade, and sufferer by the embargo. In the course of the desultory conversation which takes place on such occasions, the seaman observed, in compliance with a common

superstition, 'I wish we may have good luck on our voyage—there is a magpie.' 'And why should that be unlucky?' said my friend. 'I cannot tell you that,' replied the sailor; 'but all the world agrees that one magpie bodes ill-luck, two are not so bad, but three are the worst of all. I never saw three magpies but twice, and once I had near lost my vessel, and the second I fell from my horse and was hurt.' This conversation led my friend to observe, that he supposed he believed also in ghosts, since he credited such auguries; 'And if I do,' said the sailor, 'I may have my own reasons for doing so;' and he spoke this in a deep and serious manner, implying that he felt deeply what he was saying. On being further urged, he confessed that, if he could believe his own eyes, there was one ghost at least which he had seen repeatedly. He then told his story as I now relate it:—

"Our mariner had in his youth gone mate of a slave vessel from Liverpool, of which town he seemed to be a native. The captain of the vessel was a man of a variable temper, sometimes kind and courteous to his men, but subject to fits of humour, dislike, and passion, during which he was very violent, tyrannical, and cruel. He took a particular dislike to one sailor on board, an elderly man. He seldom spoke to this person without threats and abuse, which the old man, with the license which sailors take in merchant vessels, was very apt to return. On one occasion, the latter

appeared slow in getting out on the yard to hand a sail. The captain, according to custom, abused the seaman as leaving his duty to other people. The man made a saucy answer, almost amounting to mutiny, on which, in a towering passion, the captain ran down to his cabin, and returned with a blunderbuss loaded with slugs, with which he took a deliberate aim at the supposed mutineer, fired, and mortally wounded him. The man was handed down from the yard and stretched on the deck, evidently dying. He fixed his eyes on the captain, and said, 'Sir, you have done for me, but *I will never leave you.*'

"The captain pledged his crew to silence. But after a time, the mate found them impressed with the idea, not unnatural in their situation, that the ghost of the dead man appeared among them when they had a spell of duty, especially if a sail was to be handed, on which occasion the spectre was sure to be out upon the yard before any of the crew. The narrator had seen this apparition himself repeatedly—he believed the captain also saw it, but he took no notice of it for some time, and the crew, terrified at the violent temper of the man, dared not call his attention to it. Thus, they held on their course homeward with great fear and anxiety.

"At length the captain invited the mate to go down into the cabin with him. In this interview he assumed a very grave and serious aspect. 'I need not tell you, Jack,' he said, 'what sort of hand we have got on board with

us ; he told me he would never leave me, and he has kept his word. You only see him now and then, but he is always by my side, and never out of my sight. At this very moment I see him. I am determined to bear it no longer, and I have resolved to leave you.'

"The mate replied, that his leaving the vessel while out of sight of any land was impossible. He advised that, if the captain apprehended any bad consequences from what had happened, he should run for the west of France or Ireland, and there go ashore, and leave him, the mate, to carry the vessel into Liverpool. The captain only shook his head gloomily, and reiterated his determination to leave the ship. At this moment, the mate was called to the deck for some purpose or other, and the instant he got up the companion ladder he heard a splash in the water, and looking over the ship's side, saw that the captain had thrown himself into the sea from the quarter gallery, and was running astern at the rate of six knots an hour. When just about to sink, he seemed to make a last exertion, sprang half out of the water, and clasped his hands towards the mate, calling, 'Ah ! he is with me now !' and then sank to be seen no more." Supposing the conversation to have been accurately reported, it is easy to imagine how the superstition so common among sailors should have given rise to their belief in the re-appearance of their deceased comrade. As regards the principal actor in the story, his remorse

for the crime he had perpetrated, and what we have before alluded to as the phantasmagoric power of conscience, are sufficient to account for the results which followed, without calling the supernatural into operation. An awful illustration does it present of a poet's lines :—

“ Guilt still appals, and conscience, ne’er asleep,
Wounds with incessant strokes, not loud but deep ;
While the vexed mind, its own tormentor, plies
A scorpion scourge unseen by human eyes.”

Similar instances to the above, magnified as they would naturally be by the unthinking and credulous, have often laid the foundations of what have been regarded as incontrovertible ghost stories. The impression made by such narrations on minds of a certain order is extremely enervating and deeply injurious. Without entering upon the question as to the possibility of such supernatural manifestations, (a question which in this work we prefer to waive,) we must regard the moral effects by which similar alleged appearances are attended as by no means such as to constitute an argument for the probability of their frequent occurrence, for the most credulous are certainly not those on whom apprehensions in regard to spiritual being exert the most salutary practical influence. The objects supposed to be accomplished by similar visitations are usually so trivial and even contemptible, as by no means to harmonize with the wisdom which ever attends on Divine interpositions. When, too, it is remembered in how many minds there

exists a strong predisposition to believe without adequate evidence, and on how many more a diseased imagination exerts an influence positively disastrous, sufficient reasons exist why we should be unusually slow in receiving such wonders. They demand an amount of proof which only the strongest evidence can afford.

It is not wonderful if, among the various delusions which have taken possession of the human mind, superstitions connected with *dreams* should have prevailed extensively. As dreaming was one of the modes by which Divine and prophetic communications were made in ancient days from God to his creatures, we can scarcely wonder that a supernatural character in dreams should be supposed to have survived the period in which they were manifestly employed for the above purposes. There is something, also, so distinctive in the sensations themselves—such a mixture of the novel with the familiar—and so vivid and apparently real are the pictures on which the eye of the mind rests, as to render the phenomena of dreaming altogether peculiar. The subject has accordingly been regarded with awful interest; and though dreams are in ordinary cases nothing more than new combinations of previously existing ideas, and therefore reflections of the past rather than intimations of the future, they have been in almost all ages identified with Divine influence. Yet dreams which leave behind them the strongest impressions, indicate only some dis-

turbance of the physical system, and are rather proofs of the need of medical treatment than prophecies of events to come.

Dreams are not, as they may be supposed to be, absolutely uncontrollable. Dr. Beattie relates one of his dreams, in which he supposed himself to be in a situation of the utmost danger on the parapet of a high bridge. He possessed, however, sufficient consciousness to be aware that this position was not altogether real, and to disabuse himself of the delusion, he resolved to precipitate himself from the eminence, in order to destroy the uncomfortable sensations of which he was conscious. Dr. Reid, also, who, during a certain period of his life, was, whilst asleep, oppressed by successions of painful imagery, took a decided course to divest himself of the recurrent terrors. Before he slept, he endeavoured to impress upon his mind the conviction that his dangers would be altogether imaginary, and when the moment of illusion came, he attempted to bring on the crisis which he seemed instinctively to dread. He thus gradually dispossessed himself of the phantasms, and regained ease and tranquillity.

That dreams have sometimes remarkably corresponded with subsequent facts, it would be useless, and more than useless, to deny. Yet it does not thence follow that such dreams have been supernatural. Such is the nature of the association of ideas in the human mind, that a forgotten event will sometimes only be recalled by some circumstance which stood in very near

relation to it, not till then will the event itself occur to the memory. Dr. Abercrombie relates, that on one occasion he met a lady whom he was aware of having seen before, though he could not recall her name nor the circumstances of their previous interview. When visiting a certain spot, however, with which the memory of that lady had been conjoined, the whole truth flashed upon him. Such occurrences are not unusual, and when applied to dreams, may explain a certain class of phenomena which would be otherwise inexplicable.

“A gentleman of the law in Edinburgh had mislaid an important paper connected with the conveyance of a property which was to be settled on a particular day. Most anxious search had been made for it for many days, but the evening of the day previous to that on which the parties were to meet for the final settlement had arrived without the paper being discovered. The son of the gentleman then went to bed under much anxiety and disappointment, and dreamed that at the time when the missing paper was delivered to his father, his table was covered with papers connected with the affairs of a particular client. He woke under the impression; went immediately to a box appropriated to the papers of that client, and there found the paper they had been in search of, which had been tied up by mistake in a parcel to which it was in no way related.”

Here was a forgotten circumstance recalled,

in all probability, by the kindred association which revived the remembrance in sleep; though owing to that association never having been excited in a waking state, the result seemed to be the effect of a supernatural enlightenment.

The phenomena of somnambulism are referable to those of dreams, a more intense state of excitement being only superadded. The acts of talking in sleep, of walking about as if perfectly awake, and of performing other actions in a manner precisely similar to ordinary ones, are familiar to every reader. But the subject is altogether so wide and difficult, that we can only give to it in these pages a transient reference.

The absurd oracles by which dreams are professedly interpreted would be scarcely worthy of a moment's notice, were it not that they frequently delude the unwary and unstable. The following are specimens:—To dream you see a stack of corn burned signifies famine and mortality.—To dream of little rain and drops of water is good for ploughmen.—To take flies signifies wrong and injury, etc., etc. But these are by no means the worst specimens; and to quote more would be a task equally insufferable to the writer, and uninteresting (we hope) to the reader. We would fain believe that the taste for the little books which feed such frivolous and often depraved fancies is fast passing away.

Should any of our readers entertain the

opinion, that on the subject which we have been discussing "it is necessary to caution against undue scepticism as well as against undue credulity,"—instead of engaging in unprofitable controversy, we would rather draw attention to the practical lessons which are deducible from the topic under examination. The grounds on which the Christian will withhold his belief as to the suspension of the laws of nature in cases similar to those adduced above, will entirely differ from those adopted by the unbeliever. While the latter ignorantly dreams that these laws cannot be suspended, the other will remember that the same Being who ordained them can at any time, when his wisdom sees fit, temporarily interrupt their action. He will reasonably expect, however, that the occasions when the laws of nature shall be so suspended will be such as to demand miraculous interposition, and not minister merely, to credulity. God, it is true, might send a messenger from the dead to warn a sinner of his guilt; but while Moses and the prophets remain, we have no Scriptural grounds to expect such a course. He might still, as of old, in visions of the night open to his creatures the good pleasure of his will, but the path of duty is to look for such revelation in the pages of his word. In conclusion, be it remembered, *One* has appeared from the invisible world conversant with all its solemn mysteries. To his revelations, consisting as they do of pure essential truth, it is no less our duty than our wisdom to listen. The

necessity of repentance from dead works—the proclamation of remission of sins through faith in his blood—were the tidings which he proclaimed. Abandoning vain unhallowed prying into things unseen, may the reader cordially embrace the true light thus graciously afforded him, to guide his path from time to eternity!

CHAPTER VI.

DELUSIONS CONNECTED WITH THE BELIEF IN
WITCHCRAFT.

Witchcraft forbidden by the law of God—Origin of the ancient magical practices—Familiar arts used to promote them—The being supposed to preside over witchcraft—Legendary tales—Other absurdities—Laws directed against witchcraft—Joan of Arc—Burning of witches—The witches of Warboys—Lady Glamis—Forel—John Knox—Gellie Duncan and others—"Discoverie of Witchcraft"—James I.—Matthew Hopkins—Witches' bridle—Alice Kyteler—Influence of the imagination.

THE narratives relating to witchcraft furnish a singular chapter in the history of human credulity. The instinctive tendencies of the mind towards religion are shown in nothing more than in the fact, that errors of a religious type are the most deeply rooted of all which possess the mind of man. The spirit which the gospel breathes is emphatically a "spirit of love." It was in the love of God to fallen men that the scheme of redemption originated. Love was the chief feature of the Saviour's character while on earth, and love is the temper that should distinguish his followers. Among nominal professors in all ages, however, a carnal spirit, clothing itself under the disguise of zeal for the honour of God, has often pre-

vailed, manifesting itself in evil and bitter fruits. Even real Christians have too often, from unwatchfulness, been betrayed into the same spirit, and have exchanged the meekness and gentleness of their Divine Pattern for the gratification of unlovely and unholy tempers. To causes such as these, acting in combination with the ignorance peculiar to the times, and erroneous interpretations of the word of God, must, we fear, be largely attributed many of the dark passages which stain the annals of this and other European countries in connexion with the subject of witchcraft.

That laws were enacted against witchcraft by the book of God is most clear; but their enactment would have been equally important and necessary whether witchcraft were a fallacy or a reality. In the former case, it would, by its assumption of power belonging to the Divinity alone—by its professed alliance with influences not those of the Holy One—by its association with crimes which disgrace and degrade—and by its establishment over mind of an empire always base and disastrous, have constituted a crime sufficient to give rise to the command from God, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” The visible association of witchcraft with all that is criminal in human history is, apart from verbal criticism, a sufficient explanation of the solemn injunction; while it is enough that God saw fit to give this command to the Jews. The professed witch was sometimes a pander to evil, often a poisoner, always a criminal. She was

resorted to by the basest of society—the dark and desperate in character and habits. No form of polity, perhaps, could, in that age, with impunity tolerate such beings, and least of all that economy which provided for the external purity of the chosen nation with such jealous care. Nor can there be any doubt that many of the appearances related by the consultants of witches were occasioned by the intoxicating and often poisonous potions or perfumes which they administered.

But whether the command quoted above be addressed to the Gentile equally with the Jew, or whether the cases of supposed witchcraft were those which possessed proof enough to bring them under the letter of the Divine command, are questions which materially affect the whole subject. There is abundant evidence that the allegation of a compact with the evil one, by which the minds of men were so extensively influenced a hundred years ago, were destitute of that proof which would entitle them to respect and regard.

Nothing can be more clear than that a large proportion of the ancient magical practices arose from the possession of physical secrets, known only to the initiated. The repeated stories respecting books, and their use in magical incantations, confirm this conclusion. These books, though couched in mysterious and hieroglyphic characters, contained, in fact, experiments in natural philosophy; their contents being, probably, not very dissimilar from those

now perused by the first students of natural phenomena. A name for magical power being once gained, the greatest pains were taken to keep up the reputation. Sinan Raschid-Eddin, chief of the Ishmaelites of Syria, apparently performed the miracle of making a decapitated head speak. How was it managed? The explanation is very simple. A large hole was dug in the ground, into which the body of a pupil was thrust, and the head appearing above ground, was surrounded by a dish of bronze, having the appearance of a basin of blood. When the poor victim had, as by previous agreement, delivered the message he was instructed to convey, he was killed to preserve the secret.

In these pretended magical appearances, many arts, perfectly familiar in our day, were used with great secrecy. Ventriloquism was, doubtless, extensively employed. Automata were not infrequent; jugglery very common; burning mirrors and telegraphs seem to have been also familiar. Optics, including the magic lantern and camera obscura, interposed their illusions; whilst the then ascertained discoveries of chemistry, hydrostatics, and acoustics, conspired to delude the ignorant spectator. Nor must it be forgotten that drugs, odours, and unguents, were often freely used in preparing the inquirer for the wonders to be revealed to him.

It would be impossible, within a brief compass, to convey to the reader a due notion of

the various ranks and degrees of demons once supposed to exert a mysterious influence. The being who was supposed to preside over witchcraft was no fallen archangel, "great, though ruined," full of the pride by which he fell, but a strange compound of wickedness and vulgarity—a trickster—a cheat—an idle vagrant—a low buffoon—totally unlike that powerful, though malignant being, represented in the Scripture as "the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." In conceiving of such a being as that represented by the believers in witchcraft, the spiritual character of sin is entirely lost, the nature of the human soul infinitely degraded, and all those solemn warnings neutralized by which Scripture has cautioned us to watch against the devices of Satan, as a being full of malignity and subtlety. Some of the legendary tales of St. Anthony, or those of Nostradamus, (who, having made himself over to the devil's influence, in case of his being buried in or out of the church, escaped the alternative by giving directions that he should be interred in a church wall,) are degrading to the religion, the sacred name of which sheltered such profanations. It is a trite remark, that a despised enemy is seldom a dreaded one; and these ludicrous distortions of the nature and character of the great enemy of souls must, doubtless, be ranked as among devices of his own fostering, by which he, who was a deceiver from the beginning, seeks to

delude his victims into forgetfulness of their danger.

Other absurdities followed in the wake of this leading one. The air swarmed with demons, whose antic tricks, though the relation of them provokes modern disdain, were sources of real terror to our forefathers. Spain boasted of a school of witchcraft, where the malignant arts, interdicted by the church, were eagerly pursued. It is inconceivable what a succession of laws were directed against this imaginary crime. The Anglo-Saxon decretals of Edward and Guthrum declare—"If witches or diviners, perjurers or morth-workers, or foul, defiled, or notorious adulteresses, be found anywhere within the land, let them be driven from the country and the people cleansed, or let them totally perish within the country unless they desist." Accusations of witchcraft were the most serious charges preferred against the Knights Templars at the suppression of their order, and fifty-nine of these knights were for this crime roasted in Paris before a slow fire. Till the fourteenth century, however, the punishment of witchcraft belonged rather to the secular than to the ecclesiastical power. It was afterwards dealt out, by special accusation, against heretics. In 1406, Henry IV. gave directions to the bishop of Norwich to discover and destroy sorcerers. During the same century, charges of witchcraft were extensively brought by political parties against their adversaries. We see this in the cases of the

duchess of Gloucester, (temp. Hen. vi.,) the duchess of Bedford, (temp. Hen. iv.,) and lord Hastings and Jane Shore, (temp. Richard iii.)

The heroism of Joan of Arc has been often related, and is well known. Prompted by heads more cunning than her own, she yielded herself to the influence of a fallacious enthusiasm, which, at the time of the invasion of France by England, was rapidly imparted to others, and roused the flagging spirits of a depressed nation, though it ended in Joan's miserable death. When captured by the English, she was accused of having attended nightly meetings of demons near Domprine. It was stated that she constantly carried about her person the magical plant called mandrake. She was declared to possess a miraculous sword, to employ charmed banners, and to have seduced the king of France and the duke of Bourbon by means of evil spirits. To these accusations the innocent, but deluded young woman fell a victim, and was burned for sorcery.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, the burning of witches greatly increased, and it was convenient for the Roman Catholics to charge the Waldenses with the crime. During the next century, also, many suffered under this accusation. In 1515, five hundred persons were burned in Geneva under the name of witches, but really for the crime of heresy. In 1524, a thousand persons suffered for the same offence in Como; and one inquisitor alone boasted that

in the course of fifteen years he had destroyed nine hundred.

The glories of the Reformation in England were considerably diminished by the severe laws passed and executed by Protestants against this imaginary offence. A law of Elizabeth, in 1562, declared witchcraft to be a capital crime. Thirty-two years after this enactment occurred the case of the witches of Warboys, Hunts. Its particulars were the following :—

Two families lived in Warboys, those of sir Samuel Cromwell and of Mr. Throgmorton. One of the daughters of the former, who had already a great deal of credulity on the subject, and who was liable to fits, declared that when passing the cottage of mother Samuel, (an old and forbidding-looking woman,) she fixed her eyes intently upon her. She immediately imagined herself bewitched, and her terror not only became contagious through all her family, but communicated itself to the neighbouring one of the Cromwells. The reputed witch was seized and tormented, and, under the provocation of her sufferings, she uttered an imprecation against her persecutors. Lady Cromwell happened to die about this period, and the event was considered an undoubted consequence of mother Samuel's malediction, especially when it was remembered that the deceased lady had often dreamed of a black cat. She was now assailed by universal suspicion, until she began to believe (an event not in those days uncommon) that she herself

was really guilty of the crimes with which she was charged. Being in Mr. Throgmorton's house at a time when his daughter was in fits, the old woman repeated an exorcism dictated to her. She and her family were brought to trial for the bewitching of the young ladies, and for causing the death of lady Cromwell. When put to the torture, the mother repeated her acknowledgments of witchcraft; her children, however, strenuously denied the charge; but they were all condemned to be burned, and were executed April 7th, 1593.

The peruser of the criminal trials of the Scottish judicature will ascertain that charges of witchcraft occupy a considerable space in these annals. Janet, lady Glammis, was celebrated for her personal beauty and her virtues. By the death of lord Glammis she was left a widow with one son. Her hand was subsequently sought by William Lyon, a relation of her first husband. This man, when he saw the object of his attention married to Archibald Campbell, began to regard her with deadly hatred, and accused her of the treason of endeavouring to take away "king James v. his life by witchcraft." For this crime she was burned, amidst the general sympathy of the people. At the same period, dean Thomas Forel, vicar of Dolour, was similarly accused; his crime being that he had taught his parishioners the paternoster, the creed, and the ten commandments in English, "contraire to all oure acts that they suld knawe what they say." The accused produced a copy

of the English Scriptures as his authority, which act was regarded as the strongest aggravation of his guilt. He was burned at the Castle Hill of Edinburgh.*

The like accusation was brought against the celebrated Scottish reformer, John Knox. The charge, however, seems not to have been prosecuted.

James I. of England took, whilst in Scotland, great interest in the trial of witches. He often attended the criminal proceedings, and himself wrote a well-known book on the subject. One of the trials at which he was present was that of Gellie Duncan, Dr. Fian, and others, in 1591. Gellie Duncan being put to the torture, confessed that she had sold her soul to the devil, and that on the occasion of the marriage of the king to the princess of Denmark, she had by sorcery raised the storm which endangered the life of the royal pair. The tortures undergone by Dr. Fian, who was tried at the same time for a similar offence, were excruciating. Though he was a man of infamous character, he resolutely denied this imputation. The application of the boot caused him to swoon. Then, with returning consciousness, he signed a paper, declaring himself an accomplice with Gellie Duncan. He afterwards escaped from his prison, but was recaptured. When brought again before the court of justiciary, the king himself ordered his torture, which was of the most cruel description. That some of these persons actually meditated

* Pitcairn's Scottish Criminal Trials.

the king's death is not improbable. When the jury delivered in their verdict they acquitted one of the prisoners. But the king, extremely displeased, compelled them to retract that part of their finding. Twenty-nine were sentenced, first to be hanged and then burned. But one of the number, Euphemia Macalgan, who was proved guilty of poisoning, and who had been, moreover, a partisan of the notorious earl of Bothwell, was bound to a stake, and burned "quick to the death."

In Reginald Scot's "Discoverie of Witchcraft," (1584) we find the following observations, which considerably elucidate some of the occurrences relating to this subject: "The sort of such as are said to be witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, blear-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles—poore, sullen, superstitious." The same author gives an account of "the order of examination of witches by the inquisitors." This we must curtail. Suspected women must not be allowed to go home after their apprehension. Great persuasions must be used to induce others to accuse them. Immunities must be largely promised to witches who confess and accuse others. The children of witches must be attached, and if they be craftily handled will confess against their own mothers. Witches must be examined as suddenly as possible, and the inquisitor must begin with smaller matters first, so as to throw them off their guard. The examiner must look stedfastly into their eyes. They must be

examined of all accusations, presumptions, and faults, at one instant. A witch must not be imprisoned alone. To secure confession, the judge must put on a pitiful countenance, saying that it was not she, but the devil in her. If the accused be hardened against common tortures, an exquisitely cruel one is to be adopted. At the time of the examination, a number of instruments, grieves, manacles, and apparatus of torture must be exhibited before her eyes. If the prisoner will not confess, the inquisitor must declare that she has been accused by others, and then perhaps she will confess out of revenge. Presumptions and conjectures are sufficient proofs. A perjured person is a good and lawful witness. If a woman's child die, no matter how, witchcraft is to be presumed unless the contrary be proved. If the parents of a suspected person be witches, it is a strong presumption that the children are so too. It is a vehement suspicion if the witch cannot weep at the time of her examination; and yet, Bodin saith, that a witch may shed three drops out of her right eye. It is more than suspicion—it is evident proof—if a man or beast die suddenly where a person accused of being a witch hath been seen lately. Little children may be exposed to the torture, etc. It will not greatly surprise the reader, if, amidst this apparatus of all kinds of torture, bodily and mental, it has been calculated that, during a period of thirty-nine years, in the sixteenth century, the average number of annual

executions for this crime, in Scotland alone, amounted to two hundred.

Nor can it be regarded as marvellous, if, thus treated, infirm or semi-insane persons often made "confessions" of the imputed crimes. "I went once," says sir George Mackenzie, "when I was justice depute, to examine some women that had confessed judicially, and one of them who was a sickly creature told me, under secresie, that she had not confessed because she was guilty, but, being a poor creature who wrought for her meat, and being defamed for a witch, she knew she would starve; for no person hereafter would give her food and lodging, and that all men would beat her and set dogs at her, and that therefore she desired to be out of the world." It is related by one who was himself a believer in witchcraft, that another forlorn creature, when about to be led to the stake, declared, "I am as free of witchcraft as any child; but being delated by a malicious woman, and put in prison under the name of a witch, disowned by my husband and friends, and seeing no ground of hope of ever coming out again, I made up that confession to destroy my own life, being weary of it, and choosing rather to die than live." Many similar instances are upon record. Delrio states, that a gentleman in Westphalia was tortured twenty times, in order to make him confess that he was a wolf. He persisted in refusing, till an intoxicating draught was administered, when he acknowledged that the charge was

true. Delrio quotes this as an instance of "*the clemency of the criminal judges!*" Another witch confessed herself to be guilty of imputed crimes after four hours' torture; and, in another case, a little child, nine years of age, was subjected to a similar process in order that she might accuse her mother. Is it wonderful that, predisposed as these poor creatures were to believe in the reality of spiritual possessions, they should, in such extremities, acknowledge the crimes suggested to them by their judges? It would be unfair, however, not to state that there are instances of confession in which no tortures were actually applied. But then, were not such tortures apprehended?

The zeal of James I. against witches accompanied him on his accession to the throne of England. His first parliament passed an enactment, that where witchcraft was proved, the punishment for the first offence should be imprisonment and the pillory, and for the second, death. An enormous number of victims (said to amount to five hundred annually) was sacrificed during the prevalence of this infatuation. The contagion was carried by those who were expatriated by their religious opinions into New England, in which land great numbers perished—a disgrace to those who had sacrificed home through their desire for greater freedom.

No man was ever so notorious in accusing others of this crime as Matthew Hopkins, a native of the town of Manningtree, Essex. He

was entitled "witch-finder general," and was certainly "by merit raised to that bad eminence." Was there in any quarter an old, poor, ill-favoured, and unprotected woman, disliked by any of her neighbours—Hopkins was the foremost in bringing her into suspicion as a witch. If, on the body of this person, there were, as is usual with aged persons, wens, or callous parts, his sharp instruments were always at hand to probe them; and if the blind-folded victim, agonized by the terror which often destroys sensitiveness, or confused into insensibility, could not name the precise spot which had been operated upon, so much the worse for the accused. It was Hopkins who tied the victim, hands and feet together cross-wise, for the trial by the water into which she was thrown. If she swam, she was unquestionably guilty; if she sank,* she was sometimes saved; but if lost, she left to her friends the conviction of her innocence. Hopkins was constantly crusading about upon this errand, till at length he, who had stimulated the people's phrenzy, became in turn (as not unfrequently happens) its victim. His own tests were tried upon himself, and he suffered for the crime of which he had so extensively accused others.

The death of this man had probably some influence in abating this epidemical infection; yet how slowly this cruel prejudice declined

* The doctrine of this practice was, that as the witch had shaken off the water of baptism, that element refused to receive the criminal into its bosom.

may be learned from the fact, that even in the last century, especially in Scotland, there were many persons accused on similar charges.

In the parish church of Forfar there still is, or was until lately, an instrument called the witches' bridle. Chambers thus describes it: "A small circle of iron, sufficient to inclose the head, is divided into four sections, which are connected by hinges; a short chain hangs from behind. In the front, but pointing inwards, is a prong, like to the rowel of an old-fashioned spur, which entered the mouth, and, by depressing the tongue, acted as a kind of gag. The use of the thing was exactly what the name portends. By it, as with a bridle, the unfortunate old women, formerly burned at Forfar for the imaginary crime of witchcraft, were led out of town to the place of execution. Its further and more important purposes were to bind the culprit to the stake, and to prevent her cries during the dreadful process of death. When all was over, the bridle used to be found among the ashes of the victim."* A similar instrument is exhibited in the Museum of Antiquaries in Edinburgh.

One of the most detailed trials extant on the subject of sorcery may be seen in a volume published by the Camden Society, entitled, "Proceedings against Dame Alice Kyteler for Sorcery," in 1324. This, and the trial of the two Despensers, who were accused of an attempt

* Chambers's "Traditions of Scotland."

to bewitch James I., are perhaps the most remarkable in history. It was with great difficulty that the offenders were brought to trial, since the Irish lord chancellor (the offence was committed in that country) was a relative of one of the parties. Lady Alice escaped to England. After having been six times flogged, one of the culprits acknowledged the crimes charged against her lady, and avowed herself an accomplice. She was the first person burned in Ireland as a witch.

It would be gratifying to be able to state that these delusions of witchcraft were mainly the offspring of the darker ages; at least to defend Protestantism against their enormities. But truth forbids. The period of enlightenment after ages of ignorance, has, as we have already observed, usually abounded in similar errors. But this is only an extenuation, not an apology. No papist can on this subject throw the first stone, seeing that the Romanist is nearly, if not entirely, involved in the same error. But if it shall be expected that Protestantism should have shown, in this respect as well as others, its own superiority, we can only say—too true! Yet we may plead, and plead triumphantly, that the reformed religion has nobly redeemed its first errors, and that wherever there is a country in which men have outlived such deadly superstitions, and in which some real approach is made to “the perfect law of liberty,” that country is assuredly Protestant! Let us not be understood as claiming for the professors of that reli-

gion a freedom at all times from mistakes. We only assert on their behalf that their mistakes possess in the Scriptures, which they delight to circulate, a correcting power.

Before we leave the subject of supernatural agency, we must make one passing remark, in addition to those contained in our previous chapter. Nothing can be more unfair and unphilosophical than the manner in which the whole question is often treated. Even if the narrations which obtain credence were much better attested than they are—were there no room for suspicion that the imagination is largely concerned in them—and were we entirely satisfied that more patient attention would have added nothing to the alleged facts themselves, one thing is to be remembered—*what is unexplained is not necessarily supernatural*. To assert otherwise would be to deny the whole history of science and philosophy.

It is also very important to observe, how fatal an influence is exerted upon the human character, and upon none more than on the female part of it, by the undue cultivation of the imagination. The progress of the mental history of some beings is analogous to that of the drunkard. Excess creates demand, and demand increases excitement, till all is undone. The imaginative process begins with amiable sensibility, which must be fed by gossip, novels, and narrations of wonder; it degenerates into a greedy aching after tales of murder or suicide, and ends in a compound of tears,

hysterics, convulsions, and credulity. Out of such specimens have often come the devotees, who have transformed Christ's invigorating and holy religion into the system which consists in kneeling before a crucifix, macerating the body by fasts and vigils, and gazing upon a skull.

But let it not be forgotten that there are other possessions, not consisting in the influence of imagination, but too real, and deadly as they are real. The conceived lust leading to the first presumptuous sin; the search for new guilt to hide the presence of the original crime; the habitual yielding to transgression, at first timidly and secretly, but at length openly and flagrantly; the throwing off of shame; the rejection of God; the seduction of others;—these are the successive links of a chain bound too securely round the hearts and consciences of a thousand victims, and possibly binding some even of those who may have looked into these pages. If, reader, this be thy case, hasten to the footstool of mercy, that thus thou mayest obtain strength to throw off the degrading influences that enslave thee. No voice but that before which evil spirits of old fled away can disenchant thee. Cast thyself as a humble penitent at His feet, and in earnest fervent prayer implore that Divine aid which can make thee more than conqueror over all the powers of darkness.

CHAPTER VII.

DELUSIONS CONNECTED WITH THE BELIEF IN
ASTROLOGY.

Origin of the art—Antiquity—Its practice forbidden in the early ages of Christianity—Alonzo of Castile—Astrological predictions—Failures—Charles XI.—Charles I. and II. of England—Dr. Simon Forman—David Ramsay and John Scott—Lilly—Kepler—Francis Moore.

THE scope and objects of a work like this preclude us from entering upon the subject of fairy superstitions, though once extremely prevalent, especially in Scotland, and still exerting a wonderful influence over the minds of the ignorant peasantry of the south of Ireland. Nor can we devote any space to many arts of divination practised among various nations at different periods, especially among the mysterious descendants of the gipsy tribe, and still believed in by the ignorant and credulous. But among the self-called sciences pretending to a knowledge of futurity, one subject may merit a more detailed notice.

Astrology was the art which professed to discover the course of human fortunes from the appearance of the stars. As it took its rise

from astronomy, whilst astronomy was in its imperfect state, it might have been legitimately classed with some of the contents of a former chapter ; but as it soon outran all scientific bounds, till it became a mass of delusion and artifice, and was afterwards lost, as a practice, in the oblivion it merited, it will not be incorrectly placed among the subjects of the present division. So ancient is this art that history does not record its first applications. It was from a remote antiquity practised in the east, where it still holds an undisputed sway. The Chaldæans, the Chinese, the Hindoos, are all under the influence of its fascination. It was known to the Egyptians, and is referred to in the sacred writings under the general descriptions of magic and sorcery. The Rabbinical Jews were much devoted to it. From the time of the adoption of Egypt into the Roman empire it was greedily cultivated by the Romans. Greece alone stands, among ancient nations, an exception to its use. None, however, have observed it with more assiduity than the Mohammedan nations.

The early ages of Christianity regarded astrology as a forbidden science. In those dark volumes which, bearing the name of "the fathers," stand on the lower shelves of the learned and the curious, may be found not a few passages describing the processes and denouncing the practice of this dark art. Tertullian protests against it. Basil declaims upon it with his usual eloquence. These men did

not see that the future discoveries of astronomical science would take root in its delusions; they only saw that it professed an unwarrantable interference with the secrets of the Most High. Nor were their objections illegitimate. Men have been prone in all ages to wrest the attributes of God to an evil purpose, and to use them for their own interested and servile ends.

By none, in a later period, was the study of astrology more assiduously cultivated than by Alonzo of Castile. He summoned an assembly of the wisest astrologers of his day, who spent five years in deliberation on the processes and results of their science. It was during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, that the practice of astrology in Britain arrived at its greatest eminence. Some of the astrological prescriptions which have come down to us from that time savour strongly of the ridiculous. Charles XI. (of Bartholomew notoriety) consulted an astrologer. He was told that he would live as many days as he could turn on his heels in an hour. The hint was sufficient. Every morning, for an hour, the monarch performed the part of a spindle—the courtiers revolving on their axes in compliment to his majesty.

Astrology was much trusted by Charles I. and Charles II. of England; and the former, when in captivity, consulted an astrologer as to the period most favourable for his intended escape from it. If the science of the adept were worth anything, the king must have greatly misread the advice he received.

In the reign of James I., Dr. Simon Forman was a celebrated practitioner of this science. He appears to have exhibited a singular mixture of knavery and folly, the latter ingredient being perhaps predominant. He relates that, as he was lying in bed one morning, the question occurred to him—Whether he should ever become a lord? He had recourse to his horoscope thereon, and ascertained that he should attain that honour in the couse of two years. But there must have been some grievous mistake in his calculations; for he tells us, with marvellous simplicity, “before the two years were expired, the doctors put me in Newgate, and nothing came.” This was almost enough to have disgusted him with his science, but his credulity survived it. Again his horoscope promised him that he should be a great lord within a year. But during that year he “had no preferment at all.” His predictions on behalf of his neighbours were equally fallible. A knight, being about to leave England for Turkey, inquired of the astrologer whether his expedition would be successful. The doctor, having consulted the stars, assured him it would. But the dream seems to have been one meant to be taken by contraries; for the consulter “was taken prisoner in Turkey, and lost all.” Again, Forman read the stars, and believed that he should discover the philosopher’s stone. But the same stars turned their backs upon him again; for he complains that all came to nothing. These things are related

by his pupil and successor Lilly, a practitioner of no small eminence in his day, who says, moreover, that Forman predicted of another pupil, Dr. Napper of Linford, that he would turn out a dunce, instead of which he became a celebrated astrologer and physician—"a consummation which," says a Quarterly Reviewer, "might, perhaps, approach to an accomplishment of the prophecy."

Nor were the above the only instances in which the astrological predictions of that day proved untrue. Lilly relates that David Ramsay, his majesty's clockmaker, having learned from the stars, or otherwise, that there was a quantity of treasure lying hid in the cloister of Westminster Abbey, entered into partnership with John Scott and himself, to profit by its exhumation. They met accordingly on a winter's night, David Ramsay bringing a sack to receive the substance. They dug to the depth of six feet, when they met with a coffin, and because it seemed light they did not open it, "which," says Lilly, "we afterwards much repented." But in the midst of their labours there arose a wind so high and fierce, that they feared that the end of the abbey would fall upon them. John Scott, we are told, grew pale and nervous, but Lilly managed to dismiss the evil influences; yet the money-diggers returned as empty as they came. On another occasion, a noted astrologer predicted that there would be a great wind; but as no such phenomenon occurred, it was afterwards discovered that the

horoscope might be referring to state revolutions, abundance of which happened about that period.

Yet, in spite of all failures, astrology retained its hold. A poet of the century thus satirizes them, having perhaps Lilly himself prominently in view—

“To whom all people far and near
On deep importances repair,
When brass or pewter hap to stray,
And linen slinks out of the way;
When cattle feel indisposition,
And need th’ opinion of physician;
When murrain reigns in hogs and sheep,
And chickens languish of the pip.”

Lilly boasts that some great men among the Independents and Presbyterians patronized his art. It is certain, however, by his own complaints, that some of the greatest eminence did *not*; for he tells us that Dr. Owen, Mr. Gataker, and Mr. Nye, denounced his pretensions as foolish and impious. He took his revenge by vehemently denouncing Gataker. Lilly’s knavery was strongly supported. He relates that, when in Scotland, he saw a soldier standing in front of the army encouraging the men to expect victory, because Lilly in his book had prognosticated it.

Among other pretensions, Lilly professed to give the true interpretation of the prophecies of Merlin, and many pages of his memoirs are addressed to the elucidation of these “dark sayings.” But his greatest fame was derived from a work published in 1651, entitled

"Monarchy, or No Monarchy." In this book he had given a hieroglyphic, which, like others of that class, might be resolved literally or emblematically, as the event might be. He says, "I had framed a hieroglyphic representing a great sickness and mortality, wherein you may see the representation of people in their winding-sheets, persons digging graves and sepulchres, coffins," etc., and on the other side, "a city all on flames of fire." "These pictures," he says, referring to them afterwards, "represented the plague of London followed by an exorbitant fire." When the great conflagration, which destroyed the city, had taken place, he was summoned before the Commons, probably with the view of ascertaining whether, at the time of the prediction, he was cognizant of any incendiary intentions. The House, however, found in him only the vagueness or dissimulation of a practised adept; and after ascertaining that Lilly had made no pretensions to acquaintance with the time of the fire, dismissed the astrologer. That marginal room for subsequent interpretation was demanded by Lilly, as by the Francis Moore of our own days, is evident from his works.

Kepler, to whose astronomical labours science owes much, practised astrology in his day, though with considerable disgust at the occupation. He confesses that his services in this department were only "worthless conjectures;" but exclaims, in apology for his occupation, "Ye overwise philosophers, ye censure this daughter of astronomy beyond her deserts.

Know ye not she must support her mother by her charms? The scanty reward of an astronomer would not provide him with bread, if men did not entertain hopes of reading the future in the heavens."

Astrology is now pretty nearly extinct, for we have witnessed in our own day the death of probably the last of his race, in the renowned person of the yclept Francis Moore. We need hardly say that its pretensions were founded no less in folly than impiety. God in his wisdom and kindness has shrouded the future from our eyes, and to lift the veil that hides it would diminish, instead of adding to our happiness. Enough for us to know that the path of duty is the path of safety; that the footsteps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; that "godliness with contentment is great gain," "having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

CHAPTER VIII.

DELUSIONS PROMPTED BY MORBID ACQUISITIVENESS.

Conditions under which wealth may be enjoyed—Alchemy—
Bubbles: the Mississippi and South Sea schemes—the
Tulip mania—the Bank panic—Railway speculations.

No subject demands, in mercantile times like our own, a more calm and careful consideration than the morality of wealth. To acquire riches does not indeed fall within the province of every man; but all men are bound to observe with care the ethical and religious principles which are concerned in the possibilities of obtaining it. All rightly acquired riches must be comprehended by the following regulations. They must be equitably gained—possessed by no man's designed injury—temperately enjoyed—held as a trust for others—increased without exposing the possessor to large hazards—regarded as uncertain possessions—watched against as a means of self-elation—and consecrated wholly to God. When the apostle said, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content," he enounced the principle that man's real wants go into a very small compass, and that therefore correspond-

ingly small should be the limits of man's great desires for the life which is. And when our Lord, in his inimitable pattern of prayer, confined the supplications for temporal blessings to the clause, "Give us this day our daily bread," he reduced the wishes of Christian men to a very moderate standard of computation indeed. In uttering the sentiment, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," Solomon enounced a principle of the highest value to every community and to every Christian in it. The industry and economy necessary to secure the daily bread are the blessings and safeguards of society; the perils involved in the sudden acquisition of wealth agitate and convulse it, and are not to be contemplated without a shudder. Lord Bacon well describes riches as "the baggage of virtue"—it had been well had he not too fatally exemplified the truth of his own axiom—and adds, "As the baggage is to an army, so are riches to virtue; they are necessary but cumbersome, and the care of it often loseth or disturbeth the victory." And in another characteristic passage he thus speaks, "Wisdom for a man's self only is, in many branches thereof, a most depraved thing. It may be compared to the wisdom of rats, that will be sure to leave a house a little before it falls; to the wisdom of the fox, that thrusts the badger out of the house that he dug for himself, not for him; to the wisdom of the crocodile, that

sheds tears when he would devour. But this is particularly to be observed, that those sort of men who are lovers of themselves without a rival are many times unfortunate. And whereas they have all their life sacrificed to themselves, in the end they sacrifice to the inconstancy of fortune, whose wings they thought they had clipt by that notable self-wisdom of theirs."*

Of this truth innumerable instances, ancient and modern, might be cited. Of some of them the following pages will furnish a brief history.

The study of alchemy, though of very early date in Europe, appears, as indeed we might have conjectured from the very form of the word, to have first attained eminence among the Arabians, probably at the time when they became teachers of medicine to Europe. It bore a considerable analogy to astrology, and the two studies were frequently associated. There is a considerable resemblance between many of the characters used in alchemy and those of the ancient hieroglyphics; sufficient, indeed, to prove their origin from the same people and at nearly the same period. The objects of alchemy were the discovery of the universal medicine which was to cure all diseases, and the preparation of the philosopher's stone, which was to turn all metals into gold. Hermes Trismegistus and Geber were among the first among modern practitioners in this alleged art, from the latter of whom, and in allusion to the language of his science, the word

* Bacon's Moral Essays.

gibberish is supposed to be derived. In this department Albertus Magnus was also a sage. He was the instructor of the celebrated Thomas Aquinas, who, in 1244, put himself under his tuition. It was believed that Albertus constructed a brazen statue, (which is not improbable,) that he found means to give it speech, (which, considering that automata were understood in that day, is by no means impossible,) and that he endowed this head with life, (here our belief is ended,) giving it the place and assigning to it the duties of a domestic servant; it performed many offices well, but, like some other servants, its chatter was intolerable. This disease defied all means of cure, till one day Aquinas, who was then engaged in the solution of a difficult mathematical problem, and was greatly disturbed by it, lifted a heavy hammer which was within reach, and, in an access of rage, dashed the head in pieces. A Greek author relates a somewhat similar rage in the experience of a magician of antiquity who had transformed the bar of his door into a water-drawing servant, and, because it did not perform its duty sufficiently fast, broke it in pieces; when, as a sequel, each piece discharging a separate office, drowned the poor devotee entirely. No part of Albertus's head, however, survived his operation; but Aquinas' petulance, and the mischief it had done, exposed him to the sharp rebuke of his master Albertus. The temper was certainly unworthy of a philosopher, and sir Isaac Newton proved himself a much greater man, when

his only rebuke to a dog, who had accidentally set fire to his mathematical papers, was, "Ah! Diamond, Diamond, thou hast destroyed the labours of thirty years."

The most incredible marvels are related of this Albertus. He is said to have once exhibited his power before William, count of Holland and king of the Romans, by altering the seasons, changing winter into summer and summer into winter, to the astonishment of the beholders. Had the miracle been performed in our day, one might have conceived of transparent blinds, painted in part with sympathetic inks, which when cold might become invisible, and when warm might put on the tints of foliage. But no alternative excepting the supposition of magic seems to have occurred to the spectators present. He was appointed bishop of Ratisbon, though he soon relinquished that office because his ecclesiastical duties clashed with the demands made upon his time by his alchemical studies. But at that period those who filled the thrones or stalls of cathedrals and priories were often addicted to alchemical pursuits, and many painted windows and gothic portals of our own isle still remain, to testify by their emblems the frequency of this conjunction. Though nothing can reconcile us moderns to the incongruity, it must be remembered that out of the pursuits of alchemy have unquestionably arisen some of the most important discoveries of chemical science. Men, in search of the philosopher's stone, often com-

pounded substances which had never been combined before ; and thus the crucible and the alembic, though they did not furnish the direct results so sanguinely anticipated, led to the arts which civilize, and to the discoveries which bless mankind.

Raymond Lulli, a Spanish ecclesiastic, boasted of having been so successful in alchemical transmutations, as to have converted no less than fifty thousand pounds of quicksilver, lead, and pewter, into gold.* His experiments are reported to have been made in the Tower of London, and it is said that a considerable number of rose nobles were coined from their success. Roger Bacon also devoted much time and attention to studies of this description. His reputation for them certainly gained for him an unenviable name, so that he narrowly escaped being burned to death as a magician.

The most incredible stories are related of Nicholas Flamel and his search after the philosopher's stone. He once bought an old book by accident at a small price, which he supposed to contain secrets of the highest alchemical importance. The study of this book, its Latin text, and its enigmatical pictures, occupied the remainder of his life. In search of its true interpretation he wandered assiduously

* Some of these transmutations were mere tricks, and consisted in inserting a hollow cone, wholly or partially filled with gold and stopped with wax, into melted lead or other metal, which of course dissolved the wax, and liberated the imprisoned contents into the crucible. In some cases mere imitative metals were employed.

through various countries, everywhere seeking light on this mysterious but most precious volume. At length, by patient perseverance, he mastered its secrets, aided by which, and by the help of his alembics, mercury became silver, and even gold. He found, moreover, we are told, the means of defending himself for a quarter of a century from death. Such is the tradition. Certain it is that Flamel practised alchemy ; it is equally certain that he employed large sums of money towards the end of his life in founding and endowing religious institutions. The rest may be regarded as the poetical adornment of a credulous age. We can more readily believe the report that, being wealthy, he lent out, to the needy and impoverished young nobles of France, sums of money at enormous interest, and that thus he greatly increased his wealth.

George Ripley, canon of Bridlington, (York,) was in his youth a laborious alchemist, but before his death his delusion on this subject entirely left him, and he desired that those who met with his books would immediately burn them, for that he was fully convinced of the falsehood and inutility of such studies. It may be readily imagined that such pursuits as these became often associated with crime and infamy. Of this we have an example in the case of Gilles de Laval, a marechal of France (nat. 1420.) He inherited the most profuse riches, of which he made an extravagant use ; but sinister rumours arose as to the manner in

which he employed them. His extravagance soon exhausted his treasures. To replenish them he became associated with Prelati, an alchemist of Padua, in the search after the philosopher's stone. At length the scandal which surrounded Laval led to his apprehension for sorcery, murder, and other crimes. Gilles confessed himself guilty, and with Prelati was sentenced to be burned alive. His rank, however, caused him to be first strangled. Prelati underwent the full sentence, and his ashes were thrown to the winds.

In an ancient poem, a story is told quaintly rebuking the folly of the votaries of alchemy. Some youths, so runs the legend, having applied to an oracular source for information as to how they should find the philosopher's stone, received the reply in three words—Labour, labour, labour. Assuming that this was intended to recommend diligent application to alchemical studies, they pursued them till their wealth and hopes were alike well nigh exhausted. The true meaning of the oracle at last occurred to one of them. "We have been deceived, my friends," he said; "honest labour was what was meant. Leaving this vain pursuit, let us each adopt a lawful calling." They did so, and found in diligent application to business the real secret of wealth.

The ancient college of Manchester formerly had for its warder a celebrated alchemist, who flourished in the reign of Elizabeth—Dr. Dee. He was an astrologer as well as alchemist; the queen sent the earl of Leicester to consult him

on the most auspicious day for her coronation. She subsequently visited him at Mortlake, and caused him to be attended during an illness by her own physician. He subsequently published his discourses on matters connected with his art, and these may yet be inspected by the curious in the British Museum. He claimed, moreover, to be in possession of the *elixir vitæ*; yet, after passing through a variety of adventures, he was a suitor to the queen for pecuniary relief. He even pawned his books for food. He died in poverty at Mortlake, 1608. Such are the frequent results of fanaticism and imposture.

A variety of the alchemists is to be traced in a sect called the Rosicrucians. They derived their origin from Paracelsus, who, in 1527, was professor of alchemy at Basle. This man possessed a character for irreligion and immorality. "He was a glutton and a drunkard, and in falsehood, vanity, and arrogance, was unequalled. He pretended to possess the philosopher's stone, and asserted that he had discovered the elixir of life."* The sect who followed him derived their name, however, from Christian Rosencrantz, who lived in the fourteenth century. Their pretensions were enormous. They claimed to possess the secrets of human happiness and of the regeneration of society. They declared that the treasures of the earth were at their disposal, whilst they could render themselves invisible at pleasure. But

* Thomson's Salverte.

their influence was chiefly confined to Germany. Two of their most distinguished followers were Jacob Bøhmen and Robert Fludd. No. 574 of the Spectator gives an account of the Rosicrucians. "I was once engaged in discourse with a Rosicrucian about the great secret. 'Its presence,' he said, 'naturally changes every place into a kind of heaven.' After he had gone on for some time in this unintelligible cant, I found that he jumbled natural and moral ideas together into the same discourse, and that his great secret was nothing else than *content*." Would men only look for the *moral* instead of the *physical* advantages of life, they would find the way much shorter to the real blessings of which they are in search. It is a pitiful thing that creatures should seek in external preparations that which only Divine principles can secure. But religion demands self-renunciation, and man's effort in every age has been to secure certain of religion's advantages without yielding submission to its spiritual requirements.

One of the greatest quacks among alchemists appeared in France, at the court of Louis xv., under the name of St. Germain. He fostered the impression that he had lived for some hundreds of years, and spoke of deceased monarchs, long passed away, as if he had been their contemporary. He displayed, apparently, immense riches, and none knew whence they were derived.

The adventures of the so-called count

Cagliostro, who lived at a later period, and became involved in the celebrated affair of the diamond necklace of Marie Antoinette, were not less remarkable, and exhibited a similar instance of fraudulent jugglery.

All tyros in chemistry will be familiar with an apparatus for impregnating liquids with certain gases, called, after the name of the discoverer, "Woulfe's apparatus." This man was an alchemist—almost the last of his race. He lived in Barnard's Inn, amidst a chaos of crucibles, alembics, and other furniture of the same kind. So entire was the confusion, that it was said a person once laid down his hat in Woulfe's room, and could never find it again. It was only by a secret signal that his intimate friends could obtain access to his apartments. The want of the due performance of charitable acts was, he supposed, the cause why, after long toil, he had never succeeded in discovering the elixir of life. He died of a cold and inflammation of the lungs, caught by journeying to Edinburgh and back, in 1805—such a journey being his prescription for every illness.

So late as 1828, a gentleman named Kellerman was residing at Lilly, Herts, who in seclusion addicted himself to this obsolete study, and barricaded his house against all strangers. He pretended to the discovery of all the wonders for which alchemists have vainly longed, and said that he could make gold at pleasure. His crucibles were attended by eight servants, in relays of two, for every six hours. He was

a miserable man, who thought all the world his enemies, and was probably insane. "In London," it has been remarked, "even at the present day, it is not impossible that the science of alchemy has still some secret votary feeding the furnace, and watching with bleared eyes over the crucible. One race of alchemists is at all events very plentiful. Their numbers exhibit no signs of diminution, and repeated disappointments do not appear to dissipate their day-dreams. The man, for instance, who makes haste to be rich by wild speculations, or who expects to succeed in his lawful calling without diligence, prudence, and industry, may fairly be termed an alchemist. All men, too, in a wider sense, who are setting their affections on riches instead of the living God, deserve the same appellation. They are seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and placing their affections in what may take eagle's wings and fly away. The true *arcanum* of wealth is to be found only in the words of the wisest of men, "The blessing of the Lord, *it* maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

A Roman satirist, in allusion to the phrenzy for riches which prevailed in his day, speaks of the "hallowed thirst for gold," and describes the popular longing as summed up in the following apophthegm, "Get money, honestly if you can ; but by any means get money !"* One of the monarchs of these realms, a savage persecutor of the Jews in his day, justified his exac-

* Horace, Ep. I

tions by a similar saying : " There is a necessity for me to have money ; gotten from what place soever, and by what means soever, and from whom soever." When such a maxim was avowed, we cease to wonder at any consequent tyranny. Happily, the well-constructed laws of modern times interpose to protect the helpless against similar oppression. We have outlived the maxim that

" — they should get who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

The steel-clad baron and the feudal lord no longer hold the purses of their vassals ; nor do the raids of the Scottish freebooter, or the desolations of the robber of the Rhine, terrify their helpless neighbours. But the desire for riches has by no means abated ; though, with the prevalence of law and liberty, other means of acquiring them have arisen—means which, though often unpunishable by law, are, in the sight of Him who trieth men's hearts, scarcely less offensive and abominable. When violence could no longer command sudden wealth, men have had recourse to those false representations, too easy for the impostor, and too enthusiastically believed by the credulous.

The first " bubble," to use a now familiar word, of which we have any distinct account, occurred in the reign of Charles II. It arose out of an attempt to support the national credit, greatly damaged by the king's licentiousness and extravagance. A general bank was then

first proposed. During the agitation of this question, schemes of all kinds flitted before the public eye—and in 1694 reached a crisis which precisely anticipated many subsequent occurrences. Mining operations in one quarter, and large fisheries in another ; inventions promising great wealth to their proprietors, followed by the now familiar devices of swelling up the price of shares to an exorbitant amount, till the original projector had amassed considerable sums, when the luckless dupes were left to help themselves as they best could—were a part of the now familiar machinery for exciting the hopes of the covetous, and inflicting the severest injury on public credit. As, however, good in some shape generally accompanies a mass of evil, two of these many projects proved of incalculable service—the New River Company, for supplying the metropolis with water, and the corporation of the Bank of England. The former was the conception of sir H. Myddelton; the latter of William Paterson, a native of Dumfries.

The disastrous excitement attendant upon these speculations were, however, speedily to be eclipsed by a monster delusion, which has so often been told, that, but for its importance to the current of our narrative, we should hesitate at its renewed infliction on our readers—the Mississippi scheme.

A man of talent and enthusiasm, without principle, especially if his wants be many and his extravagances great, is always dangerous

in any society. Such a man was William Law, who, having devoted much of his time to questions of finance, and having impoverished himself by a career of dissipation, sought to recover by public projects the fortune he had lost. His schemes at length led him to Paris, then in a crisis of its history. That country, by a court magnificent beyond parallel, and a despotic monarch, had been reduced to witness an empty exchequer. The regent of the day was the duke of Orleans—a man most dissipated and worthless, utterly negligent of affairs of state, and careless of everything except his personal pleasures. Under his *régime* the clock of the state had almost run down altogether. In this crisis of disorder, Law found himself at the regent's ear, and, by holding out large promises, obtained his consent to establish a bank upon a grand scale, out of the amazing success of which grew up the famous Mississippi scheme. His project was nominally to form a company, possessing an exclusive trade with the countries adjacent to the Mississippi river. But the powers it sought were enormous. It claimed to have control over the mint and the public treasury, and to have power to multiply the issue of bank-notes to any amount deemed desirable. Its first success was electric. It irresistibly appealed to a novelty-loving nation; and Law, from a needy adventurer, rose at once into a demi-god. The visitor to Paris may be aware of a narrow street, called Rue de Quincampoix; it was here that Law resided at

the time of the projection of his scheme, and the influence of the project on his vicinity was astonishing. Crowds of persons, prince and peasant, senators, physicians, ladies of rank, stock-jobbers, tradesmen — all crowded and jostled together, waited, regardless of weather, to obtain a preference for shares. Of these there were fifty thousand, whilst the applicants were three hundred thousand! The regent profited by the opportunity. He increased the number of shares to a large amount, and paid off the national debt with the proceeds. The excitement increased. To obtain access to the house of the adventurer, one lady caused her carriage to be upset, that thereby she might excite his pity; whilst, to diminish the crowd, another cried "fire." The ante-chambers of the regent were forsaken for those of the adventurer. The spectacle of the poor suddenly become rich was everywhere witnessed. A smile from Law was a priceless favour. Trade was stimulated; extravagance and profusion were the order of the day; land sunk in value—every proprietor desired cash; and the aid of the police was required to prevent suffocation. Between November, 1719, and the April of the next year, the price of stock rose till it reached 2,050 per cent. The moral state of society during this inflammatory fever was deplorable, and every good man regarded it with terror. M. de Tocqueville says, "There was no folly or vice in which the high society did not take the lead; the degradation of men's minds was

equal to the corruption of their manners." A nobleman of the highest rank robbed a Jew of 100,000 crowns, and murdered him. When his trial approached, the judges had to pass through a long procession of the noblest and proudest families, all intreating a mitigation of his sentence; and when the criminal was condemned to be broken on the wheel, the most active exertions continued, though fruitlessly, to obtain the commutation of the sentence. In one week Law paid for estates upwards of three millions of livres.

But, however brilliant the horizon, it proved itself all clouds and vapour. The day of awakening came. Rumours, vague and undefined arose—none knew how; and increased with portentous rapidity. Suspicion is even more contagious than enthusiasm, or, rather, the frenzy of fear is even more powerful than that of hope. Men began to think of securing themselves. The prince of Conti sent such a quantity of paper to the bank to be cashed as to require wagons to remove the gold. The country was drained of its specie. An order was issued which diminished the value of the notes by one-half. Men, struggling for the payment of their notes, were killed in the crowd. An indescribable panic ensued, during which guards were numerous posted in the streets to disperse the angry multitude. The horrors of another Bartholomew day were threatened. The bank stopped payment of the precious metals. Law was nearly torn in pieces by the

mob, and was compelled to seek refuge in the apartments of the regent. At length the adventurer fled, and died in poverty, whilst France was reduced to unspeakable distress, and the sad effects of this mania survived in the increase of the national debt by one-half. Truly was the Divine prediction fulfilled, "*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*"

The next remarkable delusion was that known by the name of the English "South Sea Scheme"—another striking instance of the extent to which common sense may be over-ridden by the all-engrossing passion for wealth. Like the Mississippi scheme, it was an attempt to lessen the national debt by concentrating many funds into one, and was promoted by greedy adventurers in order to advance their personal interests. The South Sea Company made a proposition "to unite the whole of the debts of the state, amounting to thirty-one millions, at five per cent. until 1727, and after that period at four per cent., for which they were to pay three millions and a half." The bank of England bid against them, and offered five millions for the same advantages. But the South Sea Company, resolving not to be outdone, increased their offer to seven and a half millions. This proposal again led to a further offer on the part of the bank, "to give £1,700 bank stock for every £100 irredeemable long annuities." But, unhappily, the South Sea Company obtained the preference. In consequence,

their stock rose to enormous prices. Country gentlemen and city ladies, noblemen and ministers of state, clergymen and tradesmen, farmers' servants—in short, all classes—crowded to Change-alley in order to obtain a share in the stock.

As is usual in similar crises, the most extravagant proposals followed in the wake of this great speculation. A few of these simultaneous projects may be noted:—A scheme for supplying London with cattle and hay, another for making pasteboards, another for trading in hair, another for furnishing funerals, another for a flying machine, another for making oil from poppies, etc. Such were the devices which filled the mouths of the gaping multitude. But even these were not the grossest absurdities. One project promised the discovery of perpetual motion. A second pledged itself to effect a revolution in the art of war; whilst a third proposed to raise two millions and a half on an undertaking of great advantage *to be made known hereafter!* Will it be credited that the projector realized £2,000? Of course, he was heard of no more.

Some benefits, however, were reaped at this crisis. The London and Royal Exchange Assurance Companies were formed at this juncture. The South Sea Company, however, jealous of such rivals, commenced actions at law against some of their competitors. A breath will sometimes precipitate an avalanche, and this step was the company's own undoing. A decline commenced, and in a short time South Sea stock, which, at the commencement

of the actions, had been 850 per cent. fell to 175. To bolster themselves up, the company promised that the Christmas dividend should be 60 per cent.; but the pledge came too late. The descent had begun, and it soon became headlong. Public credit fell. The name of a director became ignominious. It was declared in parliament that "the directors should be tied in a sack and thrown into the Thames." Mr. Craggs, secretary of state, was vehemently accused of being a party in the infamous fraud. He replied by offering to fight a duel with his accuser—no very conclusive proof of his innocence! A select committee was appointed to inquire into the affair. A mob collected about the House of Commons, and was with difficulty dispersed. The treasurer of the South Sea Company sought safety in flight; and when the transactions themselves underwent examination, his absence was found to be not unreasonable. All that bribery, the creation of fictitious stock, and the resort to the most unfair advantages could do, had been done on behalf of the company; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, found guilty of being an advantaged party in such disgraceful transactions, was expelled the House, and committed to the Tower, whilst his property underwent confiscation, for the benefit of the defrauded sufferers.

In the following anecdotes, related by Mr. Francis, the reader will recognise lineaments which unhappily have, within the last few years, become too familiar:—

"Samuel Chandler, the eminent non-conformist divine, risked his whole fortune in the bubble, lost it, and was obliged to serve in a bookseller's shop for two or three years, while he continued to discharge his ministerial duty."

"The elder Scraggs gave Gay £1,000 stock, and as the poet had been a previous purchaser, his gain at one time amounted to £20,000. He consulted Dr. Arbuthnot, who strongly advised him to sell out. The bard doubted, hesitated, and lost all. The doctor, who gave such shrewd advice, was too irresolute to act on his wholesome opinion, and lost £2,000; but, with an enviable philosophy, comforted himself by saying that it would be only two thousand more pair of stairs to ascend."

"One tradesman, who had invested his entire resources in the stock, came to town to dispose of it when it reached 1000. On his arrival it had fallen to 900, and as he had decided to sell at 1,000 he determined to wait. The stock continued to decline, the tradesman continued to hold, and became a ruined man."

"The wags of the day were not idle. A pretended office was opened in Change-alley, to receive subscriptions for raising one million. The people flocked in, paid five shillings for every thousand they subscribed, fully believing that they would make their fortunes. After a large sum had been subscribed, an advertisement was published, that the people might have their money without any deduction, as it was

only a trial to see how many foolish persons might be caught in one day."

The following anecdote is honourable to the unknown party concerned :—

"In 1720, soon after the bursting of the South Sea bubble, a gentleman called late in the evening at the banking-house of Messrs. Hankey and Co. He was in a coach, but refused to get out, and desired that one of the partners of the house would come to him. Having ascertained that it was really one of the principals and not a clerk who appeared, he put into his hands a parcel carefully sealed up, and desired that it might be laid on one side till he should call again. A few days passed away—a few weeks—a few months—but the stranger never returned. At the end of the second or third year, the partners agreed to open this mysterious parcel in the presence of each other. They found it to contain £30,000, with a letter, stating that it was obtained by the South Sea speculation, and directing that it should be vested in the hands of three trustees, whose names were mentioned, and the interest appropriated to the relief of the poor, which was accordingly done."*

The essential evil of gambling consists, not so much in an appeal to chance, (which word, truly interpreted, means a contingent and uncertain probability,) as in the hazarding of a valuable means of promoting good (for such is money) upon doubtful ventures. The violent

* Hone's Every-day Book, vol. i. p. 170.

transferences which large speculations involve not only convulse society, but endanger its stability. Where there are great gains, there are also, somewhere, correspondingly great losses. Those losses involve, probably, the happiness of some—the means of support for others; the child's education, the widow's sustenance, the orphan's prop. The failure of any great speculation always tends to such results. If, on the other hand, the speculator gains, he is suddenly lifted from his position, is placed on a platform he is unfitted to occupy—is swayed by passions to which his wealth gives new power—sees his family preyed upon by vanity, ambition, and the desire of what they never dreamed of before—becomes himself, possibly, in the end an object of contempt to his own children—is regarded by the public with more servility than respect—and, in all probability, carries with him to his grave a secret consciousness that all is not well. But what shall we say, what *can* we say, if the man who lives amidst such great speculations be a religious man? Only this, that it is easier to keep a naked light alive in a tempestuous and squally night—easier to make a tree grow upon a soil perpetually shaken by men tunnelling below—“easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,” than to preserve a simple, humble, contrite, holy, thankful, consecrated heart, when the intellect is continually intent upon large ventures, or is dreading the possibility of large losses.

Whatever may be the particular means employed to increase wealth with undue rapidity, the dangers and results are much the same. It is true that "dice" indicate a certain class of speculations productive of no good and much evil; but let us not suppose that where dice are not, the gambling mania cannot be. Almost all know the story of an old gambler, who, having been induced to resolve that he would never touch these dangerous cubes again, was found soon after betting with a neighbour as to who should draw the longest straw out of a hay-rick. In a similar mode, a man, while professing to denounce gambling, may himself be habitually practising it under the plausible disguise of mercantile pursuits.

In the year 1634, the tulip-root became connected, especially in Holland and Germany, with a mania for pecuniary speculation. The excitement of this new passion was very great. It gave rise, also, to some ludicrous occurrences. Amusing stories are related, how a sailor, coming into a merchant's counting-house, and supposing a bulb which he saw (some of them realized more than 5,000 florins) to be an onion, took it home to eat with his red herring, and was found, little conscious of the mischief he had done, holding it half devoured in his hand—a crime expiated, however unjustly, by half-a-year's imprisonment. Another gentleman, of some botanical taste, finding a similar bulb in a conservatory, set himself to peel off its several coats, and then cut the remainder in pieces.

The reader may suppose the damage which was done, when he is told that the root was that of a van eyck, then deemed one of the most precious of all tulip varieties. The infuriated proprietor dragged the offender before the magistrate, where the unfortunate culprit learned that the botanical specimen he had examined was worth 4,000 florins. He was imprisoned till he found securities for the payment of that sum. Such a rage, however, must necessarily have its limits. A panic began, and government was appealed to, to stop its course. But at such a time, the strongest government becomes feeble as a child. Actions for breach of law were threatened; but the law refused to interfere with contracts so nearly akin to gambling. The glittering pagoda fell down with a crash, and it was long before public credit recovered from the shock it had sustained. This mania has been attributed to Lipsius. He was, however, innocent of the gambling part of the transaction, having only sought good flowers at high prices.

The years 1824 and 1825 are memorable in the annals of this mercantile nation, as a period that promised great national prosperity. Agriculture, manufactures, and trade of every kind were profitable. This flattering state of things reduced, of course, the interest on money, and stimulated men to seek for new investments; whilst all kinds of projects abounded. No less than 624 new joint-stock companies spread their shadowy, but brilliant visions before the

public eye. Though proposed, as many of them were, by men known to be destitute of capital, the shares were usually sold. "You talk," said a satirist, "as if we had any real business to transact. All we have to do is to puff up our shares to a premium, delude the public into buying them, and then let the whole concern go to ruin." Mining companies started up in profusion, and were successful in proportion to men's ignorance of the localities whence they were to derive their wealth. The history of the day was, in short, just that of a bright summer hour, which brings into the sunshine a thousand insects of every hue only that they may be destroyed by the fury of the coming thunder-storm. Clerks were to become rich—labourers to be changed into masters—dazzling wealth danced before the eyes of those who were rich already. So long as public enthusiasm lasted, all was well ; but the climax was speedily reached, and the downward course was terrible. Banks of deposit began to be beset ; commercial discounts became difficult ; houses of high credit sought advances to meet their pressing demands, and heads of the most distinguished firms were seen to await with solicitude the answers to their requests for discounts. It was the time when one-pound notes were permitted to be issued by country bankers. These notes became suspected, and caused a tremendous run upon the banks. Nor was it only the originally insolvent firms which suffered. The enormous difficulty found in

such a moment of pressure, in turning the best securities into cash, involved in a common ruin many companies worthy of the largest confidence. Men worth £100,000 were to be seen begging earnestly for the immediate advance of £1,000. Even where the most serious consequences did not ensue, many firms suffered tremendous losses by the sudden disposal of their securities. The panic of the moment justified the statement, "that it arose from want of confidence in men able to pay 40s., 50s., and 60s. in the pound." The Bank of England did all which was possible, but it was feared that its own stability would have been ruined in the crisis. At length one of the directors, who had said that the bank could not stand such a run another week, exhausted, faint, and staggering with fatigue, presented himself before the cabinet council of the day then sitting, and with difficulty articulated the words—"All is well." The worst danger had gone by. On these occasions, the truth never appears till men begin to suffer. Large discoveries were made of fraud, puffing, bolstering, and using, as if they were securities, the names of men whose riches lay on the negative side of a single farthing! The capacity of man to be deluded is not easily gauged! The stones, sticks, etc., which are found in the ostrich's maw, are easy of digestion compared with the incredibilities which may be assimilated by an all-trusting credulity.

One would suppose such a panic as this

quite enough for a generation, and that those who had witnessed its disclosures would need no other lesson during their lives. For a few years, indeed, the lesson sufficed, and this experience, combining with other causes, checked the prodigality of adventure to which a mercantile community is prone. But, in 1845, another of these epidemics of delusion seized upon the community. It will be long known by the name of the "railway mania."

This phrenzy, like others, arose out of prosperous times. Trade was plentiful, and money abundant. The system of railways had now come into complete operation, and men flew to them for safe investments, then becoming difficult. The sanguine looked upon the metal road as the best regenerator of society. The rewards of virtue, the results of peace, the triumphs of civilization were expected, not from moral means, but from steam engines and lines of iron. What may be a legitimate source of pecuniary profit became, as thus regarded, suggestive of conclusions equally mournful and absurd. Multitudes rushed to seek a share in the high adventure. Every quarter, each nook and corner of the island, the lonely dell as the city mart, echoed to the sounds of "scrip," "discount," and "premium." Neighbourhoods where only a few poor mining huts were to be found, or vast districts uninhabited by any huts at all, were to be penetrated by railroads, the direction of which none could account for, and the benefits of which none could explain.

Prices of shares lay on the tradesman's counter, and near the gauze and riband of the milliner—were to be found in the dashing equipage and in the rumbling cart—imparted new life to the old, and suddenly matured the young ; whilst a wide-spread desire possessed almost every man to be something which as yet he was not. And there were not wanting birds of evil omen to fly about in so excited a state of the mercantile atmosphere, which, whilst increasing the clamour, availed themselves largely of its advantages. It is a pity even to name the man who set fire to the temple of Diana ; and we shall call none from the oblivion we hope they have found, and proclaim none whose names already “ fester in the infamy of years,” as the chief promoters of such a crisis. We may regard the following as a not inapt representation of many scenes of the time : “ A young gentleman need only look to a half-crown railway map in search for a district tolerably clear of the rail. Taking two of the towns that form that open space, he draws a diagonal with his pencil, and thus creates a direct line. He then writes down the name of the company, his own name as promoter, either alone or with the names of as many friends as he can venture to take that liberty with, or with any names real or fictitious ; his own occupation, whether gentleman or esquire, engineer, artist, or solicitor, or clerk, or perfumer, or tailor, or M.A., or M.D. ; his place of business, if he has one ; his place of residence, whether it be castle or hall, or in

Berkeley-square, or rooms in Gray's-inn, or lodgings in the Borough. In the course of his walk to the office in Sergeant's-inn, he may, if he pleases, remodel his company, changing every name in it. Arrived at the office, he invests a few sovereigns, begged or borrowed, and then enters his company. Advertisements and letters of allotment do the rest. It may, for anything the registrar knows or cares, be straight across a mountain a mile high, or straight across an arm of the sea, ten miles broad. It would be his duty to register a tunnel under the Atlantic."* During the above operations, the most active measures were employed to enhance the price of shares. "In schemes where as many as thirty thousand shares have been advertised, not more than fifteen thousand have been allotted to the public, the remainder being reserved, part of them for property on the line, part for the provisional committee and officers. In this way a scarcity of scrip was created, and the shares rose to a premium. When the price was thus forced up to a point supposed to be worth realising, the reserved shares were sold, and the proceeds divided among the committee."

Some of these undertakings were prepared and executed with a rapidity perfectly astonishing. The last day allowed by law for the sending in of plans and documents was the 30th of November, and to be ready by that day was an object of eager effort. Apprentices were

* Francis's Bank of England vol. ii. p. 201.

suddenly promoted to be surveyors, and draughtsmen were brought over from the continent. Sunday was no longer respected ; both in preparing plans and cutting railways, that hallowed day was appropriated to forward man's schemes to be rich despite the laws of God.

Matters continued in this state till October, 1845, when a general expectation of something ominous began to pervade men's minds. This was increased by the course taken by some leading newspapers. The crash came. It fell upon the heads of many who had thought to get free from the rafters of the falling house ; but it also fell upon thousands who had been only weak, and not guilty. Honest tradesmen, parents, widows, poor men, had drained themselves of their last resources to embark in these speculations ; and on them the ruins fell most heavily.

But though this delusion was soon over, it was long before business returned to its ordinary channels ; and who has not, even yet, among the number of his friends, some who will travel to the grave impoverished, and perhaps broken-hearted, from having yielded themselves to such an infatuation. If we hear of a widow who had lost her little all—of a tradesman, once in a position of comfort, now reduced to embarrassment and decline—of a merchant who had overtraded—of a nobleman whose property has come to the hammer,—it is easily, and not always unjustly concluded—the railway speculation has been at work.

Such are the issues of the snares by which

"the god of this world" perpetually deceives his victims. "Man never is, but always to be blest." Well does some moralist say, "the world is a cheat, which never pays what it promises." Hungry, thirsty, faint, weary, and sick at heart—a thousand victims have learned in the royal preacher's tones, to say, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." The only "true riches" are not found below. The weaned heart, the holy character, the spirit changed by the grace of God and "satisfied from itself," the presence of God, the life of immortality—are alone substantial possessions, and are all of heavenly origin. Alternations will not affect them; thieves will not steal them; they will not burst as bubbles; they are superior to death itself!

CHAPTER IX.

DELUSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RELIGION.

Heathen oracles—Stones of Druids—Romish legends—St. Gregory—Empress Helena—St. Dionysius—Relics—Blood of St. Januarius—Other legends—Coat of Trèves—Crusades—Mohammed—Seva—Rosenfeld—Enthusiasts at Munster—French prophets—Miracles at tomb of Abbé Paris—Joanna Southcott, etc.—Mormonites.

THIS chapter constitutes a painful part of the duty we have undertaken to perform. To a religious mind, nothing is more painful and detestable than the delusions which have been promoted, the crimes which have been perpetrated, in the name of God. Yet, by how much religion is powerful as an instrument of good, by so much it is deemed worthy of adoption by the base and degraded as an instrument of evil. The most lamentable result of such errors is, that religion is made responsible for the tricks and enormities perpetrated in its name; and men easily learn to decry that which they have found to be associated with fraud and imposture. Let it be remembered, however, that if piety has been abused and perverted, so also has every other system which has ever conferred benefits upon the world.

Yet, as the frauds of speculators do not proscribe traffic ; as the frauds of the empiric do not proscribe medicine ; as the frauds of tradesmen do not proscribe all trade ; as food is nutritious, though liable to be adulterated ; and as friendship is true, though sometimes employed for base purposes—so religion must not be identified with that which bears its name, but has no affinity with its character. Painful as the misrepresentation is, a secret homage to religion is nevertheless involved in it. The truth is, that, broadly speaking, the most inveterate opposers of Christianity by name are the most tenacious protectors of its leading principles of justice and integrity, and would set up much of Christ's kingdom though they dethrone the King. Could they be only convinced that, but for Christianity, these principles would never have been fully known, they would beware lest they sweep away, under the name of priestcraft, the only truths by which the dangers of priestcraft can be prevented ; and would they but think that much, which, in various ages, has called itself Christianity, was but a well-known superscription upon spurious metal, they would save themselves much real, and some pretended perplexity. In the mean time, nothing more concerns the Christian professor than to remember, that if Christ's name be put upon trickery, selfishness, hard-heartedness, and fraud ; or upon intemperance, lasciviousness, and ambition—he who so writes it is a forger and a traitor. The bearer of the august name of Christ is deeply

concerned in being true to his own professed principles.

Plato, who proposed to banish priests from his republic, with singular inconsistency, advocates the employment of methods not dissimilar to those which he would explode; and whilst vindicating marriages by lot, suggests the employment of secret means to regulate the decisions.

The oracles of the ancient heathens are notorious exhibitions of innumerable frauds. The most celebrated among them was that at Delphi, consecrated to Apollo. The priestess of that god was placed upon a tripod over a cavity, whence a gaseous and highly intoxicating vapour was exhaled, and under this influence uttered mysterious sounds, which were immediately caught up and interpreted by her attendants. But as the promulgation of any predictions was attended by some danger to the reputation of the priests, care was taken to limit and regulate the number of their utterances, and not to give forth spontaneous oracles. Expensive sacrifices were demanded before the consultation. It sometimes happened that the moment was not favourable to a response, and the answers when obtained were often extremely delusive—mere equivocations. If, after all, the prophecy turned out a mistaken one, it was often pretended that something had been omitted in the previous ceremonial; and the ambiguity of many of the answers transmitted to posterity was evidently such that they might

receive an interpretation on the one side or the other, as the case might afterwards require. To aid, moreover, in the fabrication of these oracles, the inhabitants of the whole vicinity were in league with the priests, and furnished them with much necessary information. Discoveries have been recently made in some of the temples of antiquity, of the secret chambers and hollow statues in which the priests were used to secrete themselves. Dr. Johnson relates the following in his description of the temple of Isis at Pompeii :—" We see the identical spot where the priests concealed themselves whilst delivering the oracles that were supposed to proceed from the mouth of the goddess. There were found the bones of the victims sacrificed, and in the refectory of the *abstemious* priests were discovered the remains of ham, fowls, eggs, fish, and bottles of wine."

The rocking-stones of the Druids were used, in all probability, to imply the presence of supernatural agency. Some of them still exist in Cornwall. One, which stood in the parish of Sithney, was so adjusted, as that the touch of a child could set it in motion on its pivot. The celebrated Loggan-stone was of a similar kind. It was seventeen feet in length, and its weight was estimated at sixty-six tons. Even a breath of wind caused it to vibrate. It was overturned by the captain of a revenue cutter, who excited such odium by his daring act as to be compelled to restore it to its original position. Toland imagines that the Druids

persuaded the people that these stones could only be removed by miracle.

To record many of the foolish, and more than foolish legends palmed on their deceived votaries by the teachers of the Romish religion, would exceed the compass of our volume. Before the Reformation, not only were a countless number of such legends current, but they constituted the principal materials from which the priests professed to instruct the people in religion. "The golden legend"—one of the earliest volumes printed in this country, probably by Caxton himself—was a repertory of such extravagancies, read by the priests instead of sermons. A few specimens of the deleterious food by which the people were then fed will be sufficient for our purpose.

The legends associated with the name of St. Gregory are manifold. It is related of him, that one day, when officiating at the altar, a bright cloud descended, which filled the church with so heavenly an odour, that none could dare to enter it. On another occasion, he caused the consecrated bread to appear in the form of visible flesh. Again, when certain ecclesiastical ambassadors came to Rome searching for relics, he gave them a linen cloth which had been in contact with the body of a saint. The messengers saw nothing in this present, and despised it; on which St. Gregory pierced it with a knife, and the cloth shed miraculous blood. When Gregory absented himself from Rome to escape the honours of the popedom, a pillar of fire

and a crowd of angels appeared above his head, by which signs he was "miraculously betrayed."

The most incredible stories were promulgated respecting the discovery of the cross by the empress Helena. This cross was represented to possess such powers, as to be capable of being reproduced to any extent without loss of its original virtue. This was convenient, especially at a time when so many pieces of it were spread about in Europe as to have made, had they been all collected, many crosses instead of one.

The story of St. Denis, or St. Dionysius, is perpetuated in the neighbourhood of Paris by the church which bears his name, and which was formerly the mausoleum of the French kings. Dionysius is reported to have been beheaded for his adherence to the Christian faith, on the "Mount of the Martyrs," (Montmartre.) Immediately after his decapitation, his dead body rose from the ground, took its head into its hand, and, amidst a crowd of angels, walked for two miles, till it met an old woman, into whose hands the saint put his own head. It was even believed that St. Denis kissed the head he carried. Is it wonderful that such tales as these have brought the name of Christianity into suspicion and contempt among a community who only know it through the imperfect representation of it which Popery presents?

In some of the letters relating to the suppression of monasteries, now published in one

volume by the Camden Society, are curious particulars relative to the growth of credulity in a former age. The following is from a letter of Layton, one of the commissioners for the suppression, to secretary Cromwell:—

“By this bringar my servant, I send you reliquies, fyrste, two flowers wrappede in white and blake sarcenet, that one Christymas evyn *horá ipsá quâ Christus natus fuerat*, (in the very hour in which Christ was born,) will spring and burgin (bud) and bear blossoms; *quod expertum esse*, (bad Latin for, ‘which is a fact,’) saith the prior of Maden Bradeley; ye shall also receive a bage of reliquis, wherein ye shall see strangers thynges as shall appere by the scripture as Gode’s cote, (God’s coat,) oure lady’s smoke, parte of Gode’s supper *in cenâ Domini*,” (in the Lord’s supper,) “*pars petri super quâ natus est Jesus in Bethalem*, (part of the stone on which Jesus was born in Beth-lehem,) belyke ther is in Bethelem plentie of stones and sum quarrie, and maketh their mangers of stone,” etc. etc.*

No so-called miracle of the Romish church has been paraded with more *éclat* than the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius—a wonder still exhibited at Naples. It is pretended that this blood, which is kept in a glass phial, becomes fluid when applied to the head of the saint on the day of his festival. Addison describes it as “one of the most bungling tricks

* Letters relating to Suppression of Monasteries. Camden Society.

he had ever seen." Dr. Duan says, "I approached through the crowd till I got close to the bust of St. Januarius. The archbishop had been attempting to perform the miracle, and an old monk stood by, who was at the utmost pains to instruct him how to handle, chafe, and rub the bottle which contained the blood. He frequently took it also into his own hands, but his manœuvres were as ineffectual as those of the archbishop, who was all over in a profuse sweat with vexation and exertion, fearing lest the people might interpret so unpropitious an omen against him. The old monk, with a genuine expression of chagrin, exclaimed, '*Cospetta di Baccho*,' It is as hard as a stone. An universal gloom overspread the multitude. Some were in a rage at the saint's obstinacy, and called his head an ungrateful yellow-faced rascal. It was now almost dark, and, when least expected, the signal was given that the miracle was performed. A Roman Catholic, who remained close by the archbishop, assured me this miracle failed altogether; the bottle was turned with a rapid motion before the eyes of the spectators, who would not contradict that which they were all expecting to see." Precisely how this delusion is practised we do not know. It may be imitated by reddening sulphuric ether with orcanet, and saturating with saltpetre. This mixture is solid at a few degrees above freezing-point, and melts at a little higher temperature.*

* Salverte i. 332.

All travellers are well aware of the innumerable legendary stories and relics attached to the various Roman Catholic churches on the continent. Cologne exhibits, for the devotion of its pilgrims, the skulls of "the three kings," as they are termed, who brought presents to the infant Saviour at the nativity. These persons exist only in tradition, though Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, were fearful names in ancient times ; for it was believed that those who wrote these names on their foreheads with blood, and then looked into a mirror, would see themselves in the forms in which they would afterwards die.

The miraculous wonders attendant on the eleven thousand virgins, whose bones are exhibited in another church at Cologne ; the drops of blood still shown at Bruges as the real blood of our Lord ; the extraordinary theft of the holy wafer by certain Jews, the puncture of which spouted out blood, represented on the windows of the cathedral church of Brussels : together with a thousand phenomena of the same order, believed by the multitude, but laughed at or deplored by the more intelligent, are familiar to all who have travelled on the continent.

The exhibition of the holy coat of Trèves has originated, within our own day, a class of reformers, disgusted with the mummery of a senseless religion, though unhappily distinguished by no love for evangelical truth. This coat, professing to be the seamless vesture of

our Lord, "woven from the top throughout," was first shown in 1196. For three hundred years after that time the coat was never displayed, but Leo x., in 1514, authorized a new exhibition. At the time of the French revolution the garment was secreted; but when, subsequently, the Rhenish provinces were adjusted, it became the subject of a special treaty. It was again displayed in 1810. Besides this relic, there was then displayed one of the nails of the true cross. A more notorious demonstration was made in 1844, and complete absolution (an equivocal term, asserted by the priests to mean nothing, but by the people everything,) was, in accordance with the pope's bull, given to each worshipper. Outrageous and profane spectacle! which, by setting up the external in the place of the spiritual, hid the Saviour behind his own cross. The accounts of the crowding multitudes gathered together to behold this sight must be sought for in other volumes. The relic was inclosed in a golden and glazed frame, (its colour being brown, as if long stained by age,) and each pilgrim was allowed to insert his hand through an opening, and so to touch it. Was it wonderful if such a scene should have awakened in inquiring minds a sensation somewhat resembling that which followed the preaching of indulgences by Tetzal? But how wide, in point of gospel power, has been the difference between the "second Reformation" and the first! It was not by unsubstantial doubt

that Luther prevailed ; it was by something earnestly believed. But rationalism has no creed, and, therefore, no extended influence. It is a system of negations—at least of hesitations ; positive truth alone omnipotent.

We cannot undertake even to enumerate the various delusions which a papistical superstition has, under the name of religion, palmed upon the world. The Crusades, which exerted so important an influence over the aspects of the then existing society, merit a volume to themselves.* When Peter the Hermit, journeying from province to province, first represented the injuries received by monks and pilgrims from the Saracens then occupying the Holy Land, he kindled a contagious enthusiasm which is altogether without parallel. Nobles, princes, sovereigns, hastened in a transport of excitement to assume the cross, and, during two centuries, the western provinces of Europe were but the highroad to the “ kings of the east.”

Nor have we allowed ourselves room even to mention those various other absurdities—that farrago of miraculous rubbish—which, in every age, have constituted the stock-in-trade of Romanism. Radiant saints and winking Madonnas ; visions of supernatural light ; pictures which bleed when touched, and marks of the five wounds impressed upon the bodies of enthusiastic votaries—such delusions, whether of more or less modern fashion, whencesoever

* See volume on “The Crusades,” in the present monthly series.

imported, and by whomsoever, do nothing to commend a pure and spiritual religion to mankind.

The leading particulars of the gigantic imposture of Mohammed may be found already narrated in a volume of this series. The attempts recently made to whitewash the character of this renowned deceiver have been manifestly unsuccessful, and can only be regarded with favour by those who hold that "it is no matter whether there be a God or not." Mohammed's first principle of promulgating his religion by gentle and peaceful means was notoriously violated by himself in the course of his after career, whilst the hypocritical means by which he introduced successive pretended revelations to sanction the impulses of his ambition or his lust, stamp his character with undying infamy. Strange as, in many respects, the progress of this delusion has been, we must not forget that it was the interpolation with his own lying materials of many of the nobler precepts of the religion of God, which alone imparted to it influence.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, great excitement was caused among European Jews by the claims of Sabbatai Seva, who declared that he was the Messiah of that ancient people. Though renouncing, in the face of the wonderful accordance of fact with prophecy, the demands of Jesus to be regarded as the predicted Messiah, that ancient people have ever shown a remarkable disposition to

believe in false prophets. Seva was the son of a merchant of Smyrna, and after a somewhat erratic course in the earlier period of his life, declared himself to be the long-expected one of the Jews. He was assisted in this imposture by one Nathan, who personated the character of Elijah, Messiah's precursor. The 26th of June was fixed as the period of manifestation; and it was announced that at that time the Messiah would sit upon the throne of the grand signor. The deception succeeded to a large extent, and multitudes of the Jews engaged in preparatory acts of devotion, and expected their deliverer. But the chief men alone were suspicious, denouncing Sabbatai as an impostor, and they consequently exposed themselves to great unpopularity among the mass of their brethren. Sabbatai in the mean time advanced from prediction to asserted miracle. As a pillar of fire had guided the Israelites on their first emancipation from Egypt, so, it was declared, a similar spectacle should herald them back to the scenes of their former glory. Such a portent, Sabbatai said, had already greeted him, though he alone had been able to discern it. Yet this was believed on his own uncorroborated testimony. He next determined to visit Constantinople, there to proclaim his new mission. But his claims had given some uneasiness to the Sublime Porte, and instead of a triumphant entry, the impostor only found in that ancient city chains and prison-darkness. He was summoned at length before the grand

signor, and told, that nothing less than a miracle would save him from being punished for wilful deception. The test to which he was exposed was severe. He was ordered to be stripped naked, and it was declared, that if when shot at by marksmen he remained unhurt, his Messiahship should be immediately acknowledged. The impostor quailed and confessed. But this was not all. He was ordered to be immediately impaled, unless he renounced Judaism and embraced Mohammedanism. To this also Sabbatai consented, declaring that to become a Turk was an honour he had long coveted. Such was the disgraceful unveiling of this "speaker of lies in hypocrisy!"

Several other pretenders to the Messiahship of the Jews have since appeared—amongst which may be distinguished Hans Rosenfeld, a German, who for this offence was whipped and imprisoned for life; and Richard Brothers, who, in the latter part of the last century, found a home in Bedlam.

The dreadful extravagances practised at Munster, in 1533, if not well attested, would seem almost incredible. Certain so-called religionists, with whose impieties no sect in the present day can be legitimately associated, proclaimed that a new Jerusalem was to be set up in that city, which was to attract the whole earth to its influence. As they were pretty numerous, and did not disdain the use of carnal weapons, they put down the magistrates, and occupied their places, whilst they filled the

whole city with crime and outrage, proclaiming a general community of goods, the abolition of all distinctions or rank, and general polygamy. With such delusions any civil society must be manifestly a thing impossible, and religion itself could not long exist when its administration was taken into the hands of those who vindicated every enormity by the pretence of a special revelation from heaven. Against such doctrines, therefore, the early Reformers, and amongst others Melancthon, lifted their loudest protests. From Munster, however, the flame of disaffection spread into Holland, where John of Leyden, already notorious for the part he had taken in the first insurrection, was proclaimed the apostle of this insane and dangerous mission, attended by twelve disciples, most of whom were women. This man claimed, by authority from heaven, to be king over the whole earth, avowing that he was commissioned to raise an army which should put down the unbelieving powers of this world. He was at length besieged in Munster by its bishop, count Waldeck. For a long time the city held out under his influence. But John of Leyden was at last betrayed; an entrance was treacherously effected into the city, and the leaders of the insurrection were punished by exquisite torments, their flesh being torn from their bones with red-hot pincers, whilst their mangled remains were exhibited in iron cages. In this insurrection, joined as it was by many who were smarting under severe civil oppressions,

it is calculated that not fewer than a hundred thousand perished.

In the year 1707, Dr. Calamy, the well-known Nonconformist minister, writes thus concerning a sect which appeared in his day :—

“About this time we had a mighty noise about us concerning new prophets risen up, that foretold strange and heavy judgments. They were for bringing in a new dispensation in religion, and had many admirers and followers. This fancy had been at work in France in 1703, and many fell in with it. Some of them coming in England in 1706, with great vigour and earnestness, endeavoured to spread their notions here, where they were but too well entertained; their common cry among us was, that this new prophetic dispensation was to be proclaimed in every nation under heaven, beginning in England, and to be manifested over the whole earth within the short time of three years.” These people were called “French Prophets.” One of their adherents was called Lacy, and was well known to the doctor. This man imagined himself inspired. But one Elias Marion was the most conspicuous. He claimed the right to deal out the judgments of Heaven, and to discover the hidden secrets of the future. Dr. Calamy gives a prolonged account of the strange “agitations” which accompanied their prophetic utterances, and of their claims to miraculous gifts, and even to raise the dead. By prophesying in the streets they attracted much attention, and made many converts; and

when they denounced constituted authorities, there were some who greedily listened. Several of them were fined, and exposed on the pillory. This sect, having little of doctrine to subsist on, soon died away.

The miracles said to have been performed at the tomb of the abbé Paris would be scarcely worthy of mention, but for the use made of them by certain sceptics of a former day. This man was a pious Jansenist, whose devoutness had gained for him high reputation. After his death, extraordinary cures were asserted to have been performed on those who made a pilgrimage to his tomb. Most of these were the results of strong imagination, operating on the physical frames of persons afflicted by a certain class of ailments, and were such cures as gave, within a more recent day, notoriety to the names of prince Hohenlohe and others. It is well known how, for a time at least, bed-ridden and infirm persons have been made, under the impulses of a strong credulity, to recover the suspended use of their bodily functions. Similar results were in this case witnessed. By drinking of the well consecrated by the memory of the abbé, people were also thrown into violent convulsions—a phenomenon by no means unusual when the sympathetic emotions are strongly appealed to. Tortures, only to be equalled by those of the Brahminical Hindoos, were voluntarily submitted to by others of these visionaries, with a courage worthy of a better cause.

Many now living will well remember the freaks and impostures of Joanna Southcott, and there are yet to be seen, in the streets of some of our towns, men whose long beards, unattended by the usually accompanying Jewish physiognomy, proclaim them to be the followers of that ignorant and guilty woman. Her story and pretensions were, in brief, the following. She declared herself to have received a Divine commission, as the mother of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear on earth; and she succeeded, by the influence which usually attends a confident imposture, in persuading multitudes of ignorant, with some better taught persons, of the truth of her pretensions. She professed, that by her agency and that of her child, the visions of the book of the Revelations were speedily to be fulfilled upon earth. At the same time, she claimed the right to present to the sealed ones the credentials of their acceptance, and in a handwriting, which displayed her ignorance, and was barely legible, issued certificates to her followers. Contrary to the assured belief of her disciples, however, she died without giving birth to the Messiah; and though her body was kept unburied till the most active signs of decomposition appeared, many refused to believe in her death, and, after her burial, many more asserted that she would rise again, and bound themselves by a vow not to shave their beards till this consummation. What bounds can be set to the extension of human folly?

Easy would it be to add to the names already given a large list of those who, under the influence of an enthusiasm in which intentional deception had no place, have yielded themselves up to religious delusions, and succeeded oftentimes in rendering others partakers in their folly. It is incredible to what extravagancies men may be led by the influence of diseased self-esteem. Even in ordinary intercourse with society, a sagacious observer must have known many who are utterly incapable of deliberately violating truth, and yet who so torture the smallest occurrences into self-flattery, as to derive incense from the most insignificant sources. Let this predisposition become but connected with the religious element, and such persons readily imagine themselves the inspired prophets of the Divine will, though their only warrant for believing so is their own self-confidence. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind, that religion is a system of external evidences, as well as of internal experience; that it is as much *objective*, as it is *subjective*; that its revelations are not only sustained by inward consciousness, but by prophecy, miracle, contemporaneous testimony, and a world-wide adaptation. As we dwell on the pages which record the progress of religious delusion, how strong is sometimes the desire that we could subject its promoters—not to the tortures of the red-hot pincers, or the boots, or pilliewinkies of former times—but to a searching cross-examination as to their visions

themselves—the motives of love of applause by which they might have been influenced—the state of health in which they were at the moment—the tests they would apply to separate their own convictions from the impositions of credulity—and the Scriptural warrant for believing their practices true. Under such a process, powerfully pursued, and unless he were raving mad, which is very likely, we imagine St. Simeon Stylites would come down from his pillar, St. Anthony would cease to preach to the little fishes, Emanuel Swedenborg would abandon his unintelligible mysticism, Bœhmen his religious jugglery. But these spirits are now beyond us, and elude our grasp. They have gone where delusion mocks no more, and self stands no longer in the place of God. Let us beware how we regard the illusory as if it were real. Let us cultivate with special urgency the influences which belong to Him who is called “the Spirit of truth.”

The religious delusions of the last century would not be complete without a passing reference to the Buchanites, named after a person called Buchan, who, in 1783, professed herself the woman spoken of in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, and promised to her followers that they should not taste death. Their influence was very limited and transient, and they were soon forgotten.

The delusions possessing the body called “Mormonites, or Latter-day Saints,” are some of the most extraordinary of any we have

related. As its pernicious errors have extensively spread, a more detailed exposure of them may be useful. This sect originated with one Joseph Smith, who, though he was, perhaps, at a subsequent time partially the dupe of his own delusions, began his course as an impostor of the blackest order. Hypocrisy is seldom found unmixed, and the most atrocious deceivers are usually, in some important respects, self-deluded. Joseph Smith was born in the state of Vermont, (U.S.) in the year 1805, and though an illiterate man, who could scarcely read and write, was possessed of great talents, which he afterwards used for the most injurious purposes. The whole family to which he belonged were loose and unsettled, incapable of industrious application, and seeking their livelihood by digging for treasures supposed to be deposited in the earth by the ancient buccaneers. In these exploits Smith distinguished himself as a clairvoyant. Putting a certain stone, to which he attached much value, into his hat, and then hiding his head in it, he professed to be able to point out the quarters in which the search of his friends would be most successful. But as deception is suggestive and accumulative, Joseph Smith advanced from one lie to another. He pretended to receive visions from Heaven, and though not yet fourteen years old, he found those who were ready to give credence to his tale. These visions, however, did not alter the course of his life, which was at this time, according to the admissions of his own people,

vain and abandoned. He pretended to have been Divinely told, that the American Indians were descendants of the ancient Israel—the colour of their skins having been miraculously changed in punishment for their transgressions; that they had emigrated to America at an early period of the world's history; that their records were Divinely preserved, and constituted a book of revelation from God; and that he himself, if found faithful, should be employed to exhibit these records to the world. In process of time, another revelation, he declared, told him where this sacred book was deposited, and Joseph Smith communicated the information he had received to his father and brothers. The father insisted that they should immediately go to the indicated spot, and satisfy themselves of the existence of this extraordinary volume. The family went accordingly, and dug up the ground with implements provided for the purpose. But when the chest had just met their view, it was supernaturally removed out of their sight. Again they disinterred it, but amidst thunder and lightning the same process was repeated, and they fled in terror to their home. Joseph alone remained behind them. As he was slowly returning to his house, he encountered a dreadful vision of an angel, who in a fearful voice spoke to him, whilst lightning was flashing around, upbraiding him for the disobedience of which he had been guilty, in communicating the dreadful secret. He was afterwards sent alone to the spot, and was commanded to take the

chest, and to bury it under his hearthstone, but forbidden to investigate its contents. Together with the book, he professed to have found two stones, designated in his first narratives a pair of spectacles, but afterwards termed "the Urim and Thummim"—"two transparent stones set in the two rims of a bow," which were to enable him to decipher these wonderful records. Dr. Authon, of whom we shall speak hereafter, relates:—"The way that Smith made his translations and transcripts was the following: Although in the same room, a thick curtain or blanket was suspended between them, and Smith, concealed behind the blanket, pretended to look through his spectacles or transparent stones, and would then write down or repeat what he saw, which, when repeated aloud, was written down." The severest judgments were denounced against the scribe, if he should presume to draw near to, or even to look upon Smith, whilst thus dictating. One Sidney Rigdon was largely engaged in this work of transcription, and at length, under these auspices, what is called "The Book of Mormon" was brought forth to the world as a new revelation. It professes to have been found written on golden plates, in a mysterious character, which only Smith himself was able to read, and he simply by a supernatural impulse. Its contents relate to different periods, and contain fifteen books, the productions of as many authors. It comprehends a period of a thousand years, from the time

of Zedekiah, king of Judah, down to the year 420.

About the same time, a document was put forth, bearing the names of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, declaring that an angel from heaven had showed them the golden plates, and commanded them to bear witness to J. Smith's testimony. Simultaneously, another paper was put forth by eight other witnesses, declaring that they had seen the plates, which bore the appearance of gold, and that they had also seen the engravings upon them. Such, then, is the basis of the Mormon imposture. Joseph Smith, who appears to have had Mohammed in his eye, and to have imitated some of his leading transactions, professes a new revelation; declares that an angel from heaven has directed him to a Divine book, long hidden from the world; supports his declaration by bringing forward three witnesses, who avow they have seen an angel, who corroborates Smith's statements, and eight others who declare that they have seen the golden volume. But it remains invisible to all other eyes, and is, as the Mormonites pretend, divinely shut up from the view of all besides. On this testimony the Book of Mormon claims to be received as a special revelation from God.

Now the absence of the book itself, it must be obvious, gives the complete lie to the whole transaction. Such a pretence as that of Smith demands the largest proof—the most open pub-

licity. Christianity could say, "These things were not done in a corner." Mormonism, on the contrary, is the most "hole and corner device" imaginable. Christianity is, it is true, dependent on testimony, as Mormonism professes to be. But the testimony which supported Christianity was a testimony borne in the most open and the strongest manner. Our Lord had been crucified by the Jews and buried; his disciples declared him risen again, and asserted that he had so proved his Divinity. Not three only, but "above five hundred brethren at once," were ready to prove that they had seen him. The disciples bore this testimony in Jerusalem, before our Lord's very crucifiers, in the most repeated form, and when the production of the body of Jesus would have silenced them at once, such a proof could never be made. Mormonism, on the contrary, produces three witnesses, who bear witness to an appearance which might have been delusive, and if not an invention altogether, has not strength enough to influence the world in its favour. They say that they have seen the engravings and the plates, and they declare that an angel brought them from heaven. But they do not declare that they saw the angel—only that he came and laid the plates before their eyes. The statement is so loose that one wonders at the amount of credit it has received. There was obviously nothing in Smith's previous character to render it unlikely that he should invent the whole story. All testimonies concur in repre-

senting his former life to have been abandoned and dissolute, and his own followers confess that his life was not irreproachable subsequently even to his first revelation. The Mormon writers lay great stress on the unlikeliness of so young a man inventing such a lie. But the improbability is altogether imaginary. The annals of deception furnish many much younger criminals.

If we examine the names of the witnesses, namely, of the three affixed to the first paper, and of the eight subjoined to the second, we shall find that of the three first, one was Smith's amanuensis, (Cowdery,) one probably either a relative or intimate connexion, (Whitmer,) and one an amanuensis and a dupe, (Harris,) and that of the eight others, four were Whitmer's and three Smith's own family. The majority were thus *unprejudiced witnesses* truly!! It may be observed respecting Martin Harris, who perhaps was the most honest of the group, that he was evidently one of the weakest of men. "A gentleman of Palmyra, bred to the law, a professor of religion, and of undoubted veracity," is reported on good authority to have "appealed to Harris, and to have asked him directly, 'Did you see those plates?' Harris replied he did. 'Did you see the plates and the engravings on them with your bodily eyes?' Harris replied, 'Yes, I saw them with my eyes; they were shown me by the power of God and not of man.' 'But did you see them with your natural, your bodily eyes, just as you see

this pencil-case in my hand? Now say yes or no to this?' Harris replied, 'Why I did not see them as I do that pencil-case, yet I saw them with the eye of faith; I saw them just as distinctly as I see anything around me, *though at the time they were covered over with a cloth.*'" At the time the pretended finding of these books took place, this man applied to professor Authon, a man of large reputation as a scholar, informing him that "a gold book, consisting of a number of plates fastened together by wires of the same material, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with it an enormous pair of spectacles. These spectacles were so large that if any person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would look through one glass only. . . 'Whoever,' he said, 'examined the plates through the glasses was enabled not only to read them but fully to understand their meaning.'" Harris, moreover, said, that having been requested to contribute a sum of money for the publication of the said book, he had come to ask the professor to counsel him on the contents of a paper he had brought with him, which professed to be an extract from this mysterious volume. The professor regarded the matter first as a hoax, and then as a cheat. The paper consisted of "all kinds of crooked characters," composed of different ancient alphabets, and ending with "the rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evi-

dently copied after the Mexican calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived." Subsequently the professor advised Harris to go to a magistrate, and have the whole affair examined. This he declined to do, stating his conviction that the curse of God would rest upon him if he did so. Such is the testimony of professor Authon. By what means Harris was afterwards induced to affix his name to the paper which professed that he had seen the plates is unknown, but the process taken with so weak a man is not inconceivable.

It may appear strange that an illiterate man like Smith should have been able to invent a story such as that contained in the Book of Mormon. But there are other circumstances which explain the wonder. It appears that, in the year 1809, one Solomon Spaulding, who had been previously a clergyman, set himself to compose a religious tale, based upon the assumed fact that the North American Indians were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. As he proceeded in his story, he read portions of his manuscript to his neighbours, who became greatly interested in it, especially in that part in which he fictitiously related how he had found an ancient record, imitating the style of the Old Testament. This volume was afterwards put into the hands of a bookseller for publication, and whilst there was copied by Sidney Rigdon, who it is to be observed was one of the promoters of the Mormon imposture.

Spaulding's brother declared that the pretended Scriptures were altogether compiled from his deceased brother's manuscript. The widow of Spaulding bore the same testimony; and it is added that the neighbours to whom the original tale had been read, instantly recognised the production with which they had been heretofore familiar as incorporated in the Book of Mormon which came forth from Joseph Smith as a new revelation from Heaven. Rigdon denied, indeed, the whole transaction, but in so abusive a style and manner as by no means to add to our conviction of his veracity.

The manner in which this pretended revelation is compiled, is extremely clumsy and illiterate. Such phrases as the following are frequent:—"I saith unto them"—"these things had not ought to be"—"ye saith unto him"—"ye are like unto they." The mariner's compass is spoken of as having piloted these ancient Israelites upon their voyage, though well-known not to have been applied as a nautical instrument until many ages later than the professed period. The Messiah is called by names not known at all to the ancient Hebrews, and of well-known Greek origin.

What are the doctrines of the books themselves? If the Book of Mormon have any moral power, it is derived from its appropriation of Scriptural truth which it admits, though its interpretation grossly garbles the contents of the sacred volume. It receives the doctrine of atonement and of punishment for sin, and it

avows a code of pure morality. But certain allegations borne to the conduct of some of its followers, even of Smith himself, have tended to throw considerable suspicion upon the practice of the most eminent of its apostles. Mormonism enunciates an entirely new system of church government, dividing its priesthood into two branches, each consisting of many officers—the Melchisedec and the Aaronic priesthood. In these offices, Joseph Smith, as might be expected, bears the pre-eminence. It lays great stress on baptism for remission of sins. It regards the church as a living interpreter of revelation. It interprets the Hebrew Scriptures literally, never symbolically. It therefore believes that God possesses a human form, which doctrine is avowed in all its creeds and catechisms. It sets up a great scheme of worldly polity, to which it believes that all the inhabitants of the earth will become ultimately subject, and which affords peculiar advantages to its founders and leaders. It declares that “no one can possibly be saved and reject” its messages. Against all forms and creeds it wages, therefore, the most offensive and deadly warfare; labouring thus to uproot and destroy all the seeds of piety sown in the hearts of men. Of all spiritual religion—the religion of the heart—it is mainly ignorant, the visible and external being the leading objects of its ambition. How different from the system of which it shall not be said, “Lo here, or lo there,” but whose seat is *within*!

Only the religion which can change men's hearts is that which can convert the world. Mormonism is, in short, a religion which, adopting much of the contents of God's word, hacks and hews it to its own purposes, and makes it the foundation of an organization purely secular and ambitious, and tending greatly to the advantage of its founder.

Besides all this, Mormonism recognises the working of miracles as attesting its Divine origin, though its miracles are of such a kind as sometimes to excite ridicule, and to be seldom capable of proof or of disproof, consisting mainly in the alleged casting out of evil spirits, or the cure of malignant diseases. Such wonders often arise out of the faith of the operator alone.

The history of Mormonism is, however, very singular, and affords a remarkable proof how persecution may lift into eminence the system against which its attacks are directed. Basing his system on such pretensions as we have detailed, Joseph Smith soon found himself the head of a growing sect. From the 1st of June, 1830, when its numbers were thirty, it advanced like the religion of Mohammed, in regularly increasing development. As it grew, the opposition against it became loud and vehement, and men, disgusted with its pretensions, attacked it with a violence which savoured altogether of this world. Smith travelled about in search of a location for his contemplated settlement, not without some misunderstandings

among his own people, but exposed to an incessant fire of persecution from his indignant enemies. A mob dragged him from his bed in a village called "Hiram," and violently tarred him and some of his followers. The same mob tracked his footsteps, caused riots wherever a Mormon settlement was found, sacked the houses of the religionists, and compelled them to emigrate into distant countries. Such proceedings as these of course excited sympathy and furnished undeserved power to the new sect; and though the public authorities reprobated the persecution, it was easily put by the Mormons to the discredit of the old sects. The expatriated people moved into the state of Missouri. Whilst there, the following entry occurs in one of the journals of the elder accompanying the prophet. It will be understood as bearing reference to the meteoric appearances well-known to philosophers as characterising the month of November, and may be taken as an example of the whole delusion:—

"November 13.—About four o'clock, A.M., I was awakened by brother Davis knocking at my door, and calling on me to arise, and behold the signs in the heavens. I arose, and to my great joy beheld the stars fall from heaven like a shower of hail-stones—a literal fulfilment of the word of God, recorded in the Holy Scriptures, as a sure sign that the coming of Christ is close at hand."

Such were the delusions which impressed

the minds of the Mormon leaders, and were by them communicated to their people.

In the midst of dangers such as those to which he was exposed, Joseph Smith began to organize his followers into a body-guard to defend him against his enemies. His brother, Hiram Smith, was nominated captain, and another brother, George Smith, held the office of armour-bearer. Such measures on Smith's part provoked corresponding ones on the side of his enemies. An antagonist force was rapidly raised, and one of the leaders of this band swore to destroy Smith and his army. Before he could accomplish this threat, however, the man was drowned in the midst of the Missouri river—an event which Smith did not fail to regard as a just punishment of his foe. Soon after this event, the cholera broke out in the Mormon army. At first, Smith endeavoured to cure it by the power which he supposed to be vested in himself, but he soon learned that the disease was quite beyond his influence, and thirteen of his band were removed by it. About the same time, Smith was accused by some of his own followers of prophesying lies, and appropriating the money of his people. He met the charge boldly, however, and the accuser retracted the charge.

Joseph Smith is accused of having fled from his debts in Kirtland, where his first settlement had been, in the middle of the night, leaving his creditors to do as they could. This transaction was followed by a great schism among

his people themselves, led on by two of the three who had signed the first paper testifying to the authenticity of the books of Mormon, in alliance with whom was Sidney Rigdon. But the last was deep in Joseph Smith's secrets, and was soon forgiven. The persecution of the body in the meantime continued. Obstructions being offered to the right of voting in political elections by the enemies of Smith, a regular series of assaults took place, which lasted during several weeks. In the end, an attempt was made to massacre the Mormons.

The Mormons now began to establish themselves in Illinois, where they formed a town, which they called "Nauvoo," or beautiful. Of this town Smith was appointed mayor, and in addition to his titles of prophet and president, was also termed lieutenant-general.

In 1837, Mormonism began first to make head in England, and in that year made many converts among the ignorant and weak-minded, principally in the manufacturing districts. Those who looked to religion for a system of external advantage and polity, saw much in this new system which corresponded with their views. In 1841, Joseph Smith directed, under inspiration, as he termed it, the construction of a magnificent temple at Nauvoo, to which he invited contributions from all quarters. It was well situated, and of large proportions, and a million of dollars were expended upon its construction.

Among other descriptions given at this time

of the prophet, is one delivered by a public lecturer, named Newhall, who was present at a review of his army by Smith himself, attended by "six ladies on horseback, who were dressed in black velvet, and wore waving plumes of white feathers, and rode up and down in front of the regiment." The prophet himself is called "very sociable, easy, cheerful, obliging, and kind, and very hospitable—in a word, a jolly fellow, and one of the last persons whom he would have supposed God would have raised up as a prophet or priest."

It was about this time that one of the leaders of the Mormonites, Sidney Rigdon, promulgated the abhorrent doctrine of plurality of wives, in imitation of Mohammed himself—a doctrine which Smith was regarded as greatly favouring. Smith, now at the very height of his ambition, was put forward as a candidate for the presidency of the United States, and published what he termed "General Smith's Views of the Government and Policy of the United States." It is needless to say that his pretensions were regarded in the main with contempt. Soon after this, the accusation against Smith of promoting the "spiritual wife" doctrine, sustained as it was by the affidavits of sixteen persons, led to the destruction by the Mormons of the newspaper which had published them, and thence to a serious conflict between the Mormonites of Nauvoo and the surrounding inhabitants, in the course of which Joseph Smith and his brother were shot. The pro-

phet's death gave to him a power which it is probable his life, had it been prolonged, would have utterly prevented—he became enshrined and worshipped.

After the death of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon endeavoured to vault into the vacant chair. His reputation was, however, so low, that this was found to be impossible. He was expelled from the society, and Brigham Young was appointed the leader—a post which he still holds.

Again the Mormon body were compelled to emigrate. They were driven from Nauvoo, and have now fixed their residence at Deseret, in the vicinity of California, in the great salt water lake valley, which they first reached after incredible troubles and privations. They have formed here a large and increasing settlement; they have built an enormous temple; they are said to have been the first who profited by the gold found in California, and they have established a perpetual emigration fund, to aid those from all countries who are attracted by the hope of an earthly paradise. The latest account of them is given by Mr. Kelly, who, in his "Excursion to California," gives no very favourable description of the morals of the new settlement. If only half the narratives given of the practices of the leaders be true, they will demonstrate the fact that chastity and purity have no true basis among them. It is indeed true that the Mormonite books profess to abjure such practices. But a new revelation is with

them always possible, and who can say what vices it may sanction?

Melancholy as are these illustrations of delusions connected with religion, the student of the word of God will see in them only a fulfilment of many warnings which that Divine record contains upon this subject. "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." A corrupt state of the heart is the prolific source from which these delusions spring. There is a want among their votaries of an earnest, simple-minded, child-like desire to attain to the truth, and mingled, as this often is, with the indulgence of some known sin, it ends in the judicial surrender of the victim to a strong delusion to believe a lie. Those, however, who earnestly and with uprightness of purpose seek to know the Lord, no such delusions will be permitted to entangle. The promise of God standeth sure, that they who seek him with their whole heart shall surely find him. The highway of holiness that leadeth to His kingdom is so plain, that a labouring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

OUR illustrations of credulity are now nearly closed. To spend much time in winding up these observations may be censured by the reader as superfluous. A few short words will be enough.

The reader who lives in the nineteenth century stands on vantage-ground with regard to most of the errors which we have detailed. The self-complacency naturally attendant on our advanced knowledge can well afford to pity those who lived in a period of comparative disadvantage, and who were thus victims of their own infatuation. We censure delusions not our own, as the man despises the delusions of the child.

But what if we conceive of a state of things, as much or more in advance of the present, as the present is in advance of the past? We speak not now of science, but of truths much higher and holier than science has ever known, and in comparison of which mere scientific discoveries are but as baubles. What, if we think of one who has himself passed "the flaming

bounds of space and time," looking down from his "empyrean throne," with all his faculties now quickened and enlarged, upon "the smoke and stir of this dim spot which men call earth," and passing sentence upon the thoughts which now occupy others, and which once amused himself. Would there be nothing to excite surprise and pity?

Below him is a world, every atom of which bears upon it the significant impress of an almighty Creator, walking through all its scenes in the varieties of his majestic power. The opening day—the summer evening—the plumage of its birds—the instincts of its animals—the fragrance of its flowers—and the commanding intellect of the being who, as God's vicegerent, commands them all, speak to man at every turn of "God's eternal power and Godhead, so that they who deny him are without excuse." Yet, by that noblest production of almighty workmanship—by man himself—God is neglected and scorned. The creature who basks in God's sunshine does not value his smile; nor does he who shudders at God's tempest dread his frown. The eye, the ear, the understanding, proclaim the Divinity. But the heart refuses its homage, and man walks like an atheist through a world full of the Holy One, knowing him not, obeying him not, and careless of all that might do Him pleasure. Is there any of the delusions we have just exhibited so great an infatuation as this?

Or, let us look again at the gigantic powers

of evil everywhere stalking abroad in the world. Man sees sin poisoning society in all its forms, yet he clings with eagerness to the very influence which destroys him. He gives up his soul, by a succession of voluntary acts, not quite so apparent, but quite as *real* as in any case heretofore believed. He risks that soul upon ventures in which the chances of repentance are inconceivably small, and the probabilities of final ruin overwhelmingly great. The spendthrift embraces the want he dreads. The drunkard faints for his "liquid fire." The pleasure-seeker laboriously invites the ennui which he yet feels to be intolerable. The debauchee eagerly invites disgrace, premature exhaustion, and a nerveless death. Men ask for martyrdom in forms which bring all its pains without its attendant consolations. The mind grows sick at such exhibitions. Delusion and infatuation possess the world.

In all directions men are seen to act like maniacs. Insane, when in youth they lay up for themselves future diseases and death ; insane, when in manhood they solicit their own inevitable disappointment ; insane, when through life they kindle the fires of a life to come. That flattering looking-glass gives back this warning to the beauty who sits before it. That engrossing business gives it back to the merchant or tradesman who sacrifices soul and body at its venture. That parental fondness gives it back to those who, like the Carthaginians of old, are sacrificing their children to a senseless god. Do

we not seem to see a vast collection of maniacs, intent, as maniacs often are, on perpetrating on themselves the most deadly injuries?

Is there, then, no remedy for this wide-spread infatuation? no place in which men may find something that shall satisfy the deep craving of the human heart for solid happiness? Thanks be to God, there is one remedy that never fails—one place at which all who truly seek shall find abiding satisfaction,

“The Cross—

There no delusive hope involves despair,
No mockery meets you, no deception there.
The spells and charms that blinded you before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.”

COWPER.

The true Christian alone has found the secret of happiness. Taught by the Holy Spirit, he has seen through the emptiness of the world, and has abandoned the chase of those empty shadows which such multitudes around him pursue. The fountain at which he has drunk is free and open to all. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,” is still the Saviour’s invitation to the children of men. May the reader hearken to this affectionate appeal, and with gratitude welcome the gospel offer of reconciliation through faith in His blood! “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

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