few months he was to spend in their hearing run into a score, and again into another score. Two or three years hence we shall meet him again, — changed, certainly; but whether for better or for worse the sequel will show.

And Rose? — and Adèle?

Well, well, we must not overleap the quiet current of our story. While the May violets are in bloom, let us enjoy them and be thankful; and when the autumn flowers are come to take their places, let us enjoy those, too, and thank God.

DEEP-SEA DAMSELS.

> "Once I sat upon a promontory,
> And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
> Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
> That the rude sea grew civil at her song;
> And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maid's music."
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

MEN have a commodious faith generally, and in the things of land and water; but they do not believe in the mermaid.

Once, a thousand years ago, a certain Arabian traveller described an Oriental fish that came up out of the sea to catch flies or to get a drink. It was no crabbed crustacean, no compromise of claws; but a fish with fins, — a perch: and, being a perch, it not only came up on dry land, but did, the traveller said, climb trees. There was a climax! No one characterized this story fitly, for all perceived that the Arabian must know its nature very well. And so the Arabian traveller died in good time, and the thousand years went on about their business, and in our days the fish story has been verified. Now it rests, partly, on the authority of "two Dutch naturalists residing at Tranquebar." Two Dutch naturalists are a good foundation for anything less than a pyramid. In this matter they are not alone, however; for the naturalist Daldorf, also, who was a lieutenant in the Danish East-India Company's service, communicated to Joseph Banks, who "did not believe in the mermaid," that "in the year 1791 he had taken this fish from a moist cavity in the stem of a Palmyra palm which grew near a lake." More than this, "he saw it when already five feet above the ground struggling to ascend still higher." And this was its process: "suspending itself by its gill-covers, and bending its tail to the left, it fixed its anal fin in the cavity of the bark, and sought by expanding its body to urge its way upward"; and its progress was arrested only by the hand with which the valiant Daldorf seized it. More in reference to the same fish may be found in Tennent's great book on Ceylon, in Hartwig, and later naturalists generally.

Men would naturally doubt of fish in trees. Even the Chinese would. "To climb a tree in pursuit of fish," is a phrase actually used as an hyperbole of nonsense by many Tsze, in the book called "Shang Mung." And the above is therefore a fair instance of the progress of human intelligence, — of a thousand years of incredulity, and final scientific admission. Let it be taken here as absinthe, appetizingly.

The ancients believed, among other things, that man had, to say the least, relations in the various departments of Nature and in the various divisions of animal life; that there were wild men who lived in the forests, and differed

from man proper principally in other than physical respects; and that there were wild men who lived in the sea: also that there were beings half-man and half-horse; others half-man and half-bird; and others, again, half-man and half-fish. In respect to the wild man of the woods, it may be said that those words are the literal signification of the Malayan words *orang outang;* and that animal's appearance seems to determine that the Satyr and kindred creatures were not entirely imaginations. For the half-man and half-horse we have abundant explanation in the various wild riding tribes of men, especially the Tartars. The half-bird appears to have been distinguished for only a singing reason, and is therefore, as it were, a piece of heraldry. For the wild man of the sea, and the half-man and half-fish, what have we?

Let us see.

Apparently the earliest presentation to men's eyes of that form under which the mermaid is still figured was the image, in very ancient days, of Derceto, goddess of the Philistines of Ascalon, in a temple of that city. She was woman above and fish below. She had been a beautiful virgin, but had excited that all-prevalent passion since irregulated by Aphrodite. It proved her ruin, she cast herself into the sea, and suffered the partial metamorphosis. So was it fabled in that land: but it is much more plausibly thought that the combination of woman and fish declared, hieroglyphically, some dim knowledge that those ancients had of certain relations between the moon and the sea, of which things the respective parts were typical.

Half-fishy also was the form of that Dagon which in Ashdod, or Azotus, another city of the Philistines, fell down upon his face before the ark of the Lord. This Dagon was the god, apparently, in whose honor the Philistines were gathered together on that day when blind Samson "took hold of the two middle pillars," and let down the roof, and caught so many swallows.

According to an ancient fable, preserved by Berosus, this is what was known of Dagon. In the first year, there appeared, coming out of that part of the Erythræan Sea which borders upon Babylonia, an animal whose whole body was that of a fish; but under the fish's head he had another head, with feet below similar to those of a man, subjoined to the fish's tail. His voice was articulate and human, and he taught men to construct cities, to found temples, compile laws, — indeed, taught them everything that could tend to soften them from a state of natural barbarism; and hence he was called Oannes, a name that signified "the Enlightener"; and this name journeying westward became contracted into *On*, and had prefixed to it the *Dag*, signifying *a fish*, and so became Dagon.

An image of Oannes is mentioned by Berosus as preserved in his time, and one has been found on the walls of Nimroud. In the ruins near Khorsabad was found another of Dagon in his final Phœnician form. Engravings of both these may be seen in "Nineveh and its Palaces."

In the story of Oannes we have probably the account preserved by a rude people of the advent among them at a very early period of one more enlightened than themselves; just as the Peruvians accounted in their peculiar way for the coming of Manco Capac. He comes also from a land farther east, by the Persian Gulf. These people were at the time very likely ignorant of even the most rudimentary navigation, and hence coming by water he was to them a fish indeed.

The incarnation of Brahma as a fish — the Matsya Avatar — is recounted in much Sanscrit; but it appears to be only a symbolical reference to a great division of Nature, — a heathen assertion of God in the sea, as well as elsewhere. The same is true of the marine deities of Greece and Rome, which were not fishy, though the words Triton and Nereïd have led to misconception, as in relation to those words it is necessary to understand a distinction that has not always been made. The mythological Triton was one, — a sea-god sub-

ordinate to Poseidon, and played a conspicuous part in Deucalion's flood. He is pictured by Ovid as carrying a horn, and wearing a Tyrian robe, that may be construed into a blue jacket, — which would make him the original sailor. The Nereïds were fifty. They were the daughters of Nereus, and, pursued by the fifty sons of Ægyptus, could find rest in no land, and became wanderers upon the sea, and at length sea-nymphs. Each had a special, besides the general name.

There does, however, appear to have been a "fishy composure" held sacred by the Greeks: this was the *Pompilus*. "Pompilus," says Apollonius Rhodius, "was originally a man, and he was changed into a fish on account of a love-affair of Apollo's. They say that Apollo fell in love with a beauty named Ocyrhoe, and that, when she had crossed over to Miletus, at the time of a festival, and was afraid to return lest the god should attack her, she induced Pompilus, a sailor, and friend to her father, to see her safely home; and that he led her down to the shore and embarked, when Apollo appeared, took the maiden, sunk the ship, and metamorphosed Pompilus into a fish." Others assert this fish to have sprung at the same time with Aphrodite, and from the same heavenly blood. What fish it was it is scarcely possible to say; but that there was a fish bearing this name held sacred by the Greeks is certain.

The Triton, in which the ancients believed as part of the physical world, was a different being from the deity. He was the classical Merman. The term *Nereïd* was used confusedly to express the female of the Triton, or the Mermaid.

The passage, in his "Natural History," where Pliny speaks of the Triton, indicates that the existence of such an animal was not universally admitted. It is prefaced thus: — "The vulgar notion may very possibly be true, that whatever is produced in any other department of Nature may be found in the sea as well." We are then told that a deputation of persons from Olisipo, (the present Lisbon,) that had been sent for the purpose, brought word to the Emperor Tiberius that a Triton had been both seen and heard in a certain cavern, blowing a conch-shell, and that he was of the form in which Tritons are usually represented.

This is so simple and meagre as to read like an extract from some diary or annals; and the mere existence of such a passage seems to be good evidence that something, at the least, like a Triton, was certainly seen. For Pliny was sufficiently near to this time to know whether such a deputation had come to Rome, and would scarcely have volunteered a falsehood; so that the deputation may reasonably be granted. Then the distance from Lisbon to Rome was so great, particularly in that ante-railroad time, and the general interest in the Merman so little, that it does not seem possible a deputation should be sent that distance "for the purpose" only of presenting this information, unless the proof of the object seen was of the most convincing character to those by whom the deputation was sent.

It is to be regretted that Pliny did not give at more length the statement of this early scientific commission. He does not leave the subject immediately, however, but says, —

"I have some distinguished informants of equestrian rank, who state that they themselves once saw in the Ocean of Gades a sea-man which bore in every part of his body a perfect resemblance to a human being; and that during the night he would climb up into ships, upon which the side of the vessel where he seated himself would instantly sink downward, and, if he remained there any considerable time, even go under water."

Gades was Cadiz, and the Ocean of Gades was that part of the Atlantic lying south and west of Spain and west of Africa. The statement of the Merman's boarding a ship is, a little singularly, to be found as well in the ballad of the "Merman Rosmer," which comes into English from a Scandinavian source. The effect of his board-

ing a ship is identical also. He would seem to have been a heavy fellow, North and South.

"Nor yet," says Pliny, still on the same subject, "is the figure generally attributed to the Nereïds [Mermaids] at all a fiction; only in them the portion of the body that resembles the human figure is still rough all over with scales. For one of these creatures was seen upon the same shores, [Ocean of Gades,] and as it died its plaintive murmurs were heard, even by the inhabitants at a distance. The legates of Gaul, too, wrote word to the late Emperor Augustus, that a considerable number of Nereïds had been found dead upon the sea-shore."

Entire faith in the scales is not exacted of the reader, and the weight of authority, especially scientific, is against them. No marine mammals have scales. There is, of course, no knowing what they may have had. The statement of what the legates of Gaul wrote to the Emperor is of most consequence in this extract, and it is perhaps out of a natural respect for authority that we are inclined to give most weight to these official communications. Officials, it is true, have sometimes erred; but these officials agree with others, and to be stranded has been a common misfortune of mermen and maids.

Alexander of Alexandria, the good Bishop who had so healthy an abhorrence of Arianism, *saw* (upon his own authority) a Nereïd (Mermaid) that had been thrown ashore on the coast of the Peloponnesus. Seeing was believing; and if the Bishop was right in so many higher things, all the way up to Divinity, is it possible that he could be wrong in the mere fact of a dead animal? Or if he was wrong in this particular, is not the whole question as to the right or wrong of Arianism opened again?

A mermaid was stranded in 1403 near Haerlem, — driven ashore by a tempest, said one Meyer, a Dutchman. It was brought to feed upon bread and milk, taught to spin, and lived for many years. John Gerard of Leyden adds, that she would frequently pull off her clothes and run toward the water, and that her speech was so confused a noise as not to be understood by anybody. She was buried in the churchyard, because she had learned to make the sign of the cross. They had much consideration for a possible soul in those days.

Gerard spoke this upon the credit of several persons who had seen her. We find noted by another author, that, "in the fifteenth century, after a dreadful tempest on the coast of Holland, a mermaid was found struggling in the mud, near Edam, in West Friesland; whence it was carried to Haerlem, where it lived some years, was clothed in female apparel, and, it is said, was taught to spin." This was apparently the same.

This creature is said to have run, — a thing somewhat inconsistent with a caudal termination, — and she must be supposed, therefore, to be of the Wild-Man-of-the-Sea family rather than of the half-man, half-fish. She was, perhaps, a relative of this next, recorded in an ancient English chronicle: —

"In the time of King Henry I., when Bartholomew de Glanville was warden of Oxford Castle, the fishermen took in their nets a wild man, having the human shape complete, with horns on his head, and long and pick beard, and a great deal of shaggy hair on his breast; but he stole away to sea privately, and was never seen afterwards."

He wished, evidently, to avoid the embarrassment of the farewell.

Another of these footed sea-men makes his appearance in the book of Gellius on Animals. Therein is recounted the history, as far as landsmen knew it, of a Triton that used to come ashore on the coast of Epirus, and lie in wait by a well but a short distance from the sea, and who, when the country-girls came to the well for water, would leap out and seize them, and bear them away beneath the waves; and not able to conceive the peculiarity of the human lungs that lurked beneath their beautiful bosoms, many a one the wretch thus drowned in his passionate admiration. Beautiful Greek girls! with such

limbs as have come down in marble! Life under the sea seems favorable to the perfection of a correct taste.

Mem. — The reader is not at liberty to doubt this Triton. Draconetus Bonifacius, a Neapolitan, subsequently saw him preserved in honey.

In 1560 the fishermen of Ceylon caught seven of these sea-people of both sexes. They were seen by many Portuguese gentlemen then at Menar, and, among the rest, by Dimaz Bosquez, physician to the Viceroy of Goa, who minutely examined them, made dissections, and asserted that the principal parts, internal and external, were conformable to those of the human species.*

In the reign of Roger, King of Sicily, a young man swimming in the sea, one night, perceived that something followed him. He thought it one of his companions, but caught it by the hair, and dragged it on shore. It was a maiden of great beauty! He threw his cloak about her, and took her to his home. There she lived with him and bore a son. But he was continually troubled that one so beautiful should be dumb; for she had never spoken. One day a companion jeered at the spectre that he had at home, and, angry and terrified, he urged her to tell him who or what she was, and threatened with his sword to kill the child before her, if she did not. Then she said that he had lost a good wife by forcing her to speak; and she vanished. A few years after, when the son was playing on the shore, his mother dragged him into the sea, and he was drowned.

In the South of France a belief prevails in beings called Dracs, who have apparently a complete human form, and who inhabit indifferently the rivers or the sea. Gervase of Tilbury has recorded several instances of their appearance, of which the following is one: —

"There is on the banks of the Rhone, under a guard-house at the north gate of the city of Arles, a great pool of the river. In these deep places they say that the Dracs are often seen of bright nights. A few years ago, there was, for three successive days, openly heard the following words in the place outside the gate of the city which I have mentioned, while the figure, as it were, of a man ran along the bank, — 'The hour is past, and the man does not come!' On the third day, about the ninth hour, while the figure of a man raised his voice higher than usual, a young man ran swiftly to the bank, plunged in, and was swallowed up, and the voice was heard no more."

The depths of the sea appear to be the Fairy Land of France, and the French Mermaids merely fairies. Such is their character in popular ballads of Provence. Among popular legends of Brittany, "The Groac'h of the Isle of Lok" is peculiarly striking, but withal merely a fairy story, — the Groac'h being a first cousin at least of Undine and the Lorelei. Yet in Brittany another Mermaid — Morgan, or Morverc'h, sea-woman, or sea-daughter — sings and combs its golden hair by the noontide sun at the edge of the ocean.

The Irish Moruach, or Merrow, sea-maid, is the *bonâ fide* Mermaid, and some families in the South of Ireland are said to claim descent from them. There are numerous legends.

Mermaids are plentiful in all accounts of Norway; and Aldrovandus gives the portrait of one that was captured in the Baltic, and presented to Sigismund, King of Poland. It lived several days, and was seen by all his court. Aldrovandus gives also the picture of a Merman who, in his natural condition, had the appearance of being clothed in a bishop's frock, and of another with horns, which was a peculiarity of the one taken in England somewhat earlier.

In Scandinavian mythology every division of Nature is peopled with its peculiar spirits, and all have a longing, mournful desire for salvation. A river-spirit, or Nek, once asked a priest if he would likely be saved.

* See *Memoirs of an Oriental Residence.* — Sir James Forbes.

"Sooner," answered the priest, "will this cane which I hold in my hand grow green flowers than thou attain salvation."

The spirit wept mournfully, and the priest passed on. But in a little while his cane actually bloomed, and put forth leaves and blossoms, and he went back and told the spirit, who then sang and rejoiced all night.

The Havmand is the Merman; the Havfrue, the Mermaid. They are handsome, rather beneficent than evil, though occasionally both are treacherous. "Fishermen sometimes see the Mermaid in the bright summer sun, when a thin mist hangs over the sea, sitting on the surface of the water, and combing her long, golden hair with a golden comb, or driving up her snow-white cattle to feed on the islands. At other times she comes as a beautiful maiden, chilled and shivering with the cold of the night, to the fires the fishers have kindled, hoping by this means to entice them to her love."

In the Faroe Islands the Mermaid of popular belief merges insensibly into the Seal; and in Shetland it is believed, that, while they are distinct beings, they can only come to the surface of the sea by entering the skin of some animal capable of existing in the water. This also is always the Seal. In this form they land on some rock and amuse themselves as they will. But they must take care of these skins, for without them they can never return.

One summer's eve, a Shetlander walked along the shore of a little inlet. By the moonlight he saw, at some distance before him, a number of these sea-people who had "left unsounded depths to dance on sands." Near them, on the ground, he saw several seal-skins.

As he approached, the disturbed dancers precipitately made to their garments, drew them on, and, in the form of seals, plunged into the sea. When he came up, he saw one seal-skin still there; he snatched it up, ran away, and secured it. He then returned. There he met upon the shore the fairest maiden that eye ever gazed upon. She was lamenting piteously the loss of her seal-skin robe, without which she could never rejoin her friends or reach her watery home. He endeavored to console her. She implored him to restore her dress; but her beauty had decided that. At last, as he continued inexorable, she consented to become his wife. They were married and had several children, who retained no mark of the watery strain, save a thin web between their fingers and a peculiar bend of the hand.

The Shetlander's love for his wife was unbounded, but she made a cold return. Often she stole out alone and hastened to the sea-shore, and at a given signal a seal of large size would appear, and they would hold converse for hours in an unknown language, when she would return home pensive and melancholy.

So years passed and her hopes vanished, when one day the children, playing behind a stack of corn, found a seal-skin. Delighted, they ran to show the prize to their mother. She was no less delighted, for she saw in it the lost home and friends beneath the water. Yet she loved her children. That proved but a slight pang, and with many embraces she fled to the sea.

The husband came in almost immediately, and hearing what had happened ran out only to see her plunge into the sea, where she was joined by the seal. She looked back and saw his misery. "Farewell!" she said. "I loved you well while I was with you, but I always loved my first husband better."

"Near the coast," says Sir James Forbes, "we saw many sorts of fish, but did not meet with many of the Mermaids so often mentioned in these seas, especially by Mr. Matcham, a gentleman of great respectability, and at that time superintendent of the Company's Marine at Bombay. I have heard him declare, that, when in command of a trading vessel at Mozambique, Mombaz, and Melinda, three of the principal seaports on the east coast of Africa, he frequently saw these extraordinary animals from six to twelve feet long;

the head resembling the human, except about the nose and mouth, which were rather more like a hog's snout; the skin fair and smooth; the head covered with dark, glossy hair of considerable length; the neck, breasts, and body of the female as low as the hips, appeared like a well-formed woman; from thence to the extremity of the tail they were perfect fish. The shoulders and arms were in good proportion, but from the elbow tapered to a fin, like the turtle or penguin."

The very curious reader should examine Cuvier's account of the Manatee, or Manatus, (called from its hands,) and of the Halicore, or Dugong, "from its mammæ, called the Mermaid." Concerning this latter Hartwig has the following sentence: — "When they raise themselves with the front part of their body out of the water, a lively fancy might easily be led to imagine that a human shape, though certainly none of the most beautiful, was surging from the deep."

This is the testimony, and our deduction is short and simple.

We see, first, in the East, two hieroglyphs: one, the fishy man-monster, expressive of a joint dominion over land and sea; the other, a woman and fish conjoined, and expressive of relationship between the moon and the sea; and thus the *form* of the Mermaid grew; and as that which had in its mythology the latter of the figures was a maritime nation, the figure was spread abroad and perpetuated. Next, in the North we see the imagination that placed a colony of trolls under every hill, a tiny creature under every "cowslip's bell," and a separate spirit in every little stream, peopling also the outer ocean with its creatures; and here the perfect *idea* of the Mermaid, with its various beneficent or mischievous qualities, appears.

Between these two put the sailor, always superstitious and of ready credulity, and very often ignorant that the stories and the figure were not the actual results of human experience, and, their reality assumed, whatever strange thing he saw in his wanderings would be naturally referred to them, whether it were an occasional Dugong, or only a seal erected in the water at such a distance that the sunbeams on his shining coat made it seem white.

And this is the natural history of the Mermaid.

Aside from this, if one were Quixotically inclined to assert the Mermaid, he would find in all that has been said nothing of weight against it; and after what has been proved to have existed, it is hard to say what is impossible. The Ichthyophagi of Diodorus, while they retained their human form, were more than half-fish, fishes in blood and instinct very clearly. Tendencies exaggerate themselves very strangely in a few centuries. A negro's under-lip has been so big as to hang down before him like an apron. Cuvier declares that we "may trace the gradations of one and the same plan, from man to the last of the fishes"; and Mr. Darwin's theory appears to involve something like Mermaids as inevitable links, existing or extinct, in the chain of universal life.