

HISTORY OF THE  
ART OF



MAGIC

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OF

*Handwritten signature: Hermann*

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OF GREECE















A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
ART OF MAGIC

CONTAINING  
ANECDOTES, EXPLANATION OF TRICKS  
AND A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF  
ALEXANDER HERRMANN

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## TO THE READER.

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FROM the fertile fields of ancient and modern literature, I have culled the facts relating to the history of the art of magic, to which the earlier pages of this little book are devoted. To give credit for everything recorded would seem out of place in a work of this kind, encumbering its pages with useless data and difficult names. Such a course would be at variance with my object, which is to present the wonderful history of the art of magic in a brief and interesting manner for the information and amusement of the general reader.







# THE ART OF MAGIC.

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It would require vast learning, Herculean labor, and a longer period of time than is allotted to the life of man to complete a history of the Art of Magic. Suffice it to say that as many different forms of magic exist as there are nations upon the earth. No subject, indeed, is more attractive and instructive than that of magic. It has had its influence on almost every phase of human thought; it is found in the fountain-heads from which spring history and civilization.

The limits of the present book, undertaken at the request of Mr. Alexander Herrmann, the best known prestidigitateur of the modern school of magic, permit only a brief synopsis of this wonderful art from the earliest to the present time.

Magic has often been erroneously considered as exclusively of Persian origin, which error the Athenian philosopher Plato appears to have originated. It is not possible to name any one country as the birthplace of magic. We must look to the continent of Asia, to Asia at large, as its native place. No section of the world is richer than Asia in wildernesses, deep sequestered valleys, mournful solitudes and gloomy caverns; in fact, its deserts are as numerous and extensive as its mighty rivers and inland seas.

That a secluded life, and especially one passed in the silence and solitude of the desert, is conducive to the production of



inward visions is shown by the history of the East in all ages, where these deserts have always been regarded as the favorite residence of spirits and apparitions. Even Isaiah, the greatest and most influential of the Old Testament prophets, speaks very plainly on this subject: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in, from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But the wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and *satyrs*\* shall dance there."

In the book of Enoch passages are met with recording instances in which spirits were banished to desert places by magic. In the middle ages all secluded spots, by-paths, deserts and solitudes were especially the trysting places of spirits of every kind. The inhabitants of the Faroe and of the Scottish islands have always been celebrated as particularly subject to the influence of spirits and the devil; and Cæsar and Plutarch both mention the British Isles as deserted and melancholy solitudes. We are told that in Shakespeare's time (1564–1616) men were apt during the hours of darkness to see a supernatural being in every bush, and they could not enter a cemetery without expecting to encounter some departed spirit wandering among the graves or commissioned to reveal something momentous and deeply affecting to the survivors. Fairies danced in the moonlight glades or something preternatural perpetually occurred to

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\* In ancient Greek mythology the satyrs were spirits, half-human, half-bestial, that haunted the woods and mountains.



fill the living with admiration and awe. Shakespeare, in his great tragedy of *Macbeth*, delineated the beliefs and superstitions of his age by introducing witches on the stage.

The original and the best description of magic art was grounded on this aphorism: "Man may become, by the assistance and co-operation of spiritual powers, and the capacities of his divine origin, capable of a higher sphere of activity, as well without as within himself, which gives him dominion not only over himself, but also over surrounding nature."

In the above aphorism we have, as it has been stated, the original and the best description of magic art. The common belief, however, in later years was that which included all occult science under the name of magic. Under the title "occult science" was understood enchantment and any extraordinary operations, such as making gold, exorcising spirits, reading the hand, the evil-eye, power over the elements, and the transformation of human beings into animals. The theories of spiritual apparitions, and the transitions of demons into the human body, take their rise in the philosophy of Heraclitus, according to whom demons are attracted by matter. \*

Everything that could be considered as wonderful, such as the workings of natural powers in the magnet, or the divining wand, or any surprising action, was regarded at a later period as magic and particularly as black magic, or the black art.

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\* Heraclitus was born about 535 B. C. in Ephesus, and is one of the most subtle and profound of the metaphysicians of ancient Greece, and it has truly been said that only of late years has he had his true position assigned to him in the history of philosophy.



The above superstitious beliefs respecting magic were, comparatively speaking, of recent origin. Even the dogma of Heraclitus (535 B. C.) is *modern* when applied to magic; for magic art may well be said to have made its appearance almost simultaneously with the creation of man.

That magic descended by tradition from the early ages, is shown everywhere by the primitive records of the human race. It is, in truth, intimately connected with the very nature of man.

Magic was in fact nothing more nor less in the early times than the wonderful power of the human mind to look into the future, or to influence others without material means. This natural power of man is, however, not frequently met with, and is not of that kind which every mind is able to appreciate according to its value. The knowledge of such rare phenomena and their causes could, therefore, in remote times, only be known to the wisest sages and rulers. These preserved it as their secret learning and transmitted it to their children under the cloak of religion, with which all their secrets were covered.

Magic derives its name from *Magi* (Greek *μάγοι*), and the word *Mag* was used by Jeremiah (629 B. C.) to indicate a Babylonian priest. The magi were men of austere habits and were the most learned men of their times. A higher knowledge of nature was implied in the term magic, with which religion, and particularly astronomy, were associated. The initiated and their disciples were called magicians—that is, the wise—which was also the case later among the Greeks. Plato especially praises the deep religious awe of the magicians, while both Lucian and Cicero speak of them as “learned.”



Originally the magi were either themselves princes or belonged to the higher class of society. Justice, truth, and the power of self-sacrifice were the qualities of a magician. The neglect of any one of these virtues was punished in the most cruel manner. Cambyzes, a Persian monarch, 1529 B. C., having commanded the execution of a priest (magician) who had allowed himself to be bribed, had his skin stretched over the chair in which his son and successor sat in his judicial capacity.

That magic proceeded originally from Asia as a peculiar and inborn gift of the human soul is shown not only by Moses, but the oldest known records of humanity, as the Zendavestas, the Vedas, etc.

In early ages men were firmly convinced that the most perfect half, the real man, had originated in the world of spirits. From this world he derived his vital energies, being as little able to sever himself from its influence as the boughs from the tree on which they grow.

In the very earliest ages, when man had just left the hand of nature, and still sat at the feet of the Creator; when the senses were still imperfect, and the limbs were not freely under the command of the will, man then communicated directly with spirits. In the Genesis of Moses, the patriarchs ate bread and milk with Elohim and set before them a fatted calf. Homer's gods, too, communicated directly with men. At that time there were no ghosts or demons, and the ideas of spirit and matter were not yet distinct. As soon, however, as the primitive community was broken up by a more freely expanding use of the senses; as soon as men had eaten of the tree of knowledge, and wished to free themselves from natural laws, that they might go their own way without fur-



ther obedience, then was the Creator no longer in Eden, and the peaceful community was destroyed, for the tree of life was not the tree of knowledge—He who sees God cannot live.

In the laws of Manu, who lived thirteen hundred years before Christ, we find definite enactments against a perfected but misused form of magic, just as similar laws are contained in the Books of Moses. In the oldest Chinese writings we also find sorcery mentioned as an art. Among the Chaldeans and Babylonians sorcery and magical astrology were as old as their history. The pure original idea of magic, as a close study of nature, was, however, soon lost, or at least speedily degenerated. The belief in magic peculiar to the human mind took the form among the good of white magic, among the bad of black magic, so that the study of magic degenerated, rather leaning to the darkness of superstition than raised to the light of wisdom. What was still worse, without believing in a devil it led people to cultivate the arts of the devil. Even at the time of Zoroaster, who is considered the first and earliest magician of the world, magic was misused, and connected with unholy efforts and the black art.

Among the Persians the magi represented the priesthood, and magic was synonymous with their religious rites. Sooth-saying was regarded as a higher revelation by the gods, and to make themselves susceptible to the prophetic spirit and to propitiate the spirits, they used the most powerful prayers and chants. To bring themselves into closer communion with the gods the magi led a life peculiar to themselves, their chief commands being to abstain from wine and to eat but little animal food. Everything which could excite the senses was absolutely forbidden.



Their mode of life was strict and their first law purity. Twice each day they were obliged to wash ; their garments were of cotton or linen, and their shoes were made from the papyrus. Their revenues were derived from farming their own land, and from offerings voluntarily given. The money thus derived was placed in a common treasury, from which the guardians of the temple received their salaries. Their food consisted principally of vegetables, but also occasionally of flesh, which was first inspected by properly authorized persons, and, being found healthy and sound, was marked by a peculiar seal, for they knew that eruptions, various diseases of the eyes, and other ailments arose from bad food. Pork was only eaten once a month, at full moon ; fish, particularly sea-fish, was also forbidden them.

One great characteristic of magic is the fixity with which magical formulas framed thousands of years ago hold on almost unchanged to this day. To understand this, it must be borne in mind that, if there were any practical use in such rules as those followed by the magi, they would have been improved by experience into new shapes. But, they being worthless and incapable of improvement, the motive of change is absent, and the old precepts have held their ground, handed down by faithful but stupid tradition from age to age. We, therefore, venture to say that magic to-day in Africa, Australia, or any part of Asia, is essentially the same as it was thousands of years ago. We do not mean that magic throughout the world is the same, for each nation has a distinct form of magic peculiar to itself, but the various forms current to-day, especially in semi-civilized or barbarous portions of the world, are exactly the same as they have been from time immemorial.



Let us now take a bird's-eye view of magic as practised in different parts of the world. In early times there was a universally accepted belief that living together and breathing upon any person produced bad as well as good effects, and if practised by a healthy person restored an undermined constitution. This belief is to this day extant throughout the coast of Asia Minor. People deem it injurious for a child to sleep with a grown person. In ancient times it was believed that to eradicate deeply rooted diseases a young and fresh life was necessary. Especially pure virgins and young children were supposed able to free persons from diseases by their breath and even by their blood. The patient was to be breathed upon by them and sprinkled with their blood. To have bathed in the blood would have been better, could it have been possible. History supplies us with many remarkable instances of restoration to health, either by living with healthy persons or being breathed upon by them. One of the most noteworthy is recorded in the Bible, of King David : "Now King David was old and stricken in years, and they covered him with clothes, but he got no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, 'Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin, and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat ;'" so they sought for a damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

Bacon makes the remark that the girl probably rubbed the king with myrrh and other balsamic substances, according to the custom of Persian maidens.

Pliny recommends breathing on the forehead as a remedy. Galen reckons among the most certain outward remedies for



bodily weakness young persons who were laid on the bed, so as to cover the body of the sufferer. Reinhart calls living with the young the restoration of the old. Bartholini says the same, and that it is a preventive to the chilliness of old age. Rudolph of Hapsburg is said, when very old and decrepit, to have been accustomed to kiss, in the presence of their relations, the daughters and wives of princely, ducal, and noble personages, and to have derived strength and renovation from their breath. The Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, near the end of his life, was advised by a Jewish physician to have young and healthy boys laid across his stomach, instead of using fermentations. Johannes Damascenus, or Rabbi Moses, states that for lameness and gout nothing better could be applied than a young girl laid across the affected part. Reinhart says young dogs are also of great service, which physicians lay, in certain cases, upon the abdomen of the patient.

The story of Luc. Clodius Hermippus, who reached a very great age by being continually breathed upon by young girls, is well known. Kohausen records an inscription which was discovered at Rome by an antiquary, by name Gomar. It was cut on marble, and run as follows :

To Æsculapius and Health  
This is erected by  
L. Clodius Hermippus,  
Who  
By the breath of young girls  
Lived 115 years and 5 days,  
At which physicians were not a little  
Surprised.  
Successive generations, lead such a life !



## HEALING BY WORDS.

“Is not my word as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. xxiii. 29.)

Healing by words was common in the early ages, particularly in the Church, and was used not only against the devil and magic arts, but also against all diseases. Not only did the early Christians heal by words, but the old magicians performed their wonders by magical formulas. The Egyptians were great believers in the magic power of words. The Greeks were also well acquainted with the power of words, and give frequent testimony of this knowledge in their poems. Orpheus lulled the storm by his song, and Ulysses stopped the bleeding of wounds by the use of certain words. Cato is said to have possessed formulas for curing sprains, while Marcus Varro is reported to have cured tumors in a similar fashion.

This is not the place to enter more fully into this subject, but it may not be superfluous to remember that in every word there is a magical influence, and that each word is in itself the breath of the internal and moving spirit. A word of love, of comfort, of promise, is able to strengthen the timid, the weak, and the physically ill. But words of hatred, censure, enmity, or menace lower our confidence and self-reliance. How easily the worldling, who rejoices over good fortune, is cast down under adversity! Despair only enters where religion is not—where the mind has no universal and Divine Comforter. But there is, probably, no one entirely proof against curses or blessings.

## HANDS.

By the touch of the hands visions and the power of



prophecy are produced. When God desires to inspire a prophet, what expression do we find employed?

“Then the hand of the Lord came upon him, and he saw and prophesied.” When Elisha was asked by the kings of Israel and Judah concerning the war with the Moabites, he called a minstrel, “And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him,” etc.

God has no human hands. The Bible, therefore, evidently indicates the divine art, by the means common among men when any one was to be thrown into ecstasy and should prophesy.

#### TALISMANS.

Talismans or amulets are substances, particularly metals, minerals, roots, and herbs, which were worn on the body, either as preventives against or cures for disease. To this day in Africa the natives make extensive use of “fetiches,” which are claws, fangs, roots, stones, and any other objects fancied to be inhabited by spirits or invested with super-human power. These fetiches the negroes trust against evil fortune, with a confidence which no failure can shake further than to cause the unlucky bearer to discard a particular fetich which has failed, and to replace it by a more successful one.

In ancient times, the talismans were supposed to possess the power of warding off misfortune or the effect of poison, and were inscribed with astrological signs and numbers. In later years, these talismans and amulets degenerated into the wearing of bloodstones, loadstones, necklaces of amber, images of saints, consecrated objects, etc.

Talismans were most frequently used by the Orientals, who even at the present time employ them. People went



so far as to believe it possible to be placed in communication with the world of spirits by the aid of talismans ; that by their use the love and esteem of men were to be gained ; and that by the mere wearing of such talismans others could be brought into any wished for condition of mind. Orpheus, for instance, says that it was possible to fix the attention of an audience, and to increase their pleasure, by the use of the loadstone.

A particular power was ascribed to precious stones.

An old writer states as follows :

The diamond has the power of depriving the loadstone of its virtue, and is beneficial to sleep-walkers and the insane. The Arabian diamond is said to guide iron towards the pole, and is therefore called magnetic by some.

The agate disposes the mind to solitude. The Indian is said to quench thirst if held in the mouth.

The amethyst banishes drunkenness and sharpens the wit.

The red bezoar is preventive against poison.

The garnet preserves health, produces a joyous heart, but discord between lovers.

The sapphire makes the melancholy cheerful, if suspended round the neck, and maintains the power of the body.

The red coral stops bleeding and strengthens digestion, if worn about the person.

The crystal banishes bad dreams from the sleepers.

The chrysolite, held in the hand, repels fever.

The onyx reveals terrible shapes to the sleeper ; worn about the neck, it prevents epileptic fits.

The opal is a remedy for weak eyes.

The emerald prevents epilepsy, unmasks the delusions of the devil, and sharpens the memory.



Amber cures dysentery and is a powerful remedy for all affections of the throat.

The topaz cures hemorrhoids and sleep-walking, relieves affections of the mind, and laid upon wounds stops the flow of blood.

As it has been stated that to this day in Africa extensive use is made of the "fetiches," which are the talismans or amulets of the ancients, it may not be amiss to add a few words concerning magic as it still exists in Africa.

In Africa the native sorcerer is the rain-maker, an office of the utmost importance among tribes who may perish of famine or disease after a long drought. It was the same in prehistoric times in that country. The African sorcerer has intercourse with demons. He is called every day to predict the future of a fight or a bargain or to discover lost or stolen cattle. He professes to gain information from the spirits, or uses his various modes of divination, such as taking omens from the cries of the eagle and the owl, the swimming of berries, or the moving of sticks in his own hands as they twitch spasmodically in nervous excitement. As with magicians everywhere, his trade is profitable but dangerous; for if his arts of killing have been successful beyond bearing, or if public opinion decides that he has wilfully withheld the rain, he may be drowned or burned as miserably as one of the many victims he has condemned to death.

In ancient Egypt there existed a system by lot of lucky and unlucky days of birth. To this day the sorcerers in Madagascar have a similar system which, carried out with stupid ferocity, has cost the lives of thousands of children born in an evil hour. When the magician declares their



birth ill-omened, their fate is settled at once by putting them to death. This reminds us that not later than 1440 Gilles de Laval, Baron de Retz and Marshal of France (an officer of the highest military rank), was burned for the crime of magic. It is alleged by Monstrelet that the marshal put to death, if we are to believe his own confession, more than one hundred and sixty children and women in delicate condition, *pour des pratiques de magie, i. e.*, for the practices of magic.

Magic among the ancient Egyptians was generally of a religious character. They have written formulas or documents, some of which were couched in the following language: "I confide in the efficacy of that excellently written book given to-day into my hand, which repels lions through fascination, disables men, . . . which muzzles the mouths of lions, hyenas, wolves, . . . the mouth of all men who have bad faces, so as to paralyze their limbs." . . .

Another point deserving attention is the appearance, in early Egypt, of the distinction between good and bad magic. Magical curative arts were practised by learned scribes or priests, and were doubtless in high esteem; but when it came to attracting love by charms or philters, or paralyzing men by secret arts, this was held to be a crime. As long ago as the time of Rameses III. it is recorded that one Hai was accused of making images and paralyzing a man's hand, for which he was condemned to death. This reminds us that in 1453 Doctor Guillaume Edelin, professor in the Sorbonne, was condemned to death for having, upon "undeniable accusation and information," visited the nocturnal meetings of witches and for having worshipped the devil in the form of an image personating a goat.



In divinatory magic the Babylonians had elaborate codes of rules, of which many have been preserved. Thus, "when a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its teeth are cut, the days of the prince will be long." Again, "If a dog goes to the palace and lies down on a throne, that palace will be burned."

Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, born in Sicily, mentions the skill of the Chaldean priests in various branches of magic; their use of purifications, sacrifices, and chants to avert evil and obtain good; their foretelling by omens, dreams, prodigies, etc.

Ancient Greek literature shows the Greeks to have been a people whose religion ran much into consulting oracle gods at many temples, of which the shrine of Apollo at Delphi was the chief. Necromancy, *i. e.*, the art of revealing future events by communication with the dead, was extensively practised. There was a famous oracle of the dead near the river Acheron in Thesprotiæ, where the departing souls crossed on their way to Hades. The myth of Circe turning the companions of Odysseus into swine shows the barbaric belief in magical transformation of men into beasts:

"Then mingling for them Pramnian wine with cheese,  
Meal, and fresh honey, and infusing drugs  
Into the mixture,—drugs which made them lose  
The memory of their home,—she handed them  
The beverage, and they drank. Then instantly  
She touched them with a wand, and shut them up  
In sties, transformed to swine in head and voice,  
Bristles and shape, though still the human mind  
Remained to them. Thus sorrowing they were driven  
Into their cells, where Circè flung to them  
Acorns of oak and ilex, and the fruit  
Of cornel, such as nourish wallowing swine."



Not less clearly does the story of Medea and her caldron typify the witch-doctress with her drugs, powerful both to kill and to bring to life. Medea was the daughter of Æëtes, king of the Colchians, who are said to have founded a settlement on the east of the Black Sea and to the south of the Caucasus. Medea was one of the "wise women" (witches or sorceresses) of antiquity, and she took terrible revenge on Jason for his desertion of her for another bride. Medea may be considered one of the oldest witches in the magic art. Her witchcraft, as mentioned by Greek authors who lived about 600 B. C., was "old" even in their time. The worship of Hecate, the moon-goddess, sender of midnight phantoms, lent itself especially to the magicians. Hecate was the chief goddess who presided over magic arts and spells, for all incantations were performed by the light of the moon. Medea is in this respect closely associated with her worship. It is in an ancient Greek writer, Theocritus, where we really find the "original recipe" employed by the witches of Shakespeare. Theocritus, in one of his idyls, represents a passionate witch crying to Hecate, the moon, to shine clear while she compels, by sacrifice, her faithless lover, and goes through the magic ritual of love and hate, striving to bring her beloved one back to her by whirling the brazen rhomb, scattering bones with the scattered barley, melting him to love by the melting wax, casting into the fierce flames a torn shred of his cloak and laurels, to crackle and blaze and be consumed, that his flesh shall be consumed likewise. This ancient witchcraft ascribed magic power to such filth as pounded lizards and the blood of creatures untimely dead, revolting messes made familiar to moderns, as it has been stated, by Shakespeare.



The ancient Greeks lived also in fear of "the evil-eye," as many still do, and they sought to avert its baneful influences by the means still in use, spitting, symbolic gestures, and the use of charms and amulets.

As to ancient Rome, much of the magic in the Latin poets is only Greek sorcery in a Latin dress. We must not, however, forget that from the earliest antiquity, and among all people, magic was often looked upon as a capital crime and was punished as such. Among the Jews magicians were sometimes severely dealt with, but for the most part they were left unmolested by the Greeks and Egyptians. The Romans enacted severe laws against those who practised magic, condemning to death by fire those given to "malefic arts," punishing with death their accomplices and associates, and sending into perpetual exile those having in their possession books on magic. The Romans enacted the above severe laws because, during those times of superstition, the astrologers \* and magicians were so numerous in Rome that 720 years after the foundation of that city, the Emperor, Augustus was obliged to issue a decree of banishment against them. The Emperor Claudius was still more severe, for, as Pliny informs us, he caused a Roman knight to be executed because he carried in his bosom an egg, supposed to be a serpent, in order to enchant his judges. This superstition was also very common among the Druids.

It is evident that the Romans attributed magic properties to eggs. Pliny informs us that the Romans were wont, on eating eggs, to break the shells into pieces, from fear of some

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\* Astrology, the so-called science by which various nations, in various ways, have attempted to assign to the material heavens a moral influence over the earth and its inhabitants.



charm being practised against them. In many parts of France the custom exists to this day of breaking, with scrupulous care, the shells of eggs, thus crushing the misfortunes to which the eater would otherwise have been exposed.

On the other hand, Nero not only favored magic, but caused magicians to come from Arabia, the fertile land of superstitions and jugglery. He spent immense sums of money to learn the mysteries of the art. Constantine the Great enacted a law by which he decreed death against those magicians whose superstitions injured health or led men to impurity ; but he permitted the magic which cured sickness and averted storms. The Emperor Leo, however, condemned to death all magicians, without exception.

Constantius also passed decrees of death against those who resorted to magic for curing diseases. It is said that he beheaded a young man who, in order to free himself from a pain in the stomach, repeated to himself the seven vowels of the Greek alphabet, and alternately placed his hand on a marble and on his stomach. Under the Roman pontiffs the magicians suffered still more terribly. Commissions of inquiry were appointed to deliver the country of sorcerers and of all who had recourse to the infernal art of magic. These "searchers" received orders to scour Germany, France, and Italy, where reports of magicians, sorcerers, etc., caused terror to weak minds and to those nurtured with superstition and prejudice. Proud of their mission, they inflicted the most excruciating torments that human ingenuity could invent, in order that those thus tortured might make such answers as their executioners desired. In this way many who were innocent confessed ; for, as a poet says,

"Torture interrogates and suffering responds."



By these means they transformed into deserts populous countries where they exercised their fatal inquisitorial power. Those who escaped took to flight. In the early centuries of the Roman Church mention is often made of the word sorcery, and capital punishment was pronounced against those suspected of exercising the same in order to cause their enemies to perish, or for having attempted by false prophecies to introduce innovations into the state. It was, however, only toward the end of the thirteenth century that active measures were openly adopted against sorcery, which was denounced as a league with the enemy of mankind, a renunciation of the Supreme Being, an alliance with the spirit of darkness—in fine, as one of the most abominable of crimes.

A bull of Pope Innocent VIII. served to stimulate the inquisitors. “We have learned,” the bull declared, “that a large number of persons of both sexes do not fear to enter into relation with the infernal demons, and by their sorcery strike equally men and animals, render sterile the conjugal bed, cause the children of women to perish, as well as the offsprings of animals, and wither the wheat in the fields, the vines, the fruits of the trees, the grass and pastures.”

The consequences of this bull were frightful. In 1485 Cumanus in one year burned alive 41 women; toward the same epoch 100 men were burned in Italy. In 1515, 500 women were executed in Geneva under the denomination of *Protestant sorcerers*; 48 more were burned in Ravensburg, and the inquisitor Remi boasted of having caused to be executed in fifteen years more than 1,000 persons. Strange though it may seem, these persecutions only tended



to extend the sphere and the influence of magic—a fact which proves that an opinion, however revolting or strange, finds ready martyrs the moment it is persecuted. Death only propagates it, ridicule alone extinguishes it. Following the bull of Innocent VIII., in 1484, documents of the same nature were issued by Alexander VI., Leo X. in 1521, and so on, but, as it has already been stated, they only served to increase the number of sorcerers. The population was, so to speak, divided into enchanter and enchanted. Del Rio assures us that in 1515 more than 500 were executed in Switzerland, and more than 30,000 are said to have perished in France. In Germany, against which country the bull of Pope Innocent was especially directed, sorcery “spread itself prodigiously.” At Würzburg, in the short space of two months, more than 157 persons were burned, among whom were children ranging from the age of 9 to 12. From 1660 to 1664, in Linden, more than one-twentieth of the entire population was turned over to the executioner’s tender mercies. One can safely assume that before the persecutions ceased 100,000 persons were sacrificed in Germany alone, by reason of the bulls of the Popes. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the greater number of those sacrificed were innocent of any connection with magic, but being handed over to torture, together with their nearest relatives and friends, a confession was secured which sent the victim to execution.

There were many causes which tended to bring magic into discredit, such as its heathenish doctrines, enmities, ignorance, superstition, scepticism, and the premature judgment of shallow authors. Magic, therefore, was classed with paganism, because some of its professors were heathen,



or were considered to be such, or because the magic arts followed in the footsteps of heathenism, as, for instance, the belief current in Spain, that the devil was visibly seen to torment men.

There is, perhaps, no country in the world where the popular beliefs respecting magic, sorcery, demonology, necromancy, airy spirits, nymphs, etc., were so deeply rooted as in Scotland and England.

“ Go, make thyself like to a nymph o’ the sea;  
Be subject to no sight but mine ; invisible  
To every eyeball else. Go, take this shape,  
And hither come in’t : hence, with diligence.” *Tempest.*

During the reign of Henry VIII., sorcery attracted the attention of the government, and the operations of magic and sorcery were deemed felony. In one year more than 6,000 persons were executed in Scotland for the crime of demonology. Was it not Bishop Jewel who declared to Queen Elizabeth that sorcerers and magicians existed to an enormous degree throughout England, so much so, that “your subjects, your Majesty,” he said, “languish unto death” ?

Was not Joan of Arc, more properly Joanneta Darc, afterward known in France as Jeanne d’Arc (the Maid of Orleans), charged with sorcery by the English, who had been conquered by her bravery and enthusiasm ? Joan never learned to read or write, and received her sole religious instruction from her mother, who taught her to recite the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and Credo. In her childhood she was noted for her abounding physical energy ; but her vivacity, so far from being tainted by any coarse or



unfeminine trait, was the direct outcome of intense mental activity and an abnormally sensitive nervous temperament. This unfortunate young woman fell into the power of the English, after having, by the valor and enthusiasm which she displayed on various occasions, reanimated the wavering courage of the French, and inspired them with the hope of restoring liberty to their country. The people of England looked upon her as a sorceress; those of France, as an inspired heroine, while the educated classes of both countries considered her neither the one nor the other, but only as an instrument that the celebrated Dunois, Count of Orleans, employed to carry out the rôle he had assigned to her. The Duke of Bedford, in whose hands Joan of Arc fell, took her life, in order to blacken her memory with the crime of sorcery, and cause her to lose the renown she had acquired in France. The decree of condemnation accused her of having frequented an old oak, under the branches of which was a fountain called the *oak of destiny*. The old sword and the white standard (it was of her own design embroidered with lilies and having on the one side the image of God seated on the clouds and holding the world in his hand, and on the other a representation of the Annunciation) she carried, were denounced as instruments prepared by the demons, with whom she was in league.

Magic, however much hated and proscribed, was not the less believed in. Stringent laws were enacted against it even during the earliest times. In Leviticus, sorcery is prohibited under the penalty of death, and whenever mention of magic is made, it is done, not in a sceptical spirit, but with reprobation. When a soothsayer was looked upon as a false prophet, the inference was, not that magic itself was



unreal, but that this particular magician was pretending to a supernatural power he did not possess. The literature of the middle ages shows us how unbroken the faith of even the educated classes remained in the reality of magic, and that its more respectable branches, such as astrology and alchemy, were largely followed, and indeed included in their scope much of the real science of the period. The final fall of magic began with the revival of science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the question was raised whether the supposed effects of magic really took place or not. In our day the occult sciences are rapidly dying out among the *educated classes of the civilized world*, though astrology still has its votaries, and the communications in "spirit circles," by possessed mediums and spirit writing, are what would in old times have been classed as necromancy. But the influence of magic may yet be seen in the practice employed of foretelling changes in the weather by the moon's quarters, taking omens from seeing magpies and hearing a dog howl at night, the fear of spilling salt, the girls listening to the cuckoo to tell how soon they will be married, pulling off the row of leaves to settle what the lover's calling will be, and perhaps even compelling him to come by a pin struck through the rushlight.

Looked at as a series of delusions, magic is distasteful to the modern mind, which, once satisfied of its practical futility, is apt to discard it as folly unworthy of further notice.

This, however, is hardly doing it justice, for, as we have shown, in the early developments of the human mind both religion and science were intimately connected with magic, whose various branches, unfruitful as they may be, are nevertheless growths from the tree of knowledge.



Magic was very early divided into two general classes — white and black magic. The different methods which magicians employed to attain their end gave rise to various branches of the art, the so-called occult sciences. Some account of a few of these is given below.

#### AËROMANCY.

This name was given to divination through certain appearances in the air. Besides the observation of meteors it included the study of the clouds, both those in process of formation and those that assume a variety of shapes ; for it was believed that the cloud-forms foretold the happy and unhappy aspect of the planets. It was claimed that the four elements were peopled with spirits called sylphs, nymphs, gnomes, salamanders, etc. The gnomes were demons which lodged in the earth and were always intent upon doing mischief. Water was the home of the nymphs, while fire was that of the salamanders. The sylphs, peopling the air, were the most beautiful and lovable creatures in the world. We are told that one could easily approach them, yet on one condition, which rendered it well-nigh impossible — it was, to be absolutely chaste.

#### ALECTRYOMANCY.

Alectryomancy was an ancient kind of divination which attempted to foretell events by means of a cock, and was employed among the Greeks in the following manner : A circle was made on the ground and divided into twenty-four equal portions or spaces ; in each space was written one of the letters of the Greek alphabet, and upon each of these letters was laid a grain of wheat. This being done, a cock



was placed within a circle and careful observation was made of the grains he picked up. The letters corresponding to these grains were afterward formed into a word, which word was the answer decreed. It was thus that Libanius and Jamblichus sought who should succeed the Emperor Valens. They pronounced certain mysterious words, and examined which would be the first letters discovered by a young cock which they kept without food for some time. The first letter was the Greek letter *Thêta* ( $\theta$ ), the second the *Epsilon* ( $\epsilon$ ), the third the *Omicron* ( $\omicron$ ), the fourth the *Delta* ( $\delta$ ), and thereby they came to the conclusion that the name of the successor would begin by *Theod*. Upon this the Emperor Valens put to death several of those supposed to aspire to the throne and whose name commenced by Theod ; as, for instance, *Theodestes*, *Theodulos*, *Theodoros*, *Theodotes*, etc. He forgot, however, *Theodosius*, who succeeded him, and who received the epithet of the Great.

The magicians attributed to the crowing of the cock the power to break up the meetings of apparitions and spectres. Thus, in the play of *Hamlet*, Horatio, speaking to his friend Hamlet about the ghost, says :

“ My lord, I did.

But answer made it none : yet once, methought,  
It lifted up its head, and did address  
Itself to motion, like as it would speak :  
But, even then, the morning cock crew loud :  
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away ;  
And vanished from our sight.”

#### ALEUROMANCY.

From the Greek word *aleuron*, meaning flour, is a sort of



divination practised by the aid of flour. It is sometimes also called alphetomancy.

#### ALOMANCY.

From the Greek *als*, meaning salt. This is divination by salt, which the ancients regarded as sacred. It is well known that salt was one of the most important ingredients in ancient Greek sacrifices ; in fact, to omit placing a salt-cellar near the spot where the sacrifice was to take place was deemed the forerunner of great misfortunes. Among early Christians salt was regarded as the symbol of wisdom, and many people still regard it as a misfortune to spill salt accidentally upon the table.

#### ANTHROPOMANCY.

This horrible divination was made by examining the entrails of the dead. Not a few instances are recorded where emperors and kings have caused to be strangled numbers of unoffending persons in the pursuit of this nefarious practice.

#### APANTOMANCY.

From the Greek *apanto*, to meet. It is divination by means of objects that one meets. Many have lived in constant fear of crows, black cats, and white hens. The Indians turn at once back into their houses if they meet a serpent on their way. In some parts of France the people fear to meet a rabbit, and peasants to this day believe that some misfortune will happen to them if on rising they come across a bare-headed woman.

#### ARITHMOMANCY.

Arithmomancy is a kind of divination or method of fore-



telling future events by means of numbers. The Gematria, which constitutes the first part of the Jewish Cabala, is a kind of Arithmomancy.

#### ASTROLOGY (JUDICIAL).

Astrology is generally divided into natural astrology, the science which predicts the motions of heavenly bodies and eclipses of the sun and moon, and judicial astrology, which studies the influence of constellations on the destiny of men and empires. The latter has taken root so deeply in the human mind that neither experience, nor the falsity of its predictions, nor the progress of civilization have been able to totally extirpate it. To this day, a few may be found who, from a superstitious reverence for the past, or the spirit of contradiction, pride themselves on their adherence to the belief in stellar influences. Even if the said science were exact, it is difficult to see the advantage which would result to the world at large for men to know their future; for they could not fight against the laws of destiny, while they would have a premature source of sorrow in case an ominous fate awaited them. What pleasure could such knowledge have brought to Socrates, Phocion, Cæsar, Pompey, Charles I., Henry III., IV., Louis XVI., and many others, whose names are inscribed on the bloody pages of history?

According to Herodotus, a Greek historian, born about the year 484 B.C., the Egyptians must be considered as the inventors of astrology, while others claim that we must look to Chaldea as its birthplace. At any rate, it is difficult to trace its origin, and a minute discussion of the subject would carry us beyond the limits of the present work. M.



F. Höfer, in his *History of Astronomy*, remarks : “ If we wish to seek for the origin of the science, let us place a child or a savage in presence of the earth and the heavens, and ask what thoughts these suggest to him. We shall then obtain a clew to guide us on our path.”

Suffice to say, that in every part of the ancient world astrology had its votaries, either as a native product, or transplanted at some unknown time, from some unknown region, and amalgamated so closely with the various local beliefs as to lose all trace of its protoplasmic condition.

The Chinese astrologists professed the power of producing or averting eclipses, the Etruscan priests asserted that they could draw down or divert lightning.

Among the Greeks, Chilon, the Lacedemonian, was the first who applied himself to the science of judicial astrology. He maintained that heat, humidity, cold, and dryness are the four qualities the different mixture of which makes the diversity of the temperament of man. Heat and humidity serve to generate, cold and dryness to destroy the body, and these four qualities are disposed in man according to celestial influences. The sun is the principle of heat, and the moon that of humidity ; and according to the disposition of these two great luminaries at the moment of the birth of the child, the latter brings to the world the ferment of the malady which is to destroy it. It can easily be seen that, from the very first, judicial astrology, was, so to speak, a medical superstition. It did not, however, long confine itself to this one phase, for general predictions of all sorts soon became attached to it, and were freely made upon the authority of celestial in-



fluences. According to the tradition of the Arabs, the sun presides over the brain, the heart, the marrow of the bones, and the right eye ; Mercury over the tongue, mouth, hands, legs, nerves, and imagination ; Saturn over the liver and right ear ; Jupiter over the navel, chest, and intestines ; Mars over the blood and nostrils ; Venus over the flesh ; the moon over all the members, but principally over the brain, lungs, stomach, and left eye.

Hence the nature of every man is in direct *rapport* with the planet under which he is born. Thus, he who is born under the domination of the sun is beautiful, frank, generous ; he who has been dominated by Venus is rich and fond of pleasure ; by Mercury, clever, intelligent, and gifted with an excellent memory ; by Saturn, unfortunate ; by Jupiter, just and famous ; by Mars, happy and valiant. Colors even belonged to the different planets : black to Saturn ; blue to Jupiter ; red to Mars ; gold to the sun ; green to Venus ; white to the moon ; and mixed colors to Mercury.

The horoscope of a child newly born may be predicted as follows : Let us suppose that it is born under the domination of the sun. According to the astrologers, the progression which this planet accomplishes from the moment of the birth of the child forms, day by day, the principal determination of its fortune for every year. Thus, a child being born at ten minutes past one in the afternoon, its genealogical figure is computed upon that moment ; for it is the root of its life, and the general figure we are always to follow. But by computing the figure of the state in which the sun and all planets find themselves the following day at the same hour, and comparing this second figure with the first, we obtain the fortune of the second year of the life of



the child. By continuing thus day by day, we can obtain the relation of that which will designate the figure of each day to each year which corresponds to it.

The ages during which astrologers were dominant, either by the terror they inspired, or by the martyrdom they endured when their predictions were either too true or too false, were the saddest in the world's history. In the times of Augustus, it was a common practice for men to conceal the day and hour of their birth, till, like Augustus, they found a complacent astrologer. On the subject of astrologers there remains only to mention a few of their predictions remarkable, either for their fulfilment, or for the ruin and confusion they brought upon their authors. We begin with one taken from Bacon's *Essay of Prophecies*: "When I was in France, I heard from one Dr. Pena that the queen's mother, who was given to curious arts, caused the king her husband's nativitie to be calculated under a false name, and the astrologer gave a judgment that he should be killed in a duell, at which the queene laughed, thinking her husband to be above challenges and duels; but he was slaine upon a course at tilt, the splinters of the staffe of Montgomery going in at his bever."

A favorite topic of the astrologers of all countries has been the immediate end of the world. As early as 1186 the earth had escaped one threatened cataclysm of the astrologers. This did not prevent Stoffer from predicting a universal deluge for the year 1524—a year, as it turned out, distinguished for drought. His aspect of the heavens told him that in that year three planets would meet in the aqueous sign of Pisces. The prediction was believed far and wide, and President Aurial, at Toulouse, built himself a Noah's



ark—a curious realization, in fact, of Chaucer's merry invention in the *Miller's Tale*. In China any false prediction of the astrologers was punished with death. But, as the Latin poet Juvenal says in his Sixth Satire, the astrologers' chief power depends on their persecution. One of the most famous astrologers of the Middle Ages was Tycho Brahe, the astronomer royal of Denmark, who not only from his fifteenth year was devoted to astrology, but adjoining his observatory at Uranienburg had a laboratory built in order to study alchemy (the pretended art of making gold), and it was only a few years before his death that he finally abandoned astrology. We may here notice one very remarkable prediction of the master of Kepler, one of the founders of modern astronomy. He carefully studied the comet of 1577, and it announced, he tells us, that on the north, in Finland, there should be born a prince who should lay waste Germany, and vanish in 1632. Gustavus Adolphus, it is well known, was born in Finland, overran Germany, and died in 1632. The fulfilment of the details of this prophecy was, of course, nothing but a lucky hit, but we may convince ourselves that Tycho Brahe had some basis of reason for his prediction. He was no dupe of vulgar astrology, but gifted rather with the happy inspiration of Paracelsus, who saw in himself the forerunner and prototype of the scientific ascendancy of Germany. Born in Denmark of a noble Swedish family, a politician, as were all his contemporaries of distinction, Tycho, though no conjurer, could foresee the advent of some great northern hero. Moreover, he was doubtless well acquainted with a very ancient tradition, that heroes generally came from the northern frontiers of their native land, where they are hardened and tempered by the



three-fold struggles they wage with soil, climate, and barbarian neighbors.

Seeing that astrology once permeated all sciences, all religion, and all politics, it is not strange if traces of it crop up where we should least expect them. To astrological politics we owe the theory of heaven-sent rulers, instruments in the hands of Providence, and saviours of society. Napoleon as well as Wallenstein believed in his star. Many passages in our older poets are unintelligible without some knowledge of astrology. Chaucer wrote a treatise on the astrolabe, Milton constantly refers to planetary influences; in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester and Edmund represent respectively the old and the new faith. We still *contemplate* and *consider*; we still speak of men as *jovial*, *saturnine*, or *mercurial*; we still talk of the *ascendency* of genius, or a *disastrous* defeat.

#### AXINOMANCY.

From the Greek *axe*, a hatchet, divination by the axe. This instrument was placed in equilibrium upon a stake. Thereupon the names of suspected persons were pronounced. When the axe made some movement during the pronunciation of any of these names, it was deemed a certain proof that the name was that of the guilty one.

#### BELOMANCY.

From the Greek *belos*, an arrow. This is a method of divination through the instrumentality of arrows, practised in the East, but chiefly among the Arabians. Ezekiel says that Nebuchadnezzar used this divination to ascertain the event of the war he was waging against the Jews.



In the employment of belomancy, two distinct methods were in vogue. One was to mark a number of arrows, and to put eleven or more of them into a bag. These were afterward drawn out, and accordingly as they were marked, or otherwise, were future events judged. Another way was to have three arrows, upon one of which was written, *God forbids it me*; upon another, *God orders it me*; and upon the third, nothing at all. These were put into a quiver, out of which one of the three was drawn at random. If it happened to be that with the second inscription, the thing they consulted about was to be done; if it chanced to be that with the first inscription, the thing was let alone; and if it proved to be that without any inscription, they drew over again. Belomancy is an ancient practice, and is probably that which Ezekiel mentions, chap. xxi. 21; at least St. Jerome understands it so, and observes that the practice was frequent among the Assyrians and Babylonians. Something like it is also spoken of in Hosea (the first in order of the minor prophets), only that staves are mentioned there instead of arrows, which is rather rhabdomancy (from the Greek *rhabdos*, *stick*) than belomancy. Grotius, as well as Jerome, confound the two together, and show that they prevailed much among the Magi, Chaldeans, and Scythians, from whom they passed to the Slavonians and thence to the Germans, who were said by Tacitus to make use of belomancy. The Turks to this day foretell the result of a battle in this way.

## BOTAMANCY.

From the Greek *botanon*, plant, divination by plants. We know very little how this sort of divination was practised, but evidently a considerable knowledge of natural



history must have been necessary, if it were based upon the observation of phenomena that certain plants present.

#### CAPNOMANCY.

From the Greek *Kapnos*, smoke. Divination by the smoke of sacrifices. If during a sacrifice the smoke was thin and light, curling itself and ascending straight up towards the sky, the omen was propitious; if it scattered itself in all directions, it was the contrary. Favorable conditions of the atmosphere were indispensable to attain the result wished for.

#### CARTOMANCY.

Divination by drawing cards.

#### CATOPTROMANCY.

This was another species of divination used by the ancients, and was performed by means of a mirror.

Pausanias says that this method of divination was in vogue among the Achaians, when those who were sick and in danger of death let down a mirror or looking-glass, fastened by a thread, into a fountain before the Temple of Ceres; then, looking into the glass, if they saw a ghastly, disfigured face, they took it as a sure sign of death; but, on the contrary, if the face appeared fresh and healthy, it was a token of recovery. Sometimes glasses were used without water, and the images of future things, it is said, were represented in them.

The Egyptian hierophants, as well as the magicians of ancient Greece and Rome, were accustomed to astonish their dupes with optical illusions, visible representations of the divinities and subdivinities passing before the spectators in



dark subterranean chambers. From the descriptions of ancient authors we may conjecture that the principal optical illusion employed in these effects was the throwing of spectral images of living persons and other objects upon the smoke of burning incense by means of concave metal mirrors. But, according to the detailed exposure of the tricks of the magicians, it appears that the desired effect was often produced in a simple way by causing the dupe to look into a cellar through a basin of water with a glass bottom standing under a sky-blue ceiling, or by figures on a dark wall, drawn in inflammable material and suddenly ignited.

The flashes of lightning and the rolling thunder which sometimes accompanied these manifestations were easy tricks now familiar to everybody as the ignition of lycopodium and the shaking of a sheet of metal.

#### CEPHALOMANCY.

This operation consisted in burning upon coals the head of a donkey. This sacrifice was made to demons, and compelled them to respond to the questions addressed to them.

#### CEROMANCY.

Wax was melted, and it was allowed to fall, drop by drop, into the water. The form which these "droppings" assumed indicated a propitious or unpropitious event. This divination is especially in vogue among the Turks.

#### CHIROMANCY.

Commonly known as palmistry. It is divination by inspecting the lines and configuration of the hand. Chiromancy seeks in the palm of the hand certain relations



supposed to be closely allied with the seven planets. According to the palmisters the upper part of the thumb, or the elevation of the hand which is at the root of the thumb, is under the domination of Venus; others, however, place it under that of Mars. The triangle formed by the lines of the hand is attributed by some to Mars and by others to Mercury. The capital letter A, formed and figured in the quarter of the hand which is dominated by Jupiter is a prognostic of wealth; in the quarter of the sun, of a great fortune; in the quarter of Mercury, of successes; in the quarter of Venus, of inconstancy; in the quarter of Mars, of cruelty; in the quarter of the moon, of weakness.

The seven first letters of the alphabet, devoted to the seven planets, have each their particular signification, when they are formed by the seven lines of the hand. But as the formation of letters is different in several languages the lines of the hand must necessarily have different meanings among the Arabs, Chinese, Greeks, French, English, etc.

The little white lines that are often to be seen upon the nails presage, when they are numerous, that the appearances upon which one counts are vain. We are told that the palmister should feel neither *love* nor *hate* toward the person whose hand he is examining. Under this condition only can the result prove true. The hand examined must be well washed and its possessor be in a state of complete tranquillity, avoiding excess of heat or cold. There is also a dispute as to which hand should be examined. Some maintain that the right hand is the proper one among men, or those born in the day, while it is the left for women, or for those born in the night. Others claim the exact contrary.



In this sort of divination, not only are the lines of the hand observed, but also their largeness, length, color, and depth. The form and largeness of the hand is also considered, as well as the shape of the fingers and nails. The stupidity of palmistry is evident from the fact that among many thousand hands not even two are to be found alike.

## CLEROMANCY.

This kind of divination is performed by the throwing of dice or little bones, and observing the points or marks turned up.

At Bura, a city of Achaia, there was a celebrated Temple of Hercules, where such as consulted the oracle, after praying to the idol, threw four dice, the points of which being well scanned by the priest, he was supposed to draw an answer from them.

## CLEDONISM.

This word is derived from the Greek *chleson*, which signifies two things, viz., a report and a bird. In the former sense, *clledonism* should denote a kind of divination drawn from words occasionally uttered. Cicero observes that the Pythagoreans made observations not only of the words of the gods, but also of those of men, and accordingly believed the pronouncing of certain words — *e. g.*, *incendium* — at a meal very unlucky. Thus, instead of prison, they employed the term *domicilium*; and to avoid calling the Furies by the name Erinyes, which was supposed to be displeasing to them, they said *Eumenides*. In the second sense, Cledonism would seem to be divination drawn from birds, the same as ornithomancy.



## COSCINOMANCY,

As the word implies, is the art of divination by a sieve.

The sieve being suspended, after the repetition of a certain formula, is taken between two fingers only, and the names of the persons suspected repeated. He at whose name the sieve turns, trembles, or shakes, is reputed guilty of the charge in question. This doubtless must be a very ancient practice. Theocritus, in his *Third Idyllion*, mentions a woman who was very skilful in it. It was sometimes also practised by suspending the sieve by a thread, or fixing it to the points of a pair of scissors, giving it room to turn, and naming, as before, the parties suspected. In this manner coscinomancy is still employed in some parts of England. From Theocritus it appears that it was not only used to find out culprits, but also to discover secrets.

## DACTYLOMANCY.

This is a sort of divination performed by means of a ring. It was done by holding a ring, suspended by a fine thread, over a round table, whose edge contained a number of marks with the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet. The ring, in shaking or vibrating over the table, stopped over certain letters, which, being joined together, composed the required answer. But this operation was preceded and accompanied by several superstitious ceremonies. The ring was to be consecrated with a great deal of mystery. The person holding it was to be clad in linen garments to the very shoes, his head was to be shaven all round, and he was to hold vervain in his hand.

The whole process of this mysterious rite is given in the 29th book of Ammianus Marcellinus.



## EXTISPICIUM.

(From *exta* and *spicere*, to view, consider.) The name of the officer who examined the entrails of the victim was Extispex.

This method of drawing presages relative to futurity was much practised throughout Greece, where there were two families consecrated and set apart particularly for the exercise of it.

Among the Etruscans in Italy, likewise, the art was in great repute. Lucian gives us a fine description of one of these operations in his first book.

## GASTROMANCY.

This species of divination, practised among the ancients, was performed by means of ventriloquism.

There is another kind of divination called by the same name, which is performed by means of glasses, or other round transparent vessels, within which certain figures appear by magic art. Hence its name, in consequence of the figures appearing as if in the interior of the vessel.

## GEOMANCY.

Was performed by means of a number of little points or dots, made at random on paper, and afterwards considering the various lines and figures which these points present, thereby pretending to form a judgment of futurity, and deciding a proposed question.

Polydore Virgil defines geomancy as a kind of divination performed by means of clefts or chinks made in the ground, and he takes the Persian magi to have been the inventors of it.



Geomancy is derived from the Greek *γῆ*, *earth*; and *μαντεία*, divination; it being the ancient custom instead of making use of the points above mentioned to cast little pebbles on the ground, and thence to form the conjecture.

#### HYDROMANCY.

Hydromancy, or the art of divining or foretelling future events by means of water, is one of the four general kinds of divination: the other three, depending upon the other elements,—viz, fire, air and earth—are denominated pyromancy, aeromancy, and geomancy, already mentioned. The Persians are said to have been the first inventors of hydromancy.

There are in existence various ancient hydromatic machines and vessels, which are of a singularly curious nature.

#### ONOMANCY.

The art of divining the good or bad fortune which will befall a man from the letters of his name. This mode of divination was in very popular repute among the ancients.

The Pythagoreans taught that the mind, actions, and success of men were according to their fate, genius, and name; and Plato himself inclines somewhat to the same opinion.

Thus Hippolytus (from the Greek *hippos*, horse) was observed to be torn to pieces by his own chariot horses, as his name imported; and Agamemnon signified that he should linger long before Troy; Priam that he should be redeemed from bondage in his childhood. To this also may be referred the lines of Claudius Rutilius:



“Nominibus certis credam decurrere mores ?  
Moribus et potius nomina certa dari ?”

It is a frequent and just observation in history, that the greatest empires and states have been founded and destroyed by men of the same name. Thus, for instance, Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, founded the Persian monarchy, and Cyrus, the son of Darius, ruined it ; Darius, son of Hystaspes, restored it ; and, again, Darius, son of Asamis, utterly overthrew it. Philip, son of Amyntas, exceedingly enlarged the kingdom of Macedonia ; and Philip, son of Antigonus, wholly lost it. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome, Augustulus the last. Constantine first settled the empire at Constantinople, to which city he gave his name, and another Constantine lost it wholly to the Turks.

There is a somewhat similar observation that some names are constantly unfortunate to princes—*e.g.*, Caius among the Romans : John in France, England and Scotland ; and Henry in France. One of the principal rules of onomancy, among the Pythagoreans, was, that an even number of vowels in a name signified an imperfection in the left side of a man, and an odd number in the right. Another rule, about as valuable as this, was that those persons were the most happy in whose names the numeral letters, added together, made the greatest sums ; for this reason, said they, Achilles vanquished Hector, the numeral letters in the former name surpassing in number those in the latter. And, doubtless, it was from a like principle that the Roman fops toasted their mistresses at their meetings as often as their names contained letters.

“*Nalvia sex cyathis, septem Justina libatur.*”



Rhodingius describes a singular kind of onomancy. Theodotus, King of the Goths, being curious to learn the issue of his wars against the Romans, an onomantical Jew ordered him to shut up a number of swine in small styes, and to give to some of them Roman, and to others Gothic names, with different marks to distinguish them, and there to keep them till a certain day. When the appointed day came, upon inspecting the styes, it was found that those to which the Gothic names had been given were dead, and those which had the Roman names were alive ; upon which the Jew foretold the defeat of the Goths.

#### ONEIROCRITICS.

The art of interpreting dreams, or a method of foretelling future events by means of dreams.

This species of divination dates back to the earliest times. The Scriptures furnish sundry examples of celestial communications given to men in their dreams, as for instance the explication given to Pharaoh by Joseph. It was believed that to dream loss of teeth presaged some calamity or the death of a relative. To dream of black cats or white hens was also considered a bad omen.

To dream loss of sight foretold the loss of one's children. If one dreamed of the loss of one's head, arms, or feet, it was the loss of one's father, brothers, or domestics.

To dream that one had hair fine and well curled was a sign of prosperity. If, on the other hand, the hair seemed to be neglected or scant, it was a sign of affliction.

To dream of garlands of flowers in their season was a happy omen ; but if the flowers were out of season the dream was a presage of ill.



To dream of death foretold marriage.

To dream that one finds a treasure was considered as foreboding death and sorrow.

To dream of looking into a mirror, if single, or to dream of some sorrowful event, foretold some good fortune about to occur.

#### ONYCHOMANCY.

This kind of divination is performed by means of the finger-nails. The ancient practice was to rub the nails of a youth with oil and soot or wax, and to hold up the nails thus prepared against the sun, upon which there was supposed to appear figures or characters which showed the thing required. Hence, also, modern chiromancers called that branch of their art which relates to the inspection of nails onychomancy.

#### ORNITHOMANCY

Is a kind of divination, or method of arriving at the knowledge of futurity, by means of birds ; it was among the Greeks what augury was among the Romans.

#### PYROMANCY.

A species of divination performed by means of fire.

The ancients imagined they could foretell futurity by inspecting fire and flames. For this purpose they considered its direction, or which way it turned. Sometimes they threw pitch into it, and if it took fire instantly they considered it a favorable omen.

#### PSYCHOMANCY, OR SCIOMANCY.

An art among the ancients of raising or calling up the



spirits or souls of deceased persons to give intelligence of things to come. The witch who conjured up the soul of Samuel, to foretell Saul the event of the impending battle, did so by sciomancy.

#### RHABDOMANCY

Was an ancient method of divination performed by means of rods or staves. In fact, this sort of divination dates from time immemorial. St. Jerome mentions it in his commentary on Hosea, where the prophet says : "*In the name of God, my people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them ;*" which passage that saint understands to allude to *rhabdomancy*. The same is met with again in Ezekiel, where the prophet says : "*For the King of Babylon stood at the parting of the way,*" at the head of the two ways, to use divination : "*he made his arrow bright,*" or, as St. Jerome renders it, *he mixed his arrows ; he consulted with images ; he looked in the river.*

If it be the same kind of divination that is alluded to in these two passages, *rhabdomancy* must be a superstition similar to *belomancy*. These two, in fact, are generally confounded. So much, however, is certain, that the instruments of divination mentioned by Hosea are different from those of Ezekiel, though it is possible they might use rods or arrows, indifferently ; or the military men might use arrows, and the rest rods. The women cut the rods very straight by means of secret enchantments, and during certain periods of time, designated very minutely by means of these rods, predicted the future.

#### SIBYLS.

The existence of sibyls dates back to the earliest antiquity.



The Greeks gave this name to all women supposed to be inspired with a prophetic spirit. Becker says that they were women more learned than the rest, that exercised the functions of priestesses.

It was a sibyl who brought to Tarquin the nine books of sibylline laws, for which she asked so high a price that the king thought her mad. The sibyl threw three of the books into the fire, and asked the same price for the remaining six. Tarquin, still refusing, she burned three more and demanded the same price for the last three. The king, surprised at this, consulted the augurs, who advised him to buy the books at the price asked. He did so, and appointed two patricians to keep these precious books, which were consulted during great calamities or by decree of the senate.

#### THE GENII.

The ancients gave the name of *genius* (plural *genii*), to good or evil spirits, supposed to preside over every person, place, and thing, and especially to rule over a man's destiny from his *birth*.

In Oriental tales *genii* are constantly mentioned and seem to constitute a family as numerous as it is multifarious.

#### THE WAIFS OF THE MOUNTAINS.

The ancient chronicles of nearly all nations, particularly of those of the north, record marvellous stories of a class of waifs, living in the mountains, whose occupation was to forge enchanted arms. They can be either spirits of good or of evil to man. They are invisible, and one should take great care not to provoke them. The mountaineers never speak of them but with the greatest possible respect. We give



below a description of one of these fantastic beings drawn from the popular beliefs in vogue in Spain.

THE LADY WITH THE FOOT OF A STAG.

The Spanish chroniclers mention that *Don Diego Lopez de Haro*, being one day on the track of a stag, heard on a sudden out in the mountains a delicious voice. He turned and saw a most beautiful woman, richly clad, upon the top of a mountain. Don Diego thereupon fell desperately in love and promised to marry her. "Beautiful cavalier," said the lady, "I accept, but upon one condition: swear to me never to utter a sacred word." The cavalier readily assented. After his marriage he noticed that his wife had a foot like that of a stag, yet this in no wise diminished his love for her. Two children were born by her, a son and a daughter. One day when they were seated at the table Don Diego threw a bone to one of his dogs—he had two, a large bull dog and a terrier—whereupon the dogs began fighting, and the bull dog seized the latter by the neck and strangled him. "*Holy Virgin!*" cried out Don Diego, "who ever saw such a thing?" Hardly were the words pronounced when the lady with the foot of a stag grasped the hands of her children. Don Diego kept the boy, but the mother fled with the girl. Some time afterward Don Diego was made prisoner by the Moors and conducted to Toledo. His son was sorely grieved at the captivity of his father and betook himself to the mountain where his mother lived. The "Spirit" was upon the rock, but she recognized and called her son by name. "I know," she said, "what brings you here. Take this extraordinary charger, called *Paraldo*; in a few hours you will be in Toledo, where I promise you help



and protection." Inigues (such was the name of the young man) mounted the horse and, with the powerful aid of his mother, brought back his father in safety. She persisted, however, in living upon the rock, for the legend tells us that she was "a devil," and as such she would never forgive the words uttered by her husband.

## GHOSTS.

The fabulous stories told to our day concerning spirits and ghosts are well known. This belief was formerly so general that one would have passed for a visionary had he doubted it. There is not a village or hamlet or castle in France which failed to give rise to some story of a ghost or apparition, which a succession of traditions has brought down to our day. Notwithstanding the fact that progress and civilization have disabused men's minds of this belief, there are still countries where people are imbued with this superstition, especially so in the more remote rural districts. Perhaps of all people the negroes are most heavily fettered with the shackles of superstition. The two instances following are to the point :

A CONJURING-STONE (From the Macon (Ga.) *Telegraph*, July 19, 1887). — "A queer case came up before Justice Freeman yesterday. Jane Blanch has a husband who has a fondness for staying away from home, and Jane has been greatly worried about it. Some time ago, while narrating her troubles to one Martha Montague, late of Columbus, Martha said her husband had a peculiar stone that had for its charm the power of bringing back husbands, and in fact of performing a number of miraculous things. Negroes believe in conjuring bags, rabbit feet, etc., and



Jane said she wanted a piece of the stone no matter what it cost. Martha saw her husband Tom, and after some persuasion they agreed to let Jane have a piece of it for \$5. Jane paid the money and waited for the wonderful stone which was so slow in getting into her hands that she sued out warrants for both Tom and Martha, and they appeared before Justice Freeman yesterday with the stone they intended giving Jane. The court compelled Tom to refund the money. The stone is a piece of magnetic iron ore, and the trial developed the fact that it is generally kept in drug stores and sold at the rate of seventy cents a pound. Negroes purchase it because they believe that it will "conjure" people.

HE OBEYED THE VODOO. — (From the *New York Times*, July 24, 1887). — "A policeman passing through West Eighteenth Street yesterday morning saw a roughly-clad, barefooted, and very black negro haul a dead cat out of the gutter, drag off one of the legs by putting his foot on it, and proceed to eat it. The man said he was Charles Rider, a farm hand, from Delaware, who arrived here in search of employment on Friday. His wife died twelve years ago and her spirit haunted him constantly. Voodoo experts had told him that nothing but human flesh or that of a live cat would lay the restless spirit. Failing to get either, he thought he would try what a dead cat could do.

"Justice Gorman committed him as insane."

#### SATAN, DEMONS.

The Satan of the legends is distinct from the *Lucifer* of theology. The former is never clothed with any vestige of his celestial origin; he is the Devil, the enemy of man,



wicked by the very essence, as it were, of his perverted nature. His rage is often powerless, excepting when he has recourse to ruse, and he inspires fear much oftener than terror. The part assigned to Satan was as poetic as it was dramatic, as it is manifest in the old religious works and *The Lives of the Saints*. It is he who is at the bottom of every intrigue ; it is he who puts the action into motion. His horns, his tail, his nails, his eyes of fire, his subtle wickedness vary but little in appearance from biblical tradition. It is thus that Satan is painted to us, not only by the biographers of the middle ages, but by Pope Gregory himself in his life of Saint Benoit. One day when the latter saint went to offer his prayers in the Oratory of Saint John, on Mount Cassin, he met the Devil under the form of a veterinary surgeon, with a bottle in one hand and a halter in the other. Satan spoke with civility to Saint Benoit and told him that he was about to administer a purgative to the two-footed animals, the fathers of the monastery. It is useless to add that Saint Benoit would not permit the infernal doctor to purge too violently the poor monks ; and finally, we are gravely informed that Saint Benoit's piety overcame Satan's perversity.

Among the numberless episodes in the history of the Devil, as mentioned in *The Lives of the Saints*, some are truly comical, others exceedingly picturesque. St. Antony once saw Satan raise his giant head above the clouds and stretch forth his mighty hands to intercept the souls of the dead which were flying towards heaven. Sometimes the Devil is represented as a veritable monkey, and his malice amounts only to grotesque drolleries. It was under the guise of a monkey that the Devil sought to deceive



St. Gudule. All his ruses having failed, he had recourse "*to a last effort.*" The virgin was in the habit, at the crowing of the cock, of going to the church to pray, accompanied by her servant, who carried a lamp. Now, what did the father of malice do? He put out the lantern by blowing under it, but the saint invoked God to her aid, and we are gravely informed it was at once relighted, whereupon the evil one ran off with downcast head. On the other hand, there are many instances in which the Devil is deceived by the simplest possible artifices. His innocence is depicted in touching colors. He is then represented as rather a good sort of devil.

#### THE DEVIL AMONG THE JAPANESE.

Matzurié is the name of the principal feast celebrated at Nagasaki, and the devils play in it the principal part. Several among them are provided with the biblical horns, and wear a frightful mask, rush about the streets and create a frightful noise, dancing and beating upon a drum. These devils are of different colors. There are white, black, red and green devils. It is well known that the whites paint the devil in black, and the negroes in white; but as to the red and the green, they belong exclusively to the Japanese. The Japanese say that one day the quarrel about the color of the devil was getting so bitter that it threatened to run into a civil war. In order to avoid this the question was submitted to the spiritual Emperor, the Son of Heaven, who declared that everybody was in the right, and that really there existed devils of all colors. Henceforth, the Japanese devils adopted the four colors — *black, white, red and green.*



## PUCK.

Puck is a little imp who had his domicile among the Dominicans (a religious order of St. Dominique), at Scheverin. Notwithstanding the tricks which he played upon strangers, he was often very useful to them. Under the form of a monkey, he turned the gridiron, drew the corks off the wine-bottles, swept the kitchen, etc. We find him in England in the form of Robin Goodfellow. Puck in Sweden is called *Wissegodreng* or *Wisse, the good fellow*. He lives on good terms with *Tomtegobbe*, or the *Old Nick* of the farm-houses, who is a devil much of the same sort. In Denmark, Puck possesses rare talent as a musician.

## THE VOODOO RELIGION.

In 1459 there arose in the city of Arras, a fortified city of France, chief town of Pas de Calais and formerly capital of the province of Artois, a sect which professed to follow a religion to which the name of Voodoo was given. This sect, composed of persons of both sexes, assembled during the night, and by the authority of Satan, in some out-of-the-way solitary spot in the depth of a forest or desert. There the devil made his appearance under the human form, although his face was never perfectly visible to those assembled. He then explained to them his wishes, the manner in which he desired to be obeyed, and distributed to each a little money and a large amount of supplies. The meeting wound up with a general scene of debauchery. Such acts caused the arrest "through direct accusation" of several respectable and innocent persons, who were forced to undergo severe tortures, so much so that several, overcome



by the excruciating torments they suffered, acknowledged that they were guilty of "Voodoo." They furthermore averred that during these nocturnal assemblies they there saw and recognized many persons of high rank, such as prelates, lords, governors, etc., names in fact suggested by those examining them, and even forced upon the victims through torture. Several of those thus accused were burned; others saved themselves by means of their gold. All these accusations sprang from a sentiment of vengeance, or were plots of a few men without honor, influenced by cupidity, through groundless accusations, to put to death after extorted confessions some wealthy people. In order to attain more surely their victims, the crime of heresy was often mingled with that of magic. History furnishes us many examples of unheard-of cruelty in connection with the Voodoo religion.

SORCERERS CONVICTED OF MAGIC THROUGH THE TRIAL  
OF COLD WATER.

During the times of ignorance and superstition, various methods were invented to convict the so-called sorcerers of the crime of magic. Among these methods the trials of *warm water*, *bitter water* and *cold water* were prominent. The latter was the one most commonly used. The sorcerer was divested of his clothes, the right wrist was tied to his left heel, and the left wrist to the right heel. A rope was then wound round his body and the victim was thrown thus bound into deep water three times. If he sunk to the bottom it was taken as a proof of his innocence; if on the contrary he did not sink it was proof of his culpability. Of course, nothing could be more absurd than this pretended



proof, because if it was through magic that the victim did not sink, it must be confessed that no worse moment could be found to exercise his art. By preserving himself from being drowned he gave against himself a proof of his pretended crime, which would infallibly conduct him to the stake. The pontiffs opposed themselves to this culpable superstition, and finally Pope Innocent IV. abolished it. We record some instances of these cruel practices.

## SORCERY PROVED BY WATER.

Beauvalet, a well-known lawyer of Dinteville, in Champagne, filled for a certain time the judicial chair in the absence of the judge. Some one told him that a certain Sebastian Breton and Jenny Simoni, his wife, inhabitants of Dinteville, were sorcerers. Thereupon the two supposed magicians were seized "upon direct information and accusation," and thrown into prison.

During the examination they declared that they did not understand what was asked of them, and denied everything imputed to them. The woman, above all, declared that she recognized only one God for master, maintained that she never was present in an assembly of sorcerers, and that neither she nor her husband had ever poisoned men or animals.

The acting judge ordered that both husband and wife should be shaved "throughout the entire body," be conducted to the river at a depth of sufficient water, be there plunged, to the end that sorcery may be proved against them, and this in accordance with the existing laws.

The decree drawn up on the 15th of June, 1594, read as follows :



“ Judgment has been pronounced against Jenny Simoni, and she is sentenced to be shaved and bathed ; to be conducted to the banks of the river, followed by the judge, her *parish priest* and the inhabitants of Dinteville and the surrounding districts.”

Right upon the banks of the river Jenny Simoni again declared that she was a respectable woman, innocent of sorcery, and not knowing what magic meant. She was, however, divested of her clothing, and by order of the judge both her feet and hands were bound and she was thrown into the river at a spot where the water was from seven to eight feet deep. Three different times she was plunged into the water, and as many times she came upon the surface without stirring. She did not seem to have swallowed a drop of water.

Both husband and wife were examined anew, and the woman persisted always in what she already had declared. Upon her knees she prayed to God, to Jesus Christ and the Holy Virgin to make her innocence manifest, and declared in a loud voice that those who had deposed against her were perjured and unfaithful to God.

The judge now wished to know whether she was marked on any part of her body as a sorceress was supposed to be, and thereupon ordered that she be divested of all her clothing, and be examined, that it might be ascertained whether she bore any magic marks. Four women were appointed to make the necessary examination.

They upon oath declared that they saw and visited the said Simoni despoiled of her garments ; that they discovered a small scar on the body, under the left shoulder, and in the form of a V ; a little below it a small, white, round



mark ; at the *périnée* another scar was found as of a wound sewn, which she declared to have been inflicted upon her by the horns of an ox, which struck her when she was a child ; and as to the mark under the shoulder, she said that it was a birth-mark.

The judge found, in the above description, the palpable proof that poor Simoni was a sorceress, and by a formal decree, bearing date July 7, 1594, she was declared “ guilty of the crime of sorcery and accordingly condemned to be hanged and strangled, her body burned and reduced to ashes, and her goods confiscated ; her husband to pay a heavy fine, to be banished for ten years, and his goods also confiscated.”

Sorrow and the torments of the suffering imposed upon the poor woman brought death to her ere the judgment was executed. But not even death freed her from the penalty of the law, which was read to the body and the latter delivered to the executioner, who brought it to the Square of Dinteville, the rope around the neck, bound it to the stake and then set it on fire. The execution was carried out in the presence of all the notaries and dignitaries of Dinteville including the parish priest.

#### TRIAL BY WARM WATER.

The trial by warm water was preceded by the same ceremonies as that with cold, after which a stone was thrown into a caldron of boiling water, which the accused was to take out at once, his hand and arm being bare. The trial with the hot iron consisted in causing the accused to touch a burning iron with the naked hand. After these trials they bound the hand, over which they placed a bag which



the judge sealed with the court's seal. If, three days afterwards, there appeared no sign of the burning, the accused was declared innocent.

#### TRIAL BY BITTER WATER.

The accused, before undergoing this trial, was brought before the priests, when, after the usual maledictions were pronounced in a loud voice, the victim was forced to swallow, in their presence, the beverage which was called *bitter water*. If innocent, no pain whatever was experienced ; but if guilty, death ensued, amid the most excruciating suffering. Who does not see in this a terrible means of getting rid of an enemy, a competitor or a rival ?

#### TRIAL BY FIRE.

This method of trial seems so dangerous that one is tempted to think that those subjected to it must have possessed some chemical substance to protect them against the action of heat. The following story will give an idea of the manner in which the trial was made : Emma, mother of Edward III., was accused of improper relations with the Bishop of Winchester, whereat the credulous and superstitious king wished that she should be justified by the trial of fire. It was decided that she would walk nine steps barefooted over nine red-hot pieces of iron, and then take five more steps "for the Bishop of Winchester." She consented to the trial and spent the night in prayer. At daybreak the usual ceremonies took place, and then, in the presence of the king and all the dignitaries of the kingdom, the queen walked between two bishops over the red-hot pieces of iron. The fire caused her so little pain that she asked how long it



would be before she came to where the red-hot irons were. Thereupon the king knelt before his mother and asked that the bishops impose upon him the necessary penalty for the doubts he had entertained against his mother. His wish was granted.

#### THE DISCOVERER OF SORCERERS.

Hopkins was the name of the man who discovered more than a hundred sorcerers, and even extracted confessions from his victims. His usual plan of discovering them was to strip the clothing from the one accused, in order to find the mark which the devil was supposed to place upon the sorcerer. To this end he tortured his victim by sticking pins into several parts of the body. It was allowed him by law to exercise this odious profession in England. His pay was twenty shillings for each town where he went, not including his traveling and other expenses, for which he asked additional pay. This monster asserts that he never went anywhere unless asked. Such rascals have really existed, to the shame of human kind. Finally, popular indignation burst forth with such force against Hopkins that, being seized and submitted to the trial of water, to which he had himself had recourse in the case of others, it happened that he floated instead of sinking. Thereupon he was convicted of magic and the world was speedily freed from the monster.

#### MAGIC LOVE-CHARM.

The following practice was at one time in vogue in Germany: A hair taken from the head of the girl was placed on retiring over one's clothes; then a general confession was made, during which the hair was worn by the love-sick



Romeo around his neck ; a taper was lighted which had been previously blessed during the last gospel, and the following formula was said : “ Oh, taper, I conjure thee by the virtue of God, the all-powerful, by the nine choirs of the angels, by the guardian virtue, bring to me that girl in flesh and bones, that I may be happy with her.”

#### HOW THE BRAHMINS IN INDIA PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST ENEMIES.

The Brahmins were, and to this day are, the most influential and wisest men in India. They were not merely the depositaries of the sacred books, the philosophy, the science, and the laws of the ancient Hindu commonwealth : they were also the creators and custodians of its sacred literature. They had a practical monopoly of Vedic learning, and their policy was to trace back every branch of knowledge and intellectual effort to the Vedas. For twenty-two centuries they have been the counsellors of Hindu princes and the teachers of the Hindu people. Yet these wise teachers were not free from the influence of magic art, for we are told that in a sort of cabalistic way they wrote the following numbers : 28, 35, 2, 7 — 6, 3, 32, 31 — 34, 29, 8, 1 — 4, 5, 30, 33 — in each of the four divisions of a square. Beneath they wrote the name of their enemy. Now, it is claimed by these learned sons of India that if you wear this talisman about you, your enemy will be utterly powerless to do you harm.

#### THE MEETING-PLACE OF DEVILS.

It can scarcely be conceived how readily, in the times of ignorance, accusations of magic were listened to, and with



how great apathy and easy persuasion death was decreed against the so-called magicians. A simple shepherd or goatherd relates, for instance, after supper to his wife or children an adventure at the meeting-place of devils; and being himself, in truth, persuaded that he has been there, and his imagination to some extent heated by the vapors of wine, he does not fail to speak in strong and lively language concerning incidents which he never saw. His family listen with awe to his talk about a subject so frightful. It follows that the impressible imaginations of his wife and children are thereby deeply affected. It is the husband, the father, who speaks of things he has seen, in which he has taken part; why then should they not believe him? Finally they become accustomed to his stories. Curiosity urges them to attend the said meetings. They continually think of what they heard so weirdly described. Their own imagination is in turn aroused and sleep presents to them all the scenes which the master depicted to them. They rise, they question each other and repeat what they saw, and each and every one is persuaded that it was not a dream, but that they were really present at the frightful meeting. It results that they are taken for sorcerers, they are seized, questioned, and rarely escape death. It was believed that the sorcerers were called to the meeting-place of devils by a cornet sounded by the arch-devil himself; it was heard by all sorcerers scattered all over the universe, without however being audible to the ears of any other person. When the prince of sorcerers traverses the air in order to attend the meeting, every sorcerer who accosts him salutes him with becoming respect, and he returns the salutation. There is also a princess of sorcerers who appears to the eyes of the sub-



altern magicians, with a black visage, red-hot eyes, a thick, large nose, and a mouth of enormous size always open, always exhaling smoke. In the estimation, however, of the prince of sorcerers, and those of high rank, she is of ravishing beauty. The main object of the meetings of the devils is to spin malignant arts; the sorcerers share in this work with the devil. Festivals take place, but the peculiarity of the feast consists in the fact that one is never "satiated" with the food served. Knives, salt and oil are rigorously excluded from that table. The knives might form the figure of the cross, for which the devils hold the greatest possible antipathy. Salt is the symbol of wisdom, and oil enters into the mysteries of religion. However, all the ceremonies of religion are imitated and turned into ridicule during these meetings. The torches used are made of wax and sulphur, and constantly emit a low, hissing noise. Volumes could be written in detailing minutely the various mysteries related by the ancients respecting these meetings, but the above may give the reader an idea of their general nature. A writer of the eighteenth century relates that when people began to believe that the souls of the dead came and visited the living, and presented themselves to the latter under visible forms, they taught the living that a peculiar phrase or password, pronounced with certain formalities, would cause the souls of the departed to appear before those who wished to speak with them. If they failed to come, it was owing to the fact that the one invoking attached too much importance to the present life instead of to the spiritual!

As it has been already stated, every people upon the face of the earth had its magicians. The most distinguished



were usually in the pay of the State. They foretold the future in various ways, perhaps more frequently by examining the heart and liver of an ox. Nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that because a magician was sometimes condemned to be burned alive, the people had no faith in the art of magic. The people claimed and believed that those condemned to be burned were thus punished because they were not true, but false magicians, laying claim to a heaven-sprung art which they not in the least possessed. Just as society to-day condemns to the full extent of the law those circulating spurious coin, in like manner ancient society claimed to punish the spurious magicians.

#### PERSONS POSSESSED OF THE DEVIL.

During the night of Friday of the Holy Week the following scene was enacted in the Romish churches, and we regret to say that to this very day it takes place in many a Catholic Church.

All those supposed to be possessed of the devil—it was seriously believed that the devil in some way had taken up his abode within the body of certain unfortunate beings—betook themselves on the eve of Good Friday to church, in order to free themselves from the dominion of the wicked spirit. Then those thus afflicted made a thousand different hideous contortions, uttering cries and howls not unlike those of a dog. Soon the priest appeared bearing the *true wood out of which the original cross was made*. Every Catholic place of worship during the middle ages claimed to possess that precious wood. On the appearance of the cross the convulsions and contortions ceased, and to the accents of rage and despair a perfect calm succeeded. There were, how-



ever, even during those times of ignorance and superstition, a few doubters who believed that those thus possessed were beggars, duly paid to play the above rôle and that the priest offered the spectacle of these pretended miraculous cures in order to eradicate any public incredulity and reanimate the belief of the faithful in the only true and original cross. The following historical fact is to the point.

#### THE STORY OF MARTHA BROSSIER.

Jacques Brossier, a weaver of Romorantin, a man of small means, formed the plan of turning into profit public credulity by causing his daughter Martha to pass for a demoniac. Having exercised her in making contortions and grimaces, in assuming extraordinary postures and uttering piercing cries, he had her make her début, as it were, in the surrounding cities and then in Anjou, whither her imposition was unmasked by Bishop Charles Miron, in the following manner: It is said that the good bishop, having invited her to his table, had her drink of blessed water without forewarning her, and that she manifested not the slightest consequence therefrom.

He poured common water into her glass, telling her that it was blessed, whereupon she fell into great agitation and had extraordinary convulsions.

He asked in a loud voice that the ritual of exorcisms be brought to him, but instead he took a copy of Virgil and read a few verses from the *Æneid*. The girl, thinking that he was pronouncing from the ritual, forthwith appeared tormented by the devil, and made horrible contortions.

The prelate, after a severe reprimand, ordered her to return to her native place and no longer abuse the public.



Instead of submitting to the order of the wise prelate, the alleged demoniac, her father, Jacques Brossier, and her two sisters wended their way towards a theatre, a place more favorable for their impostures. They came to Paris, and towards the end of March, 1599, lodged near the nunnery of Sainte-Geneviève.

When the news of the arrival of the party became known, the Capuchins were the first to enter the arena for the purpose of fighting the devil with which Martha Brossier was possessed. In the excess of their zeal, they neglected the ordinary formalities, and began to exorcise the girl without the authorization of their superiors.

Cardinal Gondi, Bishop of Paris, proceeded in this affair with more regularity, and employed the proper means to enlighten himself respecting his position as to the alleged demoniac. He called together several doctors in theology and several doctors in medicine. Among the latter were the most famous physicians in Paris.

On the 30th of March, 1599, this anxiously awaited scene opened with solemnity and the girl played her part admirably, assuming indescribable positions and uttering truly satanical cries.

There was then a principle generally admitted to the effect that the devil knew all languages, both ancient and modern. To this end, and in order to assure themselves of the presence of the malevolent spirit in the body of the young girl, Dr. Marius interrogated her in Greek, and Dr. Marescot in Latin. The devil remained mute, and hence it was decided that the girl was not in the least possessed.

The above decision did not at all suit several of the priests interested in proving the presence of the devil, and



in demonstrating their own power over this invisible and malignant spirit.

On the day following a new scene was enacted. It took place in a chapel of Sainte-Geneviève. Martha Brossier, after a thorough rehearsal, renewed her convulsions and her mysterious tricks. Two physicians, it is alleged, stuck into her a needle between the thumb and index. She did not manifest the slightest pain. The truth, however, of "the needle" is doubted by contemporary writers.

On the 1st of April Martha was submitted to new experiments. A Capuchin opened the seance by repeating the exorcism, and when he reached these words "*et homo factus est*," this wonderful girl drew forth her tongue, made horrible contortions and dragged herself from the altar to the door of the chapel with a celerity which astonished those present.

Thereupon the exorcising Capuchin said, with a tone of assurance: "*If anybody doubts the presence of the demon in the body of this girl, and does not fear to expose his life, let him try to restrain and stop this demon.*"

Hardly were the words uttered, when Doctor Marescot rose, approached Martha, seized her by the head, and restrained all her movements.

The exorciser, confounded, said that the devil had now withdrawn. The physician replied: "*It is I, then, who have chased the devil away.*"

After the above scene, Marescot left the chapel for an instant and Martha, believing him far away, fell again into her usual convulsions. Marescot entered at once, seized her, and without much effort succeeded in rendering her motionless. The exorciser, thereupon, ordered the girl to get



up, but she could not do it, and the doctor who held her replied : “ *This devil has no feet and cannot stand up.*”

The result of this experiment much chagrined the partisans of the devil, but did not discourage them. They repeated once more the spectacle of possession, but refused to allow the former physicians to be present. They called new ones, who being far more tractable and docile than the former, declared before the Bishop of Paris that Martha undoubtedly had the devil in her body.

Folly, however, did not triumph, and this ridiculous farce, which drew together many people and became a general subject of conversation, finally attracted the attention of the government. On the 2d of April the attorney-general said before the court. “ A few days ago there arrived in this city a girl who they say is possessed of the wicked spirit ; at the church of Sainte-Geneviève she has been seen and visited by physicians and other persons who are well assured of the imposition practised, wherefrom much evil ensues.”

The court, therefore, decided that the girl be turned over to the custody of the police until her trial should take place.

The Bishop of Paris at once went and declared to the attorney-general that not later than the day before he had believed that the possession of Martha Brossier was a flagrant act of imposition ; but he had since changed his mind, and begged for a delay of two or three days ere the decree of arrest was issued. The said magistrate did apply for a stay of proceedings, but the court refused to grant any delay.

Martha Brossier, in spite of her devil, was cast into prison, and a commission was appointed to examine the girl and make a formal report.



The majority of the priests were now up in arms and greatly resented this interference in a matter which they claimed belonged virtually to the Church. Henry IV. employed all the means which prudence suggested to maintain the peace of his kingdom, and avert the threatened proceedings of the priests. He had much difficulty in reducing his subjects to submission; to such extent is ecclesiastical power dangerous when sustained by public credulity.

Soon the pulpits resounded with bitter and loud complaints against the government. "It was not," said they, "the prerogative of the court to interfere in matters of possession and the devil. The clergy alone had the authority to treat such matters. To prevent the clergy from exorcising the demoniacs was to deprive the Church of a glory which was ordinarily attained by the ministry of Catholic priests alone. It was to take away the means of confounding infidels and heretics." . . .

The government lost no time in indicting these preachers.

The decree of the court was read in their convent in the presence of all the Capuchins assembled.

The commission, composed of physicians, charged with making a report concerning the condition of Martha Brossier, after an examination lasting forty days, declared that they were unable to discover in the said girl any sign of possession, and that whatever seemed extraordinary about her was natural and easily explained. Thereupon the court ordered that the said Martha, her father, and her two sisters be conducted to their place of habitation, and there live under the surveillance of a special officer of the court, who every two weeks was to make report as to the condition of the girl.



In every country where the laws are respected by all classes of society, the matter would have terminated upon the execution of this decree. But in France there existed two classes impatient of the yoke of laws. It so happened that members of the Catholic clergy were found who slighted the king and his decrees.

François de la Rochefoucauld, Bishop of Clermont, and later cardinal, in concert with his brother Alexandre, an abbot, formed the project of taking Martha Brossier from the place where she had been ordered to remain. The abbot was intrusted with the execution of this daring project. He came to Romorantin, and, notwithstanding the protestations of the officer who guarded her, took away the girl, her sisters and father, conducted them to Auvergne, lodged them at Clermont in the episcopal seat, and made them play in that province, as well as in all the places through which they passed, their disgusting farces.

The government, informed of the conduct of the two brothers La Rochefoucauld, had them formally summoned to appear at court on December 3, 1599. They did not obey, upon which the bishop and his brother were ordered to surrender Martha Brossier and her family to the city of Romorantin, and it was decreed that all the temporal goods and income of the bishop should be seized, and a commissioner was sent to see to the execution of this decree.

Instead of taking Martha Brossier to her native city, the abbot formed the resolution to conduct her to Rome.

Henry IV. was powerless to prevent the intrigues of the rebellious priests, who were spreading trouble in the kingdom and were arraying against him the still powerful party of the Jesuits who had fled to Rome. He was forced, how-



ever, to have recourse to diplomatic negotiations, and to despatch special envoys to his ambassador in Rome.

The abbot, finding himself anticipated, and in fact abandoned by the Pope, renounced at length his ridiculous and dangerous projects.

In Rome also there appeared from time to time persons alleging themselves to be possessed by the devil, but the Pope had them savagely whipped, and the evil spirit departed with astonishing celerity.

#### ON EXORCISMS.

The following curious incident took place at Lyons towards the beginning of the sixteenth century : The sisters of the nunnery dedicated to Saint Peter lived in a not strictly religious manner, so that, indeed, the higher clergy were finally obliged to send the sisters away from the nunnery. When they became aware of their impending expulsion, they seized upon everything of value. Crosses enriched with precious stones, reliquaries of gold, and a great number and variety of other ornaments were taken. Among those who came out of the nunnery, and lived a life of unusual depravity, was Sister Alix de Tisieux, secretary of the nunnery. Possessed of great beauty, she sank into all kinds of wickedness, for which in the end she paid the penalty with her life. Stricken down with sufferings and misery, she died some time afterwards near a village close beside Lyons.

In the mean time new laws were passed with respect to the nunnery, and a few of the sisters who expressed their repentance and willingness to respect their vows were taken back. Among the latter was Antoinette de Groslée, a scion of one of the noblest families of the kingdom. She was re-



markable for her beauty, and though not more than eighteen years old, she enjoyed the reputation of being "extremely wise" among her associates. She had known Sister Alix, and the latter often spoke of her during the delirium of her fatal sickness.

Now it happened that on a certain night Antoinette, while lying on her bed, but half asleep, felt "something" cautiously drawing the curtains of her bed apart and with astounding audacity kiss her on the lips. This recalled her to her senses (as well it might), and she sought in vain to discover the guilty one, but finally fell asleep again. Antoinette spoke to no one of this first apparition; in fact, she began to look upon it as a dream or an illusion, when at the end of a few days she heard a noise near her and light taps under her feet. This noise, which seemed to come from under the ground, and which thereafter was repeatedly renewed, frightened the young girl, and she straightway told everything to the sister superior. The latter tried to allay her fears, and being desirous that she should herself witness this strange apparition, summoned the supernatural being to manifest its presence before her. Hardly were the words uttered when they heard the taps under the feet of Antoinette, which left not the slightest doubt that a spirit had come to dwell in the nunnery. Many persons hurried thither in the hope of witnessing the strange apparition, but nobody was able to satisfy his curiosity, because no "he" was allowed to cross the threshold of the nunnery. But as the said spirit did not in the least attempt any wickedness or harm, the sisters began to get over their fears. They would have been willing even to enter into communication with it had they had perfect assurance that it was "a re-



spectable spirit." They to this end asked Antoinette de Groslée what she thought the spirit might be. She replied that having often dreamed of Sister Alix de Tisieux, she could not think otherwise but that it was the soul of the said sister which manifested itself to her. They then conjured the spirit to dissipate the doubt they entertained upon that subject, and the spirit spoke. It said that it really was Sister Alix de Tisieux. Immediately the sister superior summoned her council, which deliberated for a long time, and finally decided that the body of the said sister should be exhumed from the spot where it reposed and be transported into one of the chapels of the nunnery. This translation was made with great pomp, and the spirit manifested its joy by striking more loudly than ever under the feet of the young and beautiful possessed one. The ceremony being now ended, it was decided that the soul of poor Sister Alix should be delivered, if possible, from the pains of purgatory, and to make "assurance doubly sure" that the devil had not employed this subterfuge to torment these good sisters.

It was on Friday, the 22d of February, 1526, that the Bishop of Lyons, accompanied by several priests, visited the nunnery in order to discover whether it was really the soul of the defunct nun or an evil spirit that caused all the trouble. When everything had been prepared for the exorcisms, and those present swore under pain of excommunication to reveal nothing of what they might see or hear, the bishop and the sister superior proceeded into the meeting-room, where the bishop took his seat upon a throne that had been prepared for him. Following came the abbess and the sisters, each according to her rank and age. When everything was ready, the bishop rose and sprinkled the



room with holy water, invoking the Supreme aid. Then the abbess, followed by one of the oldest sisters, brought forth the one possessed, who knelt upon a marble step in a manner so that the noise which the spirit might make should be easily heard. The bishop asked her first how she was. "Very well, thank God!" she replied. Then he spoke to her about the spirit which manifested its presence by tapping under her feet. The bishop thereupon made the sign of the cross upon her forehead, stretching his hands over her head, and spoke in the following manner to those present:

"My dear lords and brethren, it is a notorious fact that the angel of darkness transforms himself often into an angel of light, and by some means deceives and astounds the ignorant. From fear, therefore, lest by reason of some wicked motive, he, the devil, may have lodged in the building occupied by these good religious women, we first of all wish to smite him and drive him out if he is in this place, armed as we are with the spiritual sword, that he in no way disturb our holy meditations and intentions!"

Having thus spoken, the reverend bishop addressed himself directly to the spirit in the following terms:

"Come forward, if you dare, spirit of darkness, if it be true that thou hast taken thy habitation in the midst of these simple-minded sisters; hear my voice, prince of falsehood, grown old in reprobation, destroyer of virtue, inventor of iniquities; hear what a sentence we pronounce against thy frauds. Thou art ashamed of us, and thou breathest forth madness and rage against us, for thou wilt be obliged to go hence and abandon to us this paradise; thou triest to deceive us, but we are on the watch against



thy treasons. It is on this account that we fortify this spot with the sign of the cross, against which thy malignity is powerless. We therefore, by the authority which God transmitted unto us, whether thou art inclined to some malignant art or mockest in this place the servants of Jesus Christ, or even if thou hast deceived any one of these innocent-minded ones, we order thee to depart at once. I adjure thee by Him who will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world at large by fire !”

When the bishop had finished adjuring the evil spirit, those present awaited with impatience the answer it would make. But in vain all necks were stretched ; it did not reply. The bishop therefore anew armed himself against it, and proceeded in the following terms :

“Cursed spirit ! Recognize that thou art one of those angels who were formerly hurled from the mountain of God into the infernal abyss. That, after having lost thy wisdom, thou hast found no other way to replace it excepting through hypocrisy and lies. If it is thou, whatever may be thy tartareous (from *tartaros*, the hell of the ancient Greeks) hierarchy and the pleasure thou takest in deceiving these excellent nuns, we invoke the Father, we supplicate the Son, we claim the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that its resistless might prevent thee from following the steps of our sister, Antoinette. We anathematize thee, oh, ancient serpent ! We interdict thee these places, and also the possession of any one of those dwelling here ! We curse thee in the name of Jesus Christ, that thou mayest return promptly to the habitation of the damned and there gnaw thy hellish pride, and that henceforth thou mayest live enchained, abjured, conjured, excommunicated, condemned,



anathematized, interdicted, and exterminated by God, our Lord, who will come to judge by fire the living and the dead!"

Then, as a sign of malediction, all lights were put out, the bells were rung, and the bishop several times struck the ground with his heel while summoning the devil to withdraw. He then took blessed water and sprinkled it through the air, over the ground and upon those present, crying several times, "*Discedite omnes qui operamini iniquitatem!*" ("Flee all ye who engender iniquity"). He then sent three priests to perform the same ceremony in every part of the abbey, recommending them especially not to be afraid. This recommendation was not useless, for scarcely had they entered the dormitory of the sisters, sprinkling their blessed water, and crying out, "*Discedite omnes qui operamini iniquitatem!*" when a multitude of devils broke forth from the dormitory in all haste and rushed upon a young sister, a novice, whose parents had, against her will, incarcerated her in the nunnery.

This incident threw the assembly into panic, and all were ready to follow the first who should flee. The sisters, pale and trembling, pressed close upon each other like sheep in whose midst a wolf had suddenly sprung. The consternation was general, and none knew what saint to appeal to, when the sister superior bravely seized the young novice and held her until the arrival of help. During that time the young girl implored the aid of the Virgin and defended herself as best she could against the evil spirits, which had not yet fully taken possession of her. Finally, after having bound her, not without difficulty, with strips of cloth which the priests wear around the neck, the three priests were requested to keep her until after the exorcism of Sister An-



toinette, which the above unexpected circumstance had interrupted. History does not inform us what became of that victim of parental cruelty

After having purified by means of holy water every part of the convent, the bishop celebrated mass, during which Antoinette made an offering of white bread and a jar of wine. The reverend priest then addressed the following "harangue" to those present :

"My lords and good friends, we, in your presence, commenced and have already succeeded in accomplishing the objects for which we are here assembled. First of all, we have conjured the evil spirit, have cast it out and excommunicated it, if by chance it thought of continuing its domicile within this young sister. We may well be assured that this has been accomplished through the omnipotent aid of God ; yet will I ask and ascertain what I wish by interrogating the said spirit, that we may be perfectly sure of facts, and by our good advice the end may be more securely brought about."

The bishop having thus spoken, Sister Antoinette was made to sit on a chair, placed near that of the prelate, and the examination proceeded as follows, by question and answer:

Question. Tell me, spirit, whether thou art truly the soul of Sister Alix, formerly secretary here?

Reply. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, whether these bones which have been brought here were of thy body ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, whether the unchaste soul so soon as it left its body, came to find this maiden ?



R. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, whether any angel is near thee ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, whether that angel is really very happy ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Does that good angel follow thee everywhere thou wishest to go ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Has he at any time ever left thee ?

R. No.

Qu. Tell me, if this good angel comforts and consoles thee in thy afflictions and troubles ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Canst thou see other angels besides thy own ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Dost thou ever see the devil ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, I adjure thee, by the mighty name of God, if there is truly any particular spot, called purgatory, where all souls can remain which are through divine justice condemned there ?

R. Yes.

(This question was a shaft aimed against "*the damned assertions to the contrary of the Lutheran heretics.*")

Qu. Hast thou seen any one in purgatory whom thou hast known before in the world ?

R. Yes. —

Qu. Knowest thou the time when thou wilt be free from thy pain ?

R. No.

Qu. Couldst thou be delivered through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving ?



R. Yes.

Qu. Tell me, whether a visit to some holy spot might free thee ?

R. Yes.

Qu. Can the Pope deliver thee ?

R. Yes.

Having asked these questions and many others which it is unnecessary to reproduce here, the bishop addressed himself to the soul of Alix in the following terms :

“ *My dear sister* : Thou perceivest here how this honorable and devoted company has been assembled in order to pray God the Creator that it may please Him to put an end to the pains and sufferings thou endurest, and that thou mayst be received into the company of His good angels and saints of Paradise.”

During all this time, the spirit moaned and groaned aloud under the feet of Antoinette.

The ceremony being ended, the bishop declared that he could not completely absolve the soul of Sister Alix, if she had not obtained beforehand from the abbess and sisters pardon for the sins she committed while in the abbey. Then the young Antoinette, who represented the defunct, knelt before the feet of the abbess and said: “ My revered mother, take pity on me and kindly consent to my absolution,” and the abbess replied: “ My daughter, my friend, I pardon you and consent to your absolution,” and thereupon the bishop pronounced the *absolvo*.

A month later, it was about midnight when a sweet voice awoke for the last time Sister Antoinette de Groslee and said to her: “ My dear Antoinette, I come to bid farewell to you and your companions. Ever since the day the bishop



gave me his benediction to which you replied *amen*, God put an end to my sufferings, which otherwise I would have endured during thirty-three years. I go this very day to enjoy the happiness of the blessed, but before leaving you, I wish once more to announce here my presence, and to this end I shall to-night during the prayers make a great noise among you." Sister Alix was true to her word. She caused in fact a frightful noise, striking thirty-three distinct blows, which indicated the remission of the thirty-three years of purgatory to which she had been condemned. The good dames of Saint Peter were at first much frightened, but when Sister Antoinette gave them the explanation of the facts, they praised God for it and rejoiced with the angels for the happiness granted to their companion until the end of the ages.

During those times the Catholic clergy, notwithstanding their power, understood that it was of the highest importance sometimes to throw the veil of the marvellous over the disorders which but too often compromised the Church. Thus we may feel certain that Antoinette de Groslée would not have obtained the honors of exorcism, if a few years before the conduct of the dames of Saint Peter had been less irregular. We also may feel certain that of the poor sister, Alix de Tisieux, would have undergone her thirty-three years of purgatory, had they not contrived to make a saint of her in order to re-establish a little the good name of the sisters. As to the apparitions to which Sister Antoinette was subject, it might seem hazardous to revoke them altogether. It is well known that the walls of a convent are not always very high, nor its iron fences strong enough to preserve the innocence of the cloister from profane seductions.



## PREJUDICES AND SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS.

In the south of Scotland, when the bride enters the house of her husband, she is lifted over the threshold of the door. To step upon it, or jump voluntarily over it, is deemed a sign of bad augury. This custom was universal in Rome in memory of the Sabine women. It was a reminder that an act of violence had been committed toward the women.

The Scotch, above all people, avoid marriages in the month of May. This prejudice was once so deeply rooted among them, that in 1684 some enthusiastic young men proposed to form a society to advocate the complete cessation of marriages during that month. The ancients have transmitted to us a certain precept that it is only bad women who marry during May, the month of flowers and zephyrs : *malæ nubent Maia*.

If anybody sneezes, it is the custom to this day to say to him, "God bless you." It is interesting to know that sneezing was regarded as something divine among the Greeks of old. Xenophon informs us that, on one occasion, a soldier happening to sneeze, all those present, with one accord, bowed to the god. The verb used by the Greek author, and which is commonly translated as "bowed," may also imply the idea of some religious act, not simply of bowing. In fact, we believe that the real act of the ancient Greeks may be easily conjectured, when we say that to-day if any one happens to sneeze after nine o'clock in the evening, the peasants of Asia Minor are wont to pour wine on the ground.

Neither enlightened Christianity, nor time, nor this boasted age of progress and civilization has eradicated the



superstitious notions of magic from our day. The world at large, the *hoi polloi*, are still thoroughly permeated with the influence of this mysterious art. You, my reader, living in this progressive land, may feel that there is only one magic influence with which you feel yourself thoroughly permeated, to wit: Uncle Sam's dollars. But I know of many other countries with vast buildings, railroads and horse-cars, national banks and exchanges, where the superstitious notions of the magic of three thousand years ago still survive, not only among the ignorant, but also among the educated. For instance, according to an old Greek writer who lived a great many years before Christ, the Persians considered the Oriental planes (platani) as sacred trees, and used to hang on their branches many trinkets of gold and silver, which nobody dared to take away. This custom of hanging trinkets upon Oriental plane-trees is still prevalent in Asia Minor. The people hang trinkets to such trees as happen to strike their fancy. I remember that once, in Smyrna, my mother went to a picnic, and we put up under a beautiful plane-tree; immediately all the people in the party, both young and old, commenced to hang shawls, ribbons, handkerchiefs, etc., upon its outstretched branches. I was not more than ten years old, but I saw my own mother, among the rest, take out of her pocket a pair of small *new shoes* and hang them on the tree.

It is well known that it was in the firm belief that his interests were under the special care of a deity, that the husbandman of ancient times sowed his seed and watched the vicissitudes of its growth; that the sailor and tradesman intrusted life and property to the capricious sea. Today, the husbandman of Asia Minor sows his seed under



the settled conviction that St. George or St. James will watch over his interests and bring to him an abundant harvest. The sailor and the trader intrust life and property to St. Nicholas, the patron of all seafaring people. Among the ancient Greeks, was not Æolus the god of the sailors, of the wind, and Hermes the god of traffickers? In the city of Smyrna, in "the upper parish," there is a sort of cavern called "the holy secret Virgin." This "secret Virgin" is considered the patron of mechanics, and her abode is daily thronged by all classes of workmen, who, in offering a part of their scanty earnings to her, earnestly pray that she may not cease to exercise her influence over their respective callings. Now, it is a fact that in ancient times the mechanic traced the skill and handicraft which grew unconsciously upon him by practice to the direct influence of a god. Artists ascribed the mysterious evolution of their ideas, and poets the inspiration of their song, to a supreme and mysterious cause. Everywhere in nature was felt the presence of august invisible beings—in the sky, with its luminaries and clouds; on the sea, with its fickle, changeful movements; on the earth, with its lofty peaks, its plains and rivers. To-day, old women in the East pretend to cure all sorts of diseases during full moon, and by the influence of invisible beings who inhabit certain stars. They undertake to cure pimples on the face by rubbing mud on them during full moon—a practice in vogue among the Spartans four hundred years B.C. Again the deities of the ancients were represented as immortal, and, being immortal, they were, as a consequence, supposed to be omnipotent and omniscient. Their physical strength was extraordinary, the earth shaking sometimes



under their tread. St. George to-day is represented as riding on a fiery steed, with a spear in his hand with which he killed a fiery dragon—not unlike the sea-serpent so wonderfully described in the fertile and imaginative reports of those *who did not see it*. Mythology, the daughter of magic, teaches us that there were tales of personal visits and adventures of the gods among men, taking part in battles and appearing in dreams. Now, the greater part of those peculiar-looking barracks—the so-called churches—that are seen nestled on the top of hills and scattered hither and thither in the interior of Asia Minor, were erected because some devout Christian declared that such a saint appeared to him, ordering the erection of a church to his memory. In praying, it was a custom of the ancients to lift their hands and turn their faces towards the East—a practice still extant among the people of Asia Minor. Numerous other examples could be adduced to show how widely the superstitious notions of the ancients are still prevalent in many parts of the civilized world.

The belief in the existence of demons, magicians, sorcerers, and vampires, the instantaneous changing of one's self into an animal, especially a wolf, is to a certain extent quite as common to-day in many parts of southeastern Europe as it was in the earliest ages of the history of mankind. Nor need we wonder at this. This belief was inculcated by tradition, by the holy Scripture, the decisions of councils, the authority of several fathers of the Church, the decrees of tribunals, and, above all, by prejudice and superstition. We do not wish to cast the slightest doubt upon what the Scriptures teach us concerning demons, and those possessed of them; but, on the other hand, how many imposi-



tions, frauds, and even crimes have been committed under the shelter of that book ! The demoniacs were formerly so common—to this day there are people in Europe who believe in their existence, and the prophet St. Elias is the acknowledged patron of the demoniacs—that the Catholic Church had, and still has, special ceremonies and prayers to cast out the evil spirits. The young abbots on receiving their minor orders obtained the authority to pronounce exorcisms. The Catholic clergy assiduously foster and spread the belief in the devil.

There are countries, however, like the United States, England, France, Germany, and free Greece, where magicians, sorcerers, vampires, etc., have ceased to cloud the vision of the people. But I repeat, the Catholic clergy, especially in Catholic countries like those of Italy, South America, Spain, Cuba, and elsewhere, still foster the belief in the supernatural, in magic, and in demoniacs. The holy Romish Inquisition, which accused Galileo of magic and impiety, still flourishes.

It is well known that force compelled Galileo, in order to preserve his life, to swear that the earth did not turn round. That great man, on re-entering his prison, and notwithstanding the danger he was threatened with, could not help exclaiming, while striking the ground with his foot, *E pur si muove !*

#### THE JUGGLERS OF INDIA.

In no part of the world have the subtleties of magic been as profoundly studied and so successfully practised as in southeastern Asia, particularly in the peninsula of India. There, as among the Chinese and Japanese, jugglery has long



been a distinct profession. The Chinese and Japanese jugglers, however, scarcely pretend to anything more than marvellous agility and sleight-of-hand, while among the Hindus the secrets of the craft are carefully guarded and clothed in a veil of impenetrable mystery. The swallowing of fire, sword-swallowing, plate-play, and practice with fans and knives are performed equally well by all the Oriental jugglers. Not satisfied, however, with such exhibitions of skill, the Hindus aspire, in appearance at least, to overcome the laws of nature, and to achieve what the ordinary mind would regard as the impossible. Some of their feats, as narrated by travellers in India, appear absolutely incredible ; yet so well substantiated are the accounts that, if the performance was a trick, the illusion must have been perfect.

No one of these feats has excited more interest among the English residents of the country, or has been more carefully investigated by scientific and medical men, than that of suspended animation, or retention of life for a given period of time after burial. A fakir presents himself and desires to be buried alive for thirty days, asserting his power to suspend the functions of life for that length of time and to resume them at its expiration. His request being complied with, and the necessary preparations made, the fakir, apparently by an act of will, throws himself into a trance, his eyes close, his breathing stops, his body stiffens and assumes the appearance of a corpse. The body is then lowered into the grave, which is filled up and carefully guarded day and night, in order that no confederate may tamper with it. When the time allotted has expired, the body is exhumed, the lips forced open, and a few drops of a liquid left for the purpose poured into the mouth. Resuscitation takes place at



once, and in a few moments the fakir rises and walks away, somewhat emaciated, indeed, but otherwise as well and vigorous as ever.

Another performance equally celebrated and even more inexplicable is that of spontaneous vegetation. The juggler takes the seed of a pomegranate, papaw, or some other fruit, and plants it in the ground. Then extracting from his arm a drop of blood, he lets it fall upon the spot, and stretching out both hands over the place where the seed was planted, he sinks apparently into a deep cataleptic sleep. Presently a stalk emerges from the ground, shoots up, develops into a small bush or tree, which blossoms and bears ripe fruit, all in the space of a couple of hours. The juggler with a sudden start recovers possession of his senses, plucks the fruit and distributes it among the astonished spectators.

The three incidents which follow are taken from the narrative of Jules Jacolliot, Chief Justice of Chandernagore in the French East Indies. Jacolliot made careful and extended observation of the fakirs, concerning whose performances he remarks:

“We assert nothing positively with regard to most of the facts which we are about to relate. The skill derived from long experience, charlatanism, and even hallucination itself may assist to explain them. We are bound to say, however, as impartial and faithful observers, that, though we applied the severest tests, to which the fakirs and other initiates interposed no objection whatever, we never succeeded in detecting a single case of fraud or trickery.

“Huc, the missionary, who gives an account of similar phenomena witnessed by him in Thibet, was equally at a loss to account for them.



“We occupy the position which we assumed in our preface, viz.: That of a simple recorder of facts which some regard as occult manifestations and others as skilful jugglery.”

. . . . .

“Three vases of flowers, so heavy that none but a strong man could have lifted them, stood at one end of the terrace. Selecting one, the fakir imposed his hands upon it so as to touch the edge of the vase with the tips of his fingers. Without any apparent effort on his part, it began to move to and fro upon its base as regularly as the pendulum of a clock. It soon seemed to me that the vase had left the floor without changing its movement in the least degree, and it appeared to me to be floating in the air, going from right to left at the will of the fakir.”

. . . . .

“Taking a small bamboo stool that stood near, the fakir sat down upon it in the Mussulman style with his legs crossed beneath him and his arms folded across his chest. At the end of a few minutes, during which he appeared to concentrate his attention upon the bamboo stool upon which he was sitting, it began to move noiselessly along the floor by short jerks, which made it advance three or four inches every time. I watched the Hindu attentively, but he was as still and motionless as a statue.

“The terrace was about seven yards long and as many wide. It took about ten minutes to traverse the whole distance, and when the stool had arrived at the end, it began to move backward until it returned to its starting place. During this performance, which was repeated three times, the



fakir's legs, crossed beneath him, were distant from the ground the whole height of the stool.

“Taking an ironwood cane which I had brought from Ceylon, and resting his right hand upon the handle, the fakir rose gradually about two feet from the ground. His legs were crossed beneath him, and he made no change in his position, which was very like that of those bronze statues of Buddha that tourists bring from the far East. For more than twenty minutes I tried to see how he could thus fly in the face and eyes of all the known laws of gravity; it was entirely beyond my comprehension; the stick gave him no visible support, and there was no apparent contact between that and his body, except through his right hand.

“As the Hindoo was about to leave me, he stopped in the embrasure of the door leading from the terrace to the outside stairs, and crossing his arms upon his chest, lifted himself up gradually, without any apparent support or assistance, to the height of about ten or twelve inches. At the commencement of his ascension I had seized my chronometer; the entire time from the moment when the fakir commenced to rise until he touched the ground again was more than eight minutes.

“As he was making his parting salaam, I asked if he could repeat the last phenomenon whenever he pleased.

“‘The fakir,’ answered he, emphatically, ‘can lift himself up as high as the clouds.’”

A ludicrously grotesque variation of this performance is recorded by another traveller as occurring in a different locality. The trick was performed with a coil of rope, and was one which it will be admitted required skill of no ordi-



nary kind. The juggler took the coil in his hand and threw it upward by a quick movement. The rope was seen to unwind itself as it ascended until it assumed a perpendicular position, as straight as a rod. Grasping it firmly with both hands, the juggler began to climb, until at length he reached the top, pulled the rope up after him and disappeared.

How absurd ! exclaims the reader. Absurd or not, this performance, as well as that with the pomegranate seed, and others quite as incredible, are vouched for by responsible persons, who claim to have witnessed them. Did they really do so, or were they deceived by a cleverly devised illusion ? The question is well worth a brief consideration.

Since there is no reason for suspecting the honesty and truthfulness of the witnesses, it is evident that one of two alternatives must be accepted ; either through the exercise of some unknown and mysterious power the feats recorded were actually performed, or the beholders were the victims of a most vivid and marvellous hallucination. Arguments are not wanting in support of either theory.

The Hindoo fakirs themselves ascribe their peculiar power to a certain " spirit force," or vital fluid that pervades all nature. Whoever possesses an excess of this spirit force acquires power both over inanimate things and over creatures less highly endowed, more subtle by far than electricity, heat, or magnetism, which are, indeed, but its grosser forms. This vital fluid permeates all existing things and serves as a means of communication between them.

William Crookes, a distinguished scientist, and member of the Royal Society, has so far convinced himself of the existence of some such occult principle, that he is making extended investigations with a view to the discovery of its



workings and laws. Other investigators also have been attracted to the subject, and their labors have brought to light many singular facts. The well-authenticated phenomena of mesmerism are now attributed to the influence of this psychic or spirit force.

"I am convinced," says Jacolliot, "that there are in nature and in man, who is a part of nature, immense forces, the laws of which are yet unknown to us. I think that man will some day discover these laws, that things that we now regard as dreams will appear to us as realities, and that we shall one day witness phenomena of which we have now no conception. Who knows whether this psychic force, as the English call it—this force of the Ego, according to the Hindus, which the humble fakir exhibited in my presence, will not be shown to be one of the grandest forces in nature?"

If, however, we reject this scheme of a psychic force as a theory not yet proved, may we not account for the marvels of the jugglers on the supposition that their dexterity is less occupied with the feats themselves than with deluding the imagination of the spectators? There is certainly some ground for such a belief.

In that wonder-land of India, with its mountain plateau, wild jungles, and deep sunny valleys, grows many a plant whose weird effects on the human brain and nerve are still unknown to our materia medica. The subtle powers and properties of these plants are well understood by the Brahmins and fakirs, but the knowledge is carefully guarded, and never revealed except to the initiated. Eugene Sue, in his novel *The Wandering Jew*, makes skilful use of one of these drugs, the Benghawar Djambi, which, it



is said, if inhaled when burning so affects the imagination of those present that whatever is described in words seems to occur before their eyes with all the vividness of reality. May not the fakirs make secret use of some similar preparation ?

Another curious drug, extensively employed in Arabia, Persia, and India, is *hashish*, a resinous substance extracted from the Indian hemp plant. It is smoked, made into a decoction, and eaten in the form of confectionery. Taken in moderation, it awakens in the mind a succession of pleasing thoughts and images ; but an overdose creates the most startling and life-like hallucinations, and plunges the imagination into alternate scenes of ecstasy and horror. This was the drug employed to delude his followers by Hassan Sabah, the " Old Man of the Mountains," founder of the famous sect of the assassins. When a recruit was wanted, some promising youth was invited to a banquet and the conversation turned upon the joys that awaited the faithful in Paradise. Then a cup of wine, drugged with hashish and some quick narcotic, was handed to the youth, who forthwith sank into a deep sleep and was conveyed into a valley whose natural beauty was enhanced by every device that art could suggest. Birds of brilliant plumage sang amid the foliage of exotic plants, rare fruits of unknown flavor hung from the loaded trees, here and there gushed forth fountains of choicest wines, while through the groves flitted troops of maidens whose natural loveliness the glamour of hashish rendered truly angelic. After a few hours spent in this paradise, the neophyte was again drugged to sleep, and carried back to the banquet hall. When he awoke he was informed that he had been absent just one minute—



that he had had one glimpse of heaven ; but that implicit obedience to the chief's command would win him that bliss for all eternity. What wonder that Hassan Sabah had devoted followers, that empires trembled at his name, and that the mightiest rulers of the East obsequiously courted his favor !

Chinese magic is remarkable for its various and elaborate modes of divination. These may be obtained from medicines possessed by spirits and from oracles in writing with "the descending pencil," as has lately been done by "spiritualists." There is also another magic in vogue in this country which regulates the building of houses and tombs by their local aspects. This has of late come under the notice of Europeans from the unexpected impediments it has placed in their way when constructing railways on Chinese soil.

In the lower stages of civilization the distinction between religion and magic hardly appears, the functions of priest and sorcerer being still blended. As established religions were formed, the separation became more distinct between the official rites of the priesthood and those practised by the magicians, the rivalry between them often becoming serious. Thus in ancient Egypt there were on the one hand the miracles worked by divinities under the official sanction of the priesthood, and on the other the unlicensed proceedings of sorcerers, who doubtless deserved ill of society on account of their detestable practices. Laws were made against magic in these ancient times, but it must be remembered that both then and a few thousands of years later this opposition to magic had seldom anything to do with the unbelief in its reality which arose among the classic philosophers.



“Hitherto,” says an author, “magic has been dealt with on its delusive and harmful side, this being that which most practically manifests itself in history ; yet it must be borne in mind that in its early stages it has been a source of real knowledge. Its imperfect arguments have been steps toward more perfect reasoning.” . . . From this point of view the intellectual position of magic is well expressed by Adolphe Bastian : “Sorcery, or in its higher expression, magic, marks the first dawning consciousness of mutual connection throughout nature, in which man, feeling himself part of the whole, thinks himself able to interfere for his own wishes and needs. So long as religion fills the whole horizon of culture, the vague groping of magic contains the first experiments which lead to the results of exact science. Magic is the physics of mankind in the state of nature. It rests in the beginning on induction, which remains without result only because in its imperfect judgments by analogy it raises the *post hoc* to the *propter hoc*, etc. Lastly, the history of medicine goes back to the times when primitive science accepted demoniacal possession as the rational means of accounting for disease, and magical operations with herbs originated their more practical use in *materia medica*.”

White magic is “the art of performing tricks and exhibiting illusions by aid of apparatus, excluding feats of dexterity in which there is no deception, together with the performances of such automatic figures as are actuated in a secret and mysterious manner.” White magic is the good son—the Abel of sorcery, so to speak—while black magic is the Cain of sorcery, and last of all legerdemain is the offspring of Abel.

White magic may be also termed “natural magic.” The



Book of Exodus makes the earliest historical reference to this natural magic when it records how the magicians of Egypt imitated certain miracles of Moses "by their enchantments." The magicians of ancient Greece and Rome were accustomed to astonish their dupes with optical illusions and visible representations of the divinities passing before the spectators in dark subterranean chambers. The principal optical illusion employed in these effects was the throwing of spectral images of living persons and other objects upon the smoke of burning incense by means of concave metal mirrors. The desired effect was often produced in a simpler way by causing the dupe to look into a cellar through a basin of water with a glass bottom, or by showing him on a dark wall figures drawn in inflammable material and suddenly ignited. The flashes of lightning and the rolling thunders which sometimes accompanied these manifestations were easy tricks, now familiar to everybody as the ignition of lycopodium and the shaking of sheet metal.

Towards the end of the last century Comus, a French conjurer, included in his entertainment a figure which suddenly appeared and disappeared about three feet above a table, a trick explained by the circumstance that a concave mirror was among his properties. A contemporary performer, Robert, exhibited the raising of the dead by the same agency. Early in the present century Philipstal caused a sensation in his magic-lantern entertainment by lowering unperceived between the audience and the stage a sheet of gauze upon which vividly fell the moving shadows of phantasmagoria.

A new era in optical tricks began in 1863, when John Nevil Maskelyne, a Chestelham artist in jewelry, invented a wood cabinet in which persons vanished and were made to



reappear, although the cabinet was placed upon high feet, with no passage through which a person could pass from it to the stage floor. The cabinet was examined and measured for concealed space, and watched by persons from the audience during the whole of the transformation. The general principle undoubtedly was this: If a looking-glass be set upright in the corner of a room, bisecting the right angle formed by the walls, the side wall reflected will appear as if it were the back, and hence an object may be hidden behind the glass, yet the space seems to remain unoccupied. This principle, however, was so carried out that no sign of the existence of any mirror was discernible under the closest inspection.

A year or two later Colonel Stodard exhibited the illusion in an extended form, by placing a pair of mirrors in the centre of the stage, supported between the legs of a three-legged table having the apex toward the audience; and as the side walls of his stage were draped exactly like the back, reflection showed an apparently clear space below the table top, where in reality a man in a sitting position was hidden. The plane mirror illusion is so effective that it has been reproduced with modifications by various performers.

Among the acoustic wonders of antiquity, fabled or real, were the speaking head of Orpheus and the golden virgins, whose voices resounded through the temple of Delphi. The voice was really that of a concealed assistant who spoke through the flexible gullet of a crane. Toward the close of the tenth century Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II.) constructed a brazen head which answered questions; and similar inventions are ascribed to Roger Bacon and others. In the first half of the seventeenth century the philosopher Descartes



made a speaking figure, which he called his daughter Franchina, and the superstitious captain of a vessel had it thrown overboard. In the same century, an Englishman exhibited at the court of Charles II. a wooden figure with a speaking-trumpet in its mouth, and questions whispered in its ear were answered—through a pipe secretly communicating with an apartment wherein was a learned priest able to converse in various languages.

In 1783 Giuseppe Pinetti de Wildale, an Italian conjurer of great originality, among his many wonders exhibited upon a bottle a toy bird which fluttered, blew out a candle, and warbled any melody proposed or improvised by the audience, doing this also when removed from the bottle to a table, or when held in the performer's hand upon any part of the stage. The sounds were produced by a confederate who imitated song birds after Rossignol's method, with the aid of the inner skin of an onion in the mouth; and speaking-trumpets directed the sounds to whatever spot was occupied by the bird.

Lucian tells of the magician Alexander, in the second century, that he received written questions inclosed in sealed envelopes, and a few days afterward delivered written responses in the same envelopes, with the seals apparently unbroken. In this deception we have the germ of "spirit-reading" and "spirit-writing." The so-called "second-sight" trick depends upon a system of signalling between the exhibitor who moves among the audience, collecting questions to be answered and articles to be described, and the performer, who is blindfolded on the stage.

Fire tricks, such as walking on burning coals, breathing flame and smoke from a gall-nut filled with an inflam-



mable composition, or dipping the hands into boiling pitch, were known in early times, and are explained by Hippolytus. These performers anointed their mouths, hands, and feet with a protective composition. It is remarkable how many of the illusions regarded as the original inventions of eminent conjurers have been really improvements upon older tricks. In 1834 was first exhibited in England a trick which a Brahmin had been seen to perform at Madras several years before. Ching Lan Lauro sat cross-legged upon nothing, one of his hands only just touching some beads hung upon a genuine hollow bamboo, which was set upright in a hole on the top of a wooden stool. The placing of the performer in position was done behind a screen, and the explanation of the mysterious suspension is, that he passed through the bamboo a strong iron bar, to which he connected a support which, concealed by the beads, his hand, and his dress, upheld the body. In 1849 Robert Houdin reproduced the idea under the title of ethereal suspension,—professedly rendering his son's body devoid of weight by administering to him vapor of ether, and then, in sight of the audience, laying him in a horizontal position in the air with one elbow resting upon a staff resembling a long walking-stick. The support was a jointed iron frame under the boy's dress, with cushions and belts passing round and under the body.

There is no reason for supposing that the ancient magicians were more proficient in the art than their modern successors. As Robert Houdin has pithily observed, "If antiquity was the cradle of magic, it is because the art was yet in its infancy." Towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth, the profession had fallen into great disrepute in England,



and the performers were classed with ruffians, blasphemers, thieves, vagabonds, Jews, Turks, heretics, pagans, and sorcerers. In 1840 a German physicist, named Döbler, devised an entertainment which gave an entirely new development to the science and was in effect the same as the conjuring entertainments which have since become so familiar and popular.

The secrets of legerdemain were for a long time jealously guarded by its professors, but in 1859 R. Houdin issued "*Les Secrets de la Prestidigitation de la Magie*, a masterly exposition of the entire art and mystery of conjuring."

Modern magic calls to its aid all the appliances of modern science—electricity, magnetism, optics, and mechanics; but the most successful adepts in the art look down upon all such adventitious aids and rely upon address and sleight of hand alone. The prestidigitateur's motto is, "The quickness of the hand deceives the eye."

"A prestidigitateur," says Robert Houdin, "is not a juggler; he is an actor playing the part of a magician, an artist whose fingers should be more clever than nimble. I would even add that, in the practice of legerdemain, the calmer the movements are, the more easy is it to produce an illusion to the spectators." Elsewhere he says: "To succeed as a conjurer three things are essential: first, dexterity; second, dexterity; and third, dexterity." And this is not a mere trick of language, for triple dexterity is required, not only to train the hand to the needful adroitness, but to acquire the requisite command of eye and tongue.

The most eminent conjurers of the modern school have been Robert Houdin, Wiljalba, Frikele, and Robin. The prince, however, of the prestidigitateurs of this age is the American mystifier, Alexander Herrmann.



Alexander Herrmann was born in Paris, in 1844. His father, S. Herrmann, was one of the most noted prestidigitateurs of his time, and his dexterity was so masterly that the then reigning Sultan of Turkey used to pay him £1,000 per night for a single entertainment. It is to Herrmann that we must look for the elaboration of "the method of drawing different liquors from a single tap in a barrel, the barrel being divided into compartments, each having an air-hole at the top, by means of which the liquid in any of the compartments is withheld or permitted to flow." It was S. Herrmann and not Robert Houdin, as alleged by some writers, who "applied the principle to a wine-bottle held in his hand, from which he would pour four different liquids, regulated by the unstopping of any of the four tiny air-holes covered by his fingers. A large number of very small liquor glasses being provided on trays, and containing drops of certain flavoring essences, enabled him to supply imitations of various wines and liquors, according to the glasses into which he poured syrup from the bottle; while by a skilful substitution of a full bottle for an emptied one, or by secretly refilling in the act of wiping the bottle with a cloth, he produced the impression that the bottle was inexhaustible." The above statement, which is attributed by an English writer to Robert Houdin, varies but little from another which appeared in 1837 in the American newspaper, *The Stamboul*, published in Constantinople. The Sultan was so amazed at this trick that, stroking his beard in Oriental fashion, he exclaimed, "Mashala! Mashala!" which in English may be translated, "Wonderful! wonderful!" A wonderful exclamation, indeed, for the taciturn Turk.



Sixteen children were born to Herrmann by his wife Anna, of whom eight were boys, and the rest girls. The eldest of the children, C. Herrmann, who recently died in Bohemia, leaving an estate valued close upon two million francs, had not for a great many years his equal in the world as a prestidigitateur, until his younger brother, Alexander Herrmann, came to the front to dispute his laurels. "I was eight years old," said Alexander Herrmann, "when I appeared with my brother on the stage at St. Petersburg. My father was unwilling to let me give up my studies, but, finally, he consented when my brother agreed to engage a professor of languages purposely for me. The professor travelled with us, and for several years he remained exclusively my tutor."

Alexander Herrmann remained with his brother for six years. At fourteen, his parents, desirous of giving him the advantages of a liberal education, placed him in a college at Vienna, where his remarkable intellect and bright wit astonished the professors, and caused them to predict *un futur extraordinaire* for the young scholar. It was during his year of college life that he became possessed of books containing accounts of Robert Houdin, Balsamo, and others, the perusal of which influenced and predestined his future career. The years spent in travelling with his brother also tended greatly to foster and develop his talent and inclination for the art of magic. From infancy he exhibited a power of discernment and ingenuity truly marvellous, and often during his college life, after witnessing or reading of some sleight-of-hand performance, he would closet himself in his room for hours, finally to appear and amaze the students by performing the same or equally startling feats.



At the age of fifteen college duties became irksome to him, and he determined to seek his fortune as a magician.

Beginning his professional career in Spain, in 1859, he has travelled through America, France, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Siberia, Central America, Cuba, South America, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Turkish Empire, Canada, Buenos Ayres, New Granada, Holland, Belgium, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, meeting with the greatest success and receiving the highest encomiums of the press and public.

As a linguist he has established a claim beyond peradventure, as he converses correctly and fluently in seven distinct languages, viz.: French, Spanish, German, English, Russian, Italian, and Portuguese. Besides speaking these languages, the studies he has been compelled to pursue, such as physics and chemistry, to gain for himself perfection in the art of legerdemain, have given him more than a passing insight into Latin and Greek.

Between Alexander Herrmann and his brother C. Herrmann there has always existed the deepest brotherly devotion. His brother was seventy-one years old when he died. During his time he lost and won four princely fortunes. In form he was tall, slender, with dark piercing eyes, a high forehead, and withal a most polished gentleman. The *Figaro*, under date of January 27, 1886, thus speaks of him :

“The whole of Vienna assembled yesterday at the house of one of the most popular men of the capital—at the residence of Professor C. Herrmann—the famous prestidigitateur, that elegant Parisian whom the chances of life have lodged in one of the streets of the Danubian city. Herr-



mann was celebrating the seventieth anniversary of his birthday by a fête, at which were present the aristocracy of the city, together with all the celebrities of art and literature. Among those present we noticed Prince Metternich, Count Zichy, Count Wittzek, Count Samezan, Prince F. Liechtenstein, Count Glamgallas, the two Barons de Rothschild, and, a thing most rare in Vienna, all these princes and barons were crowded in among the artists, the painters, the men of letters and other less distinguished citizens, friends and acquaintances of C. Herrmann. The fact is, that Herrmann is not only the Napoleon of prestidigitateurs, he is at the same time a perfect gentleman of the highest possible respectability, full of wit, and above all a thorough connoisseur of art ; for he has gathered in the course of his travels treasures of faience, bronzes, and antique marbles to such an extent that his apartments are a veritable museum. Finally, he is a *something* and *somebody* in Vienna. He is admitted into every grade of society ; in a word, all classes of society seek him.

“He is also the international man of the capital. Where was he born ? I think in Hanover, but it was by a mere chance. His family is of Alsatian origin.

“An Alsatian by origin, born in Germany, raised in France, living in Austria, Herrmann is above all a Parisian, who took up his residence in Vienna that he might speak well of Paris.”

. . . . .

Such a man was the brother of our Alexander Herrmann. If we may be allowed, however, to draw a comparison regarding the professional and artistic skill of the brothers, we unhesitatingly pronounce in favor of the younger ; for the



elder depended upon and made extensive use of mechanical contrivances, and assigned to palmistry an important part, while the younger invariably deceives the eye of the beholder by his wonderful dexterity. He also excels in what the French call "*avoir de l'œil*," "having a good eye." An earnest, continued look of the performer in a particular direction will carry every one's eyes with it, while a glance at the hand which is performing some operation that should be kept secret will ruin all.

It may be seen from the above that magic art and the name of Herrmann for some years have been almost synonymous. "It is in the blood," says A. Herrmann. "A prestidigitateur is born such; he can never become one simply by study."

Alexander Herrmann first made his appearance in America in the year 1861. He returned to Europe a year later to fill an important engagement in the leading capitals of Europe. In 1874 he again returned to this country, and on board the steamer he met a charming lady. It was love at first sight. "I knew," says Herrmann, "that the time was short; in ten days we would be in New York, but *Mademoiselle* fortunately spoke French, and, *comme de résultat*, when we reached New York we went straight to pay our respects to Mayor Wickham, who married us. Ah, monsieur," continued Mr. Herrmann, and his expressive eyes flashed with love and admiration, "I could not tell you how *charmante*, how good my wife has been to me." We assured Mr. Herrmann that all who knew Mme. Herrmann always spoke of her as "the charming Mme. Herrmann." "It is just so, *Mon Dieu!* She is a companion, *camarade*."



As it has been stated, Alexander Herrmann has travelled in almost every part of the globe. The jugglers of India, the dervishes of Turkey, the Bedouins of Egypt, the Marabouts of Arabia, all have proclaimed him the Allah of Magic. Crowned heads have attended his performances or invited him to delight them in the palace. Don Alphonso XII., *Rey Constitucional de l'España*, conferred upon him the decoration of "*Comendador ordinario de la Real orden de Isabel la Catolica*." The King of Portugal also bestowed upon him the distinguished decoration of "*Cavalleiro da Real Ordem Militar Portuguesa de Nosso Senhor Jesus Christo*."

The severest critics in Europe have declared Alexander Herrmann to be unparalleled in the history of magic art. The Germans are least of all given to praise, yet a German paper thus spoke of him: "The name of A. Herrmann is familiar throughout the entire world. It was he who one day while by the sea-shore at Ostend caused the bracelet of a lady to disappear from her wrist, threw it into the sea, and a moment later returned it to her tied with a ribbon in a beautiful bouquet which he took from the hat of the lady's husband.

"One day while seated in an omnibus, he felt the light-fingered hand of a thief in his pocket. Herrmann seized him, recovered his pocket-book, took from the thief's pocket a number of other purses the latter had stolen, and turned property and thief over to the police.

"It is he who goes to the markets, buys chickens or living rabbits, cuts their throats, and then reattaching the neck, returns to the frightened dealers their property without the slightest sign of the operation performed upon them.



“We saw him put into a tin pan three rings, borrowed from three persons in the auditorium, break some eggs over them, and out of this omelet of precious stones there came forth three white doves wearing around their necks the three rings attached by silk ribbons.

“He put into three different pots some beans of coffee, white common beans, and some grains of wheat, and the three pots were closed simultaneously at the striking of his wand. A minute later the pots were found to contain real coffee, milk, and sugar, and out of them he filled *seventy-five* cups, which he passed to the audience.

“He put four watches into a large revolver of the bull-dog pattern, filled it with powder and balls, jammed them all down with an iron rod, fired, and the watches were found hanging from the back of a gentleman in the auditorium.

“He caused his wife, Mrs. Addie Herrmann, to enter into a magical chest, locked her in, and a minute later the lady was found occupying a seat in the middle of the parquet. He accomplished many other prodigies, not the least curious of which seems to us to be the following: He borrowed a hat from a gentleman in the theatre, and out of this hat he brought forth two hundred and twenty-five gold pieces, a vast amount of paper, two rabbits, six bouquets, a dozen cups, and many other different things. He then asked his servant to return the hat to its owner, but the awkward servant slipped, fell upon the hat and made it flat as a cracker. Mr. Herrmann was very sorry, very sorry indeed, and did not know what to do to restore it to its former condition. Finally an idea struck Mme. Hermann: The cannon!

“An energetic remedy indeed! Mr. Herrmann tore the hat into shreds, which he put into the cannon. Then the



cannon was taken into the middle of the stage, where it really caused a moment of panic in the upper galleries, followed by a precipitous flight. The cannon was fired and the hat appeared on the roof of the theatre, from which Mr. Herrmann caused it to drop in its original shape by firing his pistol."

HOW MR. HERRMANN GETS RID OF UNDESIRABLE  
COMPANIONS.

A few years ago Mr. Herrmann had an engagement to appear in Alexandria during the great Turkish feast of Rhamazan. On arriving at his hotel, he was told by the proprietor that on account of the holidays the house, as was the case with nearly all the other leading hotels in the city, was crowded. Mr. Herrmann was unable, offer what he would, to obtain a room to himself. The proprietor had only one large room with two beds in it to offer, one of which was taken by a Turk from Constantinople. Mr. Herrmann, as he could not help matters, agreed to take the room, but on going into it noticed that "the fire of the Turk's eye flashed in a very uncomfortable manner as it fell on my watch-chain." He made up his mind that he would have the room to himself, and so he did. This is the way the Professor accomplished it :

"It was three o'clock in the afternoon, and I had not many hours before me, as I was to be at the theatre at half-past seven. The Turk was watching me unpacking my trunks. When I had a good 'catch' at his eye, I snatched a ferocious-looking dagger, lifted it quickly and stuck it into my wrist. At the sight of the blood, the Turk rushed from the room, and would not stay in the



hotel, nor would he come back into the room for his baggage."

This trick is an easy and simple one, since it consists only in fitting to the arm a knife made for that purpose, the blade of which is divided into two parts, joined together by a spring of the horse-shoe shape. When the arm is placed between the two halves of the blade and the spring concealed by the cuff, it appears as if the arm was pierced. The performer makes faces and contortions, as if he felt the sharpest agony. The blood is an innocent preparation which, by the quickness of the movement, appears to drop from the wounded wrist, while in reality it comes from the palm of the hand which holds the hilt.

A few years ago Mr. Herrmann appeared in Bruxelles. What he did there is best described in the words of the leading newspaper of that city :

"We considered ourselves *blasés* as regards prestidigitation. We have seen so many of those dexterous men who made us suppose a pair of spectacles to be real lanterns. Ever since the time of Bosco—let us acknowledge also that we have known Bosco personally, although this fact does not render us any the younger—as well as Conte, whose tricks with cards have remained almost legendary ; in a word, we can remember the beginning of modern magic art in Europe. We can recall Philippe, the inventor of the trick of the fishes, so well perfected since, and Robert Houdin, and Robin, 'the man of ghosts,' and Cazenave, and twenty others ; yes, a hundred others who have been successively pronounced more surprising than their predecessors, and cited as having reached the Herculean columns of prestidigitation. But where are the columns that do not give way



to-day? The reason why is, that after Bosco, Conte, Philippe, Robert Houdin, Brunet, Verly, Robin, Cazenave, *tutti quanti*, Herrmann has appeared to prove to us that we were wrong in believing ourselves *blasés* as regards omelets transformed into living doves and handkerchiefs restored more immaculate than before after having been burned under our eyes.

“We knew this unparalleled Herrmann twenty years ago in Bruxelles, and he has seemed to us ever since to substantiate the truth of the axiom which we have just mentioned, to wit, that every prestidigitateur is superior to the one seen before. Herrmann has done in fact better; he has risen above himself. The Herrmann of to-day is superior to the Herrman of twelve or fifteen years ago, just as he is to-day superior to all who have preceded him.

“First of all, he is a true gentleman. To see him in silk stockings, *culotte collante*, a black coat fitting well to the body, dazzling linen, well-trimmed mustachios, to see his easy gesture, distinguished appearance, flowing and natural elocution, one would believe that a lecture was to be delivered by a scholar rather than that a *séance* on magic was about to take place. However, magic in the true sense of the word is being performed before you. At the same time, the address and the dexterity of the hands cause you to pass from surprise to surprise. Perhaps all the feats of Herrmann are not new, although many are of his own invention; but the best known are performed with a *grâce*, an easiness, a facility which impart to them complete newness.

“Who does not remember the famous chest of the Davenport brothers? and the not less famous *chest of India*, two



masterly tricks which have drawn everywhere immense crowds to see them? Herrmann does better still; he combines the two tricks into one; he forces, as it were, *the chest of India* into that of the Davenports, and by doubling the difficulty he doubles the surprise, not to say the stupefaction of the spectators.

“However, *séance* of prestidigitation cannot be told in words. One must go and see for himself.”

. . . . .

#### THE MARQUIS AND THE PARTRIDGES.

Don Mariano del Prado, Marquis de Acapulco, invited Herrmann to dinner while the latter was astonishing the chivalrous Spaniards with his amazing feats a few years ago in Madrid. Herrmann knew that the marquis was especially fond of partridges, and he accordingly went to his friend's house bent upon “mischief.” During dinner the conversation turned upon game, and the old marquis was especially eloquent upon the subject of partridges and wished that he had provided some. Herrmann thereupon assured the marquis that nothing could be easier than to have his wish satisfied.

“What do you mean?” said Don Mariano del Prado.

“I mean,” said Herrman, “that no friend of mine shall express a wish before me without having it instantly gratified.”

Thereupon he asked the waiter to bring him his hat, turned it upside down, and by a dexterous movement of the hand brought out two of the finest partridges the marquis had ever seen. It is useless to say that this simple trick, as the saying is, brought down the house.



In order to perform this trick, it is necessary to be provided with a high hat, made with a false spring bottom, with space enough for three or four birds or anything else you may choose to take out of it. The spring must be so placed that, when it is pressed from the outside of the hat, the compartment will open and the birds will fly out, and when you relax the pressure it will fly back to its place again. Always hold the inside of the hat toward you, or elevate it a trifle higher than the audience.

The following interesting story comes from the pen of Alexander Watson :

CHRISTMAS IN SIBERIA—A COLD RIDE WITH HERRMANN—  
TO KAYALA IN A RUSSIAN TARANTASS—THE GREAT  
CONJURER ENTERTAINS TWO PARTIES IN THE DREARY  
PENAL COLONY—WONDERS HE PERFORMED.

“ ‘ Dammit ! ’

“ This good Anglo-Saxon exclamation, uttered in tones of exceeding vexation by a nervous, keen-eyed little man in a frontier town in Russia one bitterly cold morning in the winter of 1879, attracted my attention. His face—and such a weird, uncanny face it was—was the picture of intense disappointment, and his attitude was one of utter dejection. It was the first English I had heard for weeks, and, although spoken with a decided accent, there was a spontaneity and vigor to the expression which at once convinced me that the speaker was familiar with my native tongue. Approaching, I asked the nature of his trouble, addressing him in English and offering my services. His face brightened up and he quickly replied :



“ ‘My dear sare, I am veery much deestressed. I must go to Kayala, and I am too late—too late. The guard has gone without me, and I now find I cannot get a—a—what do you call it?—a conveyance, yes, a conveyance.’

“He spoke rapidly and gesticulated in a nervous, jerky way so characteristic of the French. His story was soon told. His name was Herrmann, and he was the world-famous conjurer. While relating some of his experiences as a traveller at a dinner given in his honor at St. Petersburg by several distinguished Russian officers, he was badgered into accepting a wager with the dashing General Kourropatkin, the successor of Skobeloff, that he dare not make the venture-some journey across the steppes to Kayala in midwinter and be there in time to dine with the general and his staff on Christmas Day. An escort was promised him, and it was needed, for the disastrous campaign against the Turcomans had just ended, and the country was overrun with lawless bands of freebooters. Herrmann found that the escort had gone several days, and hence his dismay expressed in the exclamation which begins this hurried sketch.

“I was a sort of utility man on a London newspaper, and was then on my way to the scene of the difficulties in Asia Minor, bearing important instructions for the intrepid war correspondent, Edmund O'Donovan, who was then contemplating that dash to Merv which afterward made him famous. Poor O'Donovan! His bones lie bleaching with those of Hicks and Villiers and the rest of that devoted band of heroes on the hot sands of the Soudan, where the life-blood of Burnaby and so many other brave Britons has ebbed away.

“Herrmann's distress was so genuine that I at once offered



him a place in my tarantass, a long, low, black vehicle on runners, to which were attached six horses. I pictured to him the hardships of the journey, for which, I must confess, I had little taste myself; but he was firm in his resolution, and quickly completing arrangements, we started on a ride which, but for the never-failing good-nature and superior entertaining qualities of my versatile companion, would have been dreary indeed.

“The days pass wearily along—some in wild, fierce storms of snow and sleet that howl around us as though all the demons of the steppe were up in arms; some in bright sunshine, whose intolerable glare blinds us and blisters our faces. From time to time we drive into darksome underground holes, hot and reeking, hover around the steaming samovar, pouring down oceans of boiling tea; then out on the silent steppe again to continue our weary struggle. There are nights when we awaken from a half-frozen sleep and see nothing but the wide, snowy plain, silent and ghastly in the spectral moonlight. The icy winds from the north come rushing down in furious blasts with an uninterrupted sweep of a thousand miles, and drive the snow about in whirlwinds that go scudding over the plain like giant spectres. Herrmann submits to all discomforts without a murmur. His jollity is infectious. Even our imperturbable Kirghiz postilions smile at his little conceits, and marvel at the wonders he performs. They look upon him as an emissary of the devil. Kayala is finally reached. Herrmann is surrounded by his friends, and the warmth of their greeting makes ample amends for the hardships he has undergone.

“‘You have won,’ says Kourropatkin, ‘and you are none



too soon, for Christmas in this country comes in advance of yours.'

" 'Yes,' replied Herrmann, 'I have won, but I will not try it again. No, no. One such journey is enough.'

"The dinner occurs the next day, and, reluctantly, I consent to remain over. Never have I spent a more delightful Christmas. There is no limit to the hospitality of these dashing Russians. Away out on this barren plain, thousands of miles from civilization and our own comfortable firesides, we sit down to a repast fit for a king. At the table are gathered all the types of Russian officerhood. Here is the gray-headed, hard-faced old major, who, without 'protection,' had fought his sturdy way up through the grades, with long delays, much hard service, and many wounds. He had been an ensign in the Crimea, and afterward was forgotten, for nobody knows how many years, in some odd corner of the Caucasus. He is only a major, poor old fellow, but he has half a dozen decorations. There is little in common between him and the tall, stately, grizzled general by his side, who is an aide-de-camp of the Emperor; a grand seigneur of the court, yet who has never forsworn the camp; a man who will discuss with you the relative merits of Patti and Lucca; who has yachted in the Mediterranean, shot grouse in the Scottish highlands, and hunted buffalo on the American prairies; who wears decorations, too, some of them earned in battle, others as marks of imperial favor. On the other side of the table is a young hussar in blue and red. He can gallop, he can cut the sword exercise, he can sing French songs, and he would give his last cigarette to a comrade or a stranger, and in his secret heart he has vowed to win the cross of St. George. Everybody contributed to



the entertainment, a spirited song from one, a recitation or a story from another ; but chief among them all was Herrmann, with his inexhaustible store of tricks and his marvellous dexterity. The general's watch was found in the pocket of a subordinate, to the dismay of the latter and the delight of the assembled guests ; a solid gold decoration which the major had earned in the Khivan campaign, and from which he never parted, was found in a bottle of wine ; loaves of bread were transformed into oranges ; cards disappeared mysteriously in the air ; chairs were sent dancing around the room in the most provoking way ; different kinds of wine were taken at will from one bottle, and live fowls were discovered in the most singular places. It was the most novel Christmas dinner it ever was my fortune to attend. An entertainment full of surprises, and one that kept the guests in an hilarious state of merriment for several hours.

“ When it was over, Herrmann obtained permission to visit the prisoners' quarters. What a contrast to the place we had just left ! The poor wretches were huddled together like sheep. Their food was bad, their scant clothing afforded but poor protection from the frosty air, and their misery was made more unbearable by the harsh words and cruel blows of the brutal keepers. Such a lot of haggard faces I never saw. Men whose eyes looked the despair that was slowly eating their lives away, and from whose hearts all hope had fled. Piteous looks of entreaty were cast upon us as we entered ; glances so full of woe and misery that they would melt a heart of stone. The sympathetic magician took in the scene at a glance, and then began a performance that I have never seen equalled. Trick followed trick, each more wonderful than the preceding one. Amid



the squalor and filth of this wretched pen, surrounded by convicts of all grades and with the atmosphere foul and stifling, Herrmann remained for nearly two hours, performing as he never performed before. Faces that had not known a smile for years relaxed and the dingy walls echoed with joyous laughter. With a wave of his magic wand, the magician produced a Christmas-tree laden with dainties; everybody was given a little present of some sort. In the delightful sensation of the moment the prisoners forgot their cares, their condition, their doom. Some were carried back to the innocent days of their childhood in far-off Russia, others were astonished at the almost supernatural powers of the man, and all were amused. Tears crept unbidden into the eyes of many when the time for departure came, and with hearts full of gratitude for the man who had given them the only taste of Christmas they had experienced in many years they bade us farewell. The friendship between the magician and myself, which began with our acquaintance at Orenberg, has continued unbroken ever since, and will continue, I hope, to the end of my days."

In the *Événement*, published in Paris, we find the following account under the title "Soirée de Prestidigitation." "Monsieur Herrmann is the Paganini of prestidigitateurs. It is not only his technical dexterity which inspires us with this belief, but his physical resemblance also to the famous Italian artist. Tall, lean, an expressive head, hair and mustachios of jet-black color, there was lacking only a violin, when he appeared on the stage, to make us believe that we were about, after more than forty years, to listen to the famous 'Prayer of Moses,' executed upon the one cord only. Instead of this *tour de force*, we have had others



which, while greatly differing, were not the less marvellous. Is it not a prodigy to see one of these servants of the sorcerer lay—through the mouth—as many eggs as the master applied to him taps upon the head? Is it a simple matter to have a California at the end of one's fingers, to such an extent abounded the five-franc pieces coming nobody knew from where, and which were falling in heaps from the noses of the spectators? And that hat—ours, let us acknowledge it—transformed into a notion store, from which were taken out myriads of cards, miles of ribbons, and, still better, rabbits and ducks, . . . probably American, like their proprietor, which, however, does not alter the fact of their being authentic and alive too. The want of space prevents us from lengthening this description, but we must not omit to mention the charm which his fascinating companion adds to the miracles of Monsieur Herrmann. The diverse poses of Mme. Herrmann in the 'Arabian dream' are the most graceful we have ever seen in the metropolis. . . ."

The muscular force of Alexander Herrmann is one of his most remarkable traits. We saw him in several leading clubs of New York take a full pack of cards and tear them in two with his hands.

In 1879 Herrmann went to Havana. He gave in that city nineteen representations, and on a Sunday afternoon appeared in the noted bull ring of Havana, where he performed the extraordinary and dangerous feat of allowing himself to be shot at by twelve soldiers, carrying as many Remington rifles. The balls were marked by a committee. The audience stood breathless, and many women fainted, while strong men left the place, believing that a cold-blooded murder was about to be committed. Twelve thousand per-



sons were there, and the receipts amounted to eight thousand dollars.

When the rifles were loaded, Herrmann took them in his hands, whispered a few words in the barrels, and then ordered the soldiers to fire. The balls flew whizzing, and as fast as they came he received them in his hands, and passed them, still warm, into the hands of the committee.

On leaving Havana he went to the City of Mexico. His first acquaintance there was with the then President, Diaz. It did not take long for Herrmann to win the friendship of the distinguished Mexican, and during the five months of his stay in that city his triumph was the greatest ever known.

Soldiers were stationed nightly in the National Theatre to control the crowds that sought admittance notwithstanding the fact that not an inch of standing room could be obtained. President Diaz, in order to express the strong friendship he felt for Herrmann, ordered a body-guard of twenty-five soldiers to follow him wherever he went. Orders were issued to all the dependencies of Mexico that the various sub-governors were held responsible for his life. From Mexico he visited every part of Central America, where his success was simply a repetition of his triumphs in Mexico.

Reaching Brazil, Herrmann and a few of his friends, among whom were several journalists, were walking in one of the principal streets of that city. A few steps ahead of them some laborers were paving the street. Herrmann whispered to his friends that he was going to astonish the workingmen. Thereupon he accosted one of them with his serious air, and lifting the foot of the man took from under it a gold piece valued at twenty dollars. The fellow



demanded one-half of the amount, and Herrmann tried to explain to him who he was, and to reason with him, and told him that it was a trick. The man would accept no explanation and kept on demanding half of the trove. Herrmann persisted that it was all nonsense for any one to claim money that did not belong to him. A crowd began to assemble, and as the workman cried for the police, Herrmann was obliged to give him one-half the amount, but made up his mind that it did not pay to play tricks on the Brazilian workmen.

It would take more space than our book affords to give one-half the incidents which have befallen Herrmann in the course of his life, and the number of times he has been the victim of the greed of man.

For instance, in Cincinnati he was sitting with some of his friends emptying a few bottles of the "cheerful" (Herrmann's designation for champagne); he was playing some of his tricks when a stranger approached him and asked whether he could change a fifty-cent piece into gold. Herrmann by a dexterous movement of the hands performed the trick, when the stranger, on the plea of examining the money, took the twenty-dollar gold piece, which belonged to Herrmann, and walked off with it.

At a noted gathering of bankers, among whom was the Baron de Rothschild, one of the leading brokers in the French capital approached Mr. Herrmann and told him he would give him five thousand francs if he would tell him what was passing at the time in the head of the Baron de Rothschild. Mr. Herrmann accepted the offer and told him that the baron's intention was to lift the shares of the Suez Canal which had been knocked down for several weeks past.



The broker called Baron de Rothschild aside and told him in plain terms that he knew what the baron intended to do. Words fail to depict the astonished air of Rothschild, who supposed the matter was a secret known only to himself. In vain did he try to find out how the broker became aware of his plans. The latter refused to divulge the source, but promised that no one else should know what was going on, and, as the price of his secrecy, claimed the brokerage of all orders to be given by the baron.

Herrmann claims that mind reading is "bosh," but while he has been unwilling to inform us how he knew what was going on in the mind of the baron, he asserts that this can be explained as well as any of his extraordinary feats. For the time being, however, he chooses to have the world mystified, until the time comes when, in a more pretentious book, his life, together with a full explanation of all the tricks, feats, mysteries, etc., with which his name has been identified, will be given to the world.

To us, however, it is not the world-wide reputation of Herrmann, his marvellous intelligence, nor his dexterity, which has won our heart, and made us eager to publish this little volume. It is the unbounded charity of the man, for we know from an intimate acquaintance with him, that Alexander Herrmann gives one-fifth of his princely income to works of charity.

While in St. Petersburg, the municipality there wished to have a hospital erected for the wounded soldiers in the Russo-Turkish War. The proceeds of three of his performances were given for that noble purpose. On the third night, which has remained ever memorable in the hearts of all Russians, Herrmann took a hat from



one of the spectators and out of the same produced the design of the hospital, which has been taken as a pattern for the one now erected. The oppressed and down-trodden people in Roumania have cause to bless the day that he landed there, for it is mainly due to his work that the Polytechnic School of that city lives and flourishes. Let us also mention the fact that on his return to this country a year or two ago, when he became aware of the misfortune that had befallen Charleston, Herrmann, whose heart's throbs were never deaf to the cry of woe, gave a representation which netted \$1,400, the whole amount of which he turned over to the Mayor of Charleston.

In the city of Detroit one fine morning, a tall, slender man, with black, piercing eyes, entered a barber shop. He asked to be shaved, and as the knight of the razor was preparing to commence work, the dark-eyed man seized the razor from his hands, and with lightning rapidity laid it across his throat, from which the blood immediately spurted in torrents. The frightened barber and those present rushed out, the one for the police and the others for the doctor. When they returned they found the would-be suicide calmly arranging his necktie and not a trace of blood to be found anywhere in the shop.

The crowd followed him to the hotel, where it was discovered that the man who caused all this innocent commotion was our friend, Alexander Herrmann.

A San Francisco paper thus describes a visit which Herrmann paid to the Stock Board: "Herrmann visited the San Francisco Stock Board yesterday, and had, as one delighted 'bear' declared, 'great joy with the gang.' Unannounced, he walked into the centre ring and commenced



operations by taking from a Mr. Budd's breast and skirt pockets a most astonishing number of cards, among which the needful ace was observed to be suspiciously plentiful. The first movement of Herrmann attracted everybody's attention, Baron Wilkie appearing particularly delighted at Mr. Budd's discomfort. At this, Herrmann turned upon Mr. Wilkie, and, taking him by the nose, caused a perfect stream of cards, principally jacks, to flow therefrom. Everybody inside the ring now gathered around Herrmann, and the Caller, seeing that his frantic yells of 'Belcher !' were unobserved, joined the crowd on the floor. As the Caller approached, Herrmann extended his hand and proceeded to pull from his (the Caller's) coat-sleeve a pair of stockings, each about four feet long. Some one at this moment tipped Herrmann's hat off. The magician caught it and took from it a twenty-dollar roll. The fun became general and uproarious now. Herrmann's hands were gliding like lightning in all directions. He extracted cigarettes and cigars from the brokers' ears and noses ; mixed their supplies of handkerchiefs up beyond recovery ; took rag babies and stumps of cigars out of the younger members' pockets, and from the older and more sedate members took chewing-gum, stick-candy, and dime novels. Mr. Schmiedell, the most dignified broker on the floor, approached Herrmann, who extended his hand with a four-bit piece in it. The broker tried to snatch it, when the magician flipped it into the air and it landed in his hand a twenty-dollar piece. Mr. Schmiedell said, 'Gracious me ! That's easier than commissions in a big market.' Some impatient dealers in the lobby, who could not see all the fun, began to call out, 'Oh, hire a hall !' 'Why don't you pay a dollar and see



him?' 'Go on with the call,' etc. Herrmann went up to one of the discontented on the outside of the rail, and taking the man's hat off, dug up out of it a double-handful of coin, remarking: 'Vat you vant to deal in stogs for? Dat's de vay to make money.' The amazed 'chipper' retired in disgust. But there was no stopping the fun. Herrmann ran his fingers through Scott's curly hair and extracted a bunch of cigars, which he passed around to the crowd. He abashed Dan Yost by taking from his scarf a half-dozen scarf-pins belonging to other brokers. The Caller, tired with laughing, sat down in a chair and immediately got up—it was only a bent pin, but the Caller thought it was a shock of electricity. Several brokers took advantage of the opportunity to air their amateur abilities as magicians, and chairs began to tip and dance, hats flew off, handkerchiefs and pocket-books parted company with their owners, and a general confusion reigned until Herrmann bowed himself out."

. . . . .  
"The famous conjurer, Herrmann," says a French paper, "has arrived in Paris, after a sojourn of six months in South America. During a performance at the house of the Governor of Montevideo, Herrmann determined to mystify three half-savage Patagonians who were present, and whom no one dared to approach. He stupefied the first by taking from his nose an orange; he astonished the second by producing a number of silver coins from his hair; but the third seemed overpowered with terror as a living rat was extracted from his nose. Uttering a cry of fright, the Patagonians withdrew, and the company congratulated Herrmann upon his success. While receiving their congratu-



lation, she suddenly discovered that his watch was gone, and that his chain had gone with it. His purse, too, had disappeared, and the thief had also appropriated his eyeglass and his pocket-handkerchief. Half an hour afterward the chief of the Patagonians returned, bringing the missing articles. The savage from whose nose the rat had been extracted emptied the conjurer's pockets at the moment when he was pretending to be overcome with terror."



We saw Herrmann perform, at his residence, the following extraordinary feats.

"He placed a beautiful orange tree on a table; he next borrowed a lady's ring and handkerchief, and putting them into a box, gave this to the lady to hold. Next he waved his wand over the orange tree, and immediately it began to blossom; then, waving his wand again, the blossoms dis-



appeared and several oranges gradually grew, which he picked and handed to the company to prove they were real. He left, however, the one on top of the tree (which we particularly noticed at the time). He waved his wand once more, and two butterflies flew out, fluttering their wings in the most natural manner, and each holding a corner of the handkerchief, which they gradually drew out from the centre of the orange with the ring suspended in the middle of it. These he restored to the owner, and the box was found empty when opened."

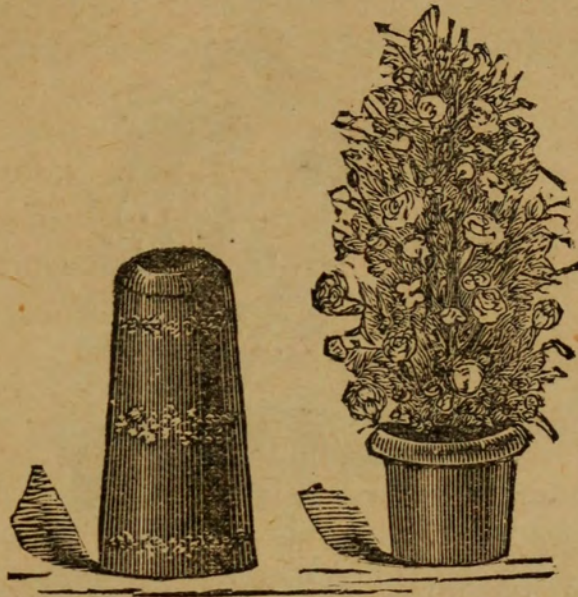
"He blindfolded a child and placed it in a basket which every one present examined and found to be perfectly empty. Closing the lid of the basket, the performer took a sharp sword and drove it repeatedly through the sides, till the screams of the child grew fainter, when the basket was opened and found to be empty. The child appeared hidden in the folds of the dress of Mme. Herrmann, who was seated in the rear of the parlor."

Before his Majesty, the King of Portugal, Mr. Herrmann performed the following marvel :

Herrmann showed a cone, made of metal, beautifully japanned. He put his arm through it to prove that there was nothing concealed inside, and that it was simply a thin metal cone, without a top. He next took a common flower-pot and asked to have it filled with mould. Placing the cone on the top of the flower-pot, and taking great quantities of various kinds of seeds, he poured them inside the cone, until the interior was full. Next, making some passes with his wand, he commanded the seeds to grow, and re-



moving the cone, revealed a beautiful bouquet of flowers,



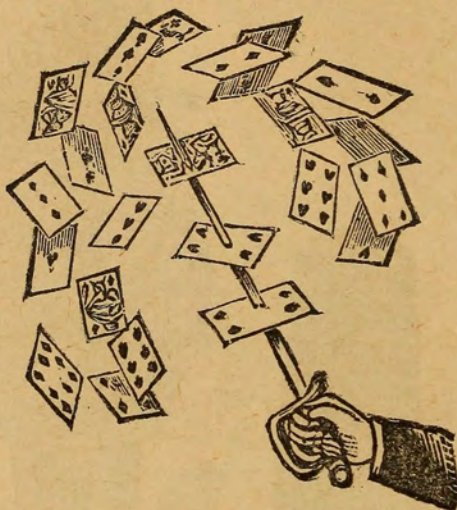
much higher than the cone, while the seeds had all vanished. The king expressed great admiration and surprise.

Another feat performed by Herrmann : Three cards were chosen from a pack, placed back, shuffled, and the pack retained by one of those present. Herrmann left the room for a few moments after giving the above instructions. He returned with a sword in his hand and asked the gentleman holding the cards to throw the pack up toward the ceiling ; as the cards fell, he thrust his sword among them and caught the three marked cards on the blade of the sword. He took them off and passed them to us.

A few nights ago Mr. Herrmann borrowed at the house of a gentleman a ten-dollar note, requesting another friend to



take the number of it. While examining it to see whether the note was a good one, it unfortunately caught fire and

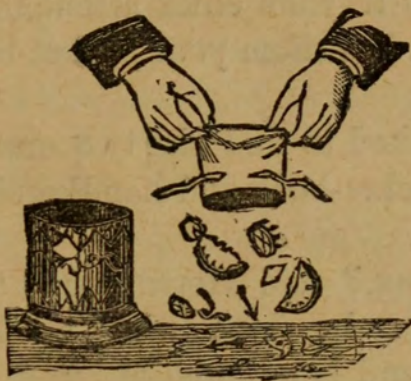


was completely consumed. Herrmann appeared to be very sorry, and the owner, taking the matter to be in earnest, assured the professor that it was a mere trifle and not worth regretting. Thereupon Mr. Herrmann said, "I have an idea—" He is always full of them. Sending for a candle, he cut it into pieces about an inch long and asked his friend in which piece he would like to find the bank-note. The piece chosen was broken in two, and there was the identical bank-note perfectly uninjured.

Mr. Herrmann borrowed our watch, placed it in a mortar and mashed it with a poker, pieces of the works being shown to us. The mortar was then covered for a moment, and when the cover was taken off the watch had vanished. His servant was next directed to bring a loaf of bread, and the watch was found in the centre of it uninjured.



Mr. Herrmann desired a lady to write a sentence on a piece of paper, which the lady was requested to burn. This being done, a basket full of eggs was brought in and the lady



asked to choose any egg she wished. The professor then broke the egg with his wand, and inside the paper written upon was found perfectly restored.

HERRMANN AND THE KING OF PORTUGAL.

The King of Portugal, wishing to ascertain the truth of the stories related to him regarding Herrmann, invited him to the palace.

“I am told you are the devil personified,” said the king to the magician.

“It is the truth, sire,” replied Herrmann, “although I am but a poor devil.”

“Perhaps you are, but I should like to have you prove to me the high reputation which you possess as a magician by exhibiting some of your feats before me, and without any previous preparation whatsoever.”

“The proof is given already,” replied Herrmann.

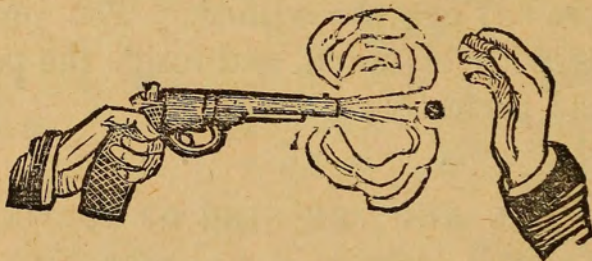
“How so?” said the king, a little puzzled.



"If your Majesty do me the favor of searching your pockets, you will find two oranges instead of the pocket-book and the handkerchief which were in your pocket when I entered here ; but if your chief attendant will search his pockets, he will find in them your pocket-book and handkerchief."

All were astonished to find the two oranges in the king's pocket and the pocket-book and handkerchief in that of the chief attendant.

"This is nothing," said Herrmann. "I want to show you something else. In which orange would you like to find your pocket-book and handkerchief ?"



"In the one which I have in my right hand," replied the king.

"Very well, your Majesty. Mr. Chief Attendant, will you please hold tight in your hands the objects found in your pockets ? Now, will your Majesty be kind enough to cut the orange ?"

The king did so, and inside of the orange were the pocket-book and handkerchief, while a bird came out of the hand of the astonished chief attendant and escaped through the open window.

During all this time Herrmann did not even approach the king or the chief attendant.



"Now, sire," continued the master of the black art, without paying attention to the surprise of all who were present, "do me the favor to choose one of your own pistols and load it with six bullets which you mark with your own hand."

After the king did it Herrmann said, "Please direct the pistol against my hand and fire."

This was too much ; the king did not want to do it, and the princess protested energetically.

"Much obliged to you, your Majesty, for the interest you manifest in my behalf, but let the King fire at me without scruple ; I am the very devil, and you cannot kill the devil with a pistol-shot."

Upon this declaration of Herrmann that it was not at all dangerous to fire, the king pointed the pistol and off went the shots. A cry of horror arose, and the eyes of all were fixed upon Herrmann, who, enveloped in the smoke produced by the explosion, presented to the king five of the bullets, the sixth having penetrated a mirror behind Herrmann a little above his shoulder.

"The pistol was well loaded," said Herrmann, pointing to the broken mirror. "It is a pity such a beautiful piece of furniture has been damaged. If you will allow it, I shall try immediately to repair it. Will your Majesty please give orders to cover the mirror with a curtain ?"

When this was done, Herrmann said, "Now I shall load the same pistol and fire at the mirror."

He fired, the curtain fell down, and the mirror was intact.

All were full of wonder that such things could take place in the salon of a king and in the presence of the court, where no preparations had been made. Nobody could explain or comprehend this action of Herrmann.



## HERRMANN AT THE WASHINGTON MARKET.

Accompanied by two newspaper reporters and several of his friends, Herrmann entered the Washington Market, walked about the stalls, passing from one place to the other, in a listless manner, apparently killing time, asking the price of one thing and another, and chatting in a friendly manner with the vendors of provisions. When it was whispered around that the famous wizard was in the market, a crowd assembled and stood gazing at him. Gradually it increased to such an extent that the police had to interfere and keep the crowd back. Herrmann pretended not to notice what was going on about him, and, in fact, seemed undecided what to do, when his attention was called to an egg-stand behind which a nice-looking Irish woman was posted. He looked for a moment at the eggs, and said :

“How much for eggs to-day?”

“Fifteen cents a dozen; fresh ones.”

“Give me a dozen, please, but on one condition. I want to break them, and whether you or I do it, it is understood whatever will be found inside of them will be mine.”

“Well, of course, I don’t want what the eggs contain inside, if once they are paid for.”

Herrmann took an egg and broke it, when lo ! there were four five-dollar gold pieces in the shell. Seeing the shining metal, the eyes of the woman almost started from their sockets. She looked at the crowd which surrounded her stand, and with astonishment exclaimed :

“How is that?”

“They are valuable eggs, those you sell,” said Herrmann, and giving one to the woman, “Will you please break this one for me?”



The woman took the egg, looked at Herrmann's face, and broke it with trembling hands. It contained the same amount of money as the first one; four five-dollar gold pieces were in the shell again. She closed her hand involuntarily, when the magician said to her:

"Hold on, madame; you know that the contents of all those eggs belong to me." As she was giving him the money, he asked: "How much do you want for all your eggs?"

Another woman who occupied the stand next to her, called out: "Don't sell another one of those eggs; why, they all, of course, belong to you."

"They are not for sale, sir," replied the Irish woman.

The crowd which surrounded the egg-stand amounted already to hundreds of persons. One after the other the eggs were broken by Herrmann and by the woman, until the one dozen bought were all broken, and each one contained the four five-dollar gold pieces. The crowd was constantly increasing, and Herrmann could make his way through it only with the assistance of the police.

#### CONFUSION IN A STREET-CAR.

A very extraordinary scene occurred a few years ago in car No. 12 of the Third Avenue line. The car was running down town with a mixed cargo of occupants, as is generally the case, when a well-dressed gentleman entered it at the corner of Sixteenth Street. The car, however, was so full that the gentleman had to stand on the platform. He stood there for about five minutes, when inside of the car a great confusion arose, one of the passengers exclaiming that his watch was gone, another swearing because his pocket-



book had disappeared, while an old Irish woman, dealing in apples, asserted in the strongest words she could command that all the apples in her basket were missing. She was greatly excited at being so shamefully treated. Two old spinsters joined in the shrieks of the Irish woman, one of them declaring that she missed her handkerchief and the other her pocket-book. The affair grew serious; the conductor stopped the car, and went in search of a policeman; then a well-known merchant made the proposition that everybody should be searched. His proposition was accepted by acclamation, and the operation took place in presence of the policeman, who arrived with the conductor. The following scene ensued, which well-nigh beggars description: In the coat-pockets of the above-mentioned merchant were found, to his great surprise and confusion, some of the apples missed by the Irish woman; a few more were found in the pockets of the gentleman who claimed to have lost his watch, and about half a dozen in the pockets of the two old spinsters, while the lost pocket-book and handkerchief were found in the pockets of the lately arrived policeman, and two live rabbits were drawn from the inside wide coat pockets of the conductor. The agitation had reached its highest point. All were standing and violently talking to each other. But the watch and the other pocket-book were still missing, when the gentleman who, as it has been said, had been compelled to stand on the platform of the car, and who, owing to the confusion, secured for himself a seat inside the car, stooped and quietly picked up two apples, in which he discovered the missing watch and pocket-book.

Immediately this gentleman was recognized by one of the passengers as the magician, Herrmann, who explained to



those present that he had performed this whole trick for the sole purpose of getting a seat inside of the car, as he felt too tired to stand on the platform. He begged to be excused for the liberty he had taken. Everybody laughed heartily excepting the apple-woman, who was still grumbling about the loss of her apples, but Herrmann, without being seen, put a gold-piece into her hand. Fully satisfied, she left the car with her empty basket.

#### THE DEVIL'S MIRROR.

Take a square box about six inches long and twelve inches high, or of any proportionate dimensions. Cover the interior with four mirrors, locating them perpendicularly to the bottom of the box. Put at the bottom any desired object, as a tin soldier, paper castles, etc. Put over the box a glass frame, which must have the form of the base of a pyramid, and must be arranged in such a way that it falls upon the box like a cover. The four sides of this frame must be of glass, or be covered from inside with gauze, in order that the light may penetrate without being seen through the upper part, which must consist of transparent glass. On looking through this glass, beautiful scenery can be seen, and of unlimited extent. If prepared with care, this mirror affords a good deal of amusement.

#### THE CHANGING COIN.

For this trick take two false gold-pieces and two silver pieces which resemble quarters. Rub the latter upon a stone until they become only half as thick as they were, and joining each yellow coin with a white one, you will have apparently two pieces of coin, each of them seeming to be a gold coin on one side and a silver coin on the other. Some



cement may be employed to keep the coins together ; but if one is of soldering metal, regulus, or antimony, and the other contains iron, they will stick together by contact and the pressure of the hand. Take one of these double coins in your hand, the yellow side upward ; now let the public observe your manipulations, which consist in closing both your hands, shaking them, or putting one upon the table and the other under the table and ordering the coins to change. While manipulating, change the coins in your hands and show them to the public changed. This trick will always create amusement, and especially if the magician in the beginning takes from the audience a gold coin and a silver one of the size of a quarter ; of course, not to use in his trick, but merely to impart more reality to the performance.

#### HOW TO NAIL A CARD TO THE WALL BY A PISTOL-SHOT.

Take a card and tell the person who has chosen it from a pack to cut off one corner and keep the piece, in order to recognize again the card chosen. The card is burned to ashes, and a pistol is loaded with gunpowder mixed with the ashes of the card. Instead of a bullet put into the pistol a nail marked by some one in the audience. The pack is then thrown into the air, the pistol fired, and the card which has been reduced to ashes is seen nailed to the wall. Take it down, compare it with the piece in the hands of the person who chose the card, and show that the card nailed to the wall is exactly the same, and that also the nail is the same which had been previously marked. The operation is as follows : When the magician sees that a corner has been cut from one of the cards, he goes away under some pretext and makes a



similar cut in another card. When he returns, he takes the chosen card, places it among the rest of the pack, changes it dexterously for the one prepared by himself, and finally reduces the latter to ashes. When the pistol is loaded, he takes it, saying that he wants to show how it has to be fired, and in the mean time opens a hole in the pistol and takes out the nail, which falls into his hand by its own weight. Closing the hole in the pistol again, he requests some one to put in more gunpowder, and during this time the magician passes the nail and the card to his assistant, who quickly nails the card on a piece of square wood which fits closely into a square hole in the wall covered with a piece of wall paper of the same design as the rest. The hole is above a mirror, the piece of wall paper covering it is fastened to the wall by pins, and a thread is attached to its lower part. When the assistant hears the detonation of the pistol, he pulls the thread, the covering piece of wall paper falls down behind the mirror, and the card can be seen nailed to the wall.

#### THE BURNED PACK OF CARDS FOUND INSIDE A WATCH.

Let some of the spectators choose a card from a pack ; request three gentlemen each to lend you his watch, and wrap each watch in a different piece of paper in the form of a drinking-cup and place these upon the table, covering them with a napkin. Burn now the chosen card, and put the ashes into a small box ; a moment afterward open this box and no ashes will be found in it. The three watches are placed upon a plate, and anybody can select one of them ; the same person opens the watch and finds inside of the glass cover a piece of the card burned, and inside the other cover



a miniature card like the one burned. The following is the method of executing this trick: As soon as you tell your assistant which card has been chosen, he takes from the table one of the watches, in which he deposits "what is necessary." The watches are covered with a napkin sustained by bottles or something else, so that the confederate's hand cannot be seen, nor the movement of the napkin. To make the ashes in the small box invisible, place under the cover of it a piece of paper cut exactly to the size of the cover and of the same color as the interior of the box; when the box is closed, this paper will fall down and cover the ashes at the bottom, leaving the spectators bewildered and believing that these ashes have produced the miniature card found in one of the watches.

#### THE TRICK OF THE ROSE.

Take a common well-developed rose, place on a hot coal a little powder of sulphur, let the rose absorb a little of the smoke, and it will become almost white. When the rose has been cut from the bush for some time, it will be completely white. Put it for a while in water and after a few hours it will again assume its red color.

#### THE DEVIL IN A SMOKING PIPE.

Take one ounce of saltpetre, one ounce cream of tartar, half an ounce of sulphur, and pulverize each ingredient separately. Afterwards mix them all together and keep them in a paper inside of your pocket. Then put a grain or two in a tobacco-pipe, and when lighted it will produce the same detonation as a gun-shot, but will not destroy the pipe. A quantity as large as can be carried under the finger-nail can be put into a piece of paper which will produce, when



lighted, a report equal to that of several cannon, but without doing any damage.

#### WALKING UPON RED-HOT IRON.

Dissolve one half ounce of camphor in two ounces aqua-vitæ, add one ounce of quicksilver and one ounce of liquid styrax, which is the product of the myrrh, and which does not allow the camphor to ignite ; take besides two ounces of red-stone, and let it be pulverized ; mix all together, and when you want to walk upon a piece of red-hot iron, rub your feet well with this composition and you can execute the trick without any inconvenience whatsoever.

#### HOW TO KEEP FOUR KINGS TOGETHER.

Take the four kings out of a complete deck of cards and have under them three other cards without this being known by the audience. Show that the four kings are together, and place them on top of the whole pack. Divide the deck into four parts, placing the four kings and the three cards under them on top of one of the parts. Take now the first three cards from the top of the first part and put one of them on top of each of the other three parts, and taking the top card from the first part show it to the spectators to be a king. Now put one part over the other until you have the whole pack in one pile, and when you let fall the cards on the table the four kings will be together.