



WITCHCRAFT.

By the author of "Astrology, Divination, and Co-Incidence," "Faith-Healing and Kindred Phenomena," etc.

The art is old and new, for verily
All ages have been taught the matter.

GOETHE.



ADDISON says that among all the poets who deal with fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits, the English are much the best, "and among the English Shakspeare has incomparably excelled all

others. There is something so wild and yet so solemn in his speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginary persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, . . . and must confess, if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable that they would talk and act as he has represented them."

As Addison saw his fatal day thirty years before Goethe's natal star arose, he could not compare the prince of German poets with others; but if the ruling sentiment of modern critics may be accepted, Shakspeare's ghosts and witches still maintain their superiority. These are "the secret, black, and midnight hags" that brewed the charm for Duncan's murder, and the familiar but ever awe-inspiring ghost of Hamlet's father:

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night.

But the fancies of poets can give no help to him who deals with one of the darkest tragedies of humanity, the only stain on the ermine of Sir Matthew Hale,—whose fame without it would rival that of Daniel for wisdom, as it does for integrity,—and the chief stigma upon the early history of New England. Nor is witchcraft of the past only: for by many theologians it is believed to reappear in modern spiritualism, and by a multitude of Christians to be a

reality, because, as they suppose, it is plainly asserted in the sacred Scriptures; and its baleful spell still holds four fifths of the fifteen hundred millions of the human race "fast in its slavish chains."

DEFINITION.

FROM the earliest ages religions, true and false, claimed divine aid, and their production of effects by other than natural causes was considered by all except avowed unbelievers to be lawful. The supernatural is occult; but the latter word is used only to apply to the illegitimate, and to the imaginary sciences of the middle ages. As the terms at first employed were descriptive, rather than definitive, they came naturally to be used promiscuously, one word sometimes standing for everything preternatural exclusive of religion, and at others for a single form of such action. In an English book dating from the middle of the sixteenth century most of these ancient terms are included in a single sentence: "Besides the art magyck, sortilege, physnomye, palmestrye, alcumye, necromancye, chiromancy, geomancy, and witchery, that was taught there also." (Bale, "English Votaries.")

Magic, applied by the Greeks to the hereditary caste of priests in Persia, still stands in the East for an incongruous collection of superstitious beliefs and rites, having nothing in common except the claim of abnormal origin and effects. Astrology, divination, demonology, soothsaying, sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, enchantment, and many other systems are sometimes included in magic, but each term is also employed separately to stand for the whole mass of confused beliefs which, outside of the sphere of recog-

nized religion, attempt to surpass the limitations of nature. For this reason the title of a work on this subject seldom indicates its scope.

But witchcraft has been restricted by usage and civil and ecclesiastical law until it signifies a voluntary compact between the devil, the party of the first part, and a human being, male or female, wizard or witch, the party of the second part,—that he, the devil, will perform whatever the person may request. The essential element in witchcraft as an offense against religion and civil law is the voluntary nature of the compact. Possession by the devil against the will, or without the consent of the subject, belongs to a radically distinct idea. The sixth chapter of Lord Coke's "Third Institute" concisely defines a witch in these words: "A witch is a person which hath conference with the *devil*, to consult with him to do some act." English laws in 1655 define witchcraft as "Covenant with a familiar spirit, to be punished with death."

CURRENT BELIEF.

WITCHCRAFT is at the present time believed in by a majority of the citizens of the United States. The larger number of immigrants from the continent of Europe are more or less in fear of such powers. To these must be added no inconsiderable proportion of persons of English and Scotch descent; for a strong vein of superstition is discernible in many Irish, Scotch, and some English, whose "folk-lore," diffused in nursery tales and neighborhood gossip, has entwined itself strongly about the fibers of spontaneous, subconscious mental imagery. Among the more ignorant members of the Catholic Church of every nationality the belief produces a mysterious dread, against which men and women cross themselves, and resort to various rites supposed to be efficacious.

Where colonies of immigrants have remained isolated, retaining the use of their own language, the influence of witchcraft is more easily traced. The interior of Pennsylvania affords better illustrations of this, and on a larger scale, than any other State. It has been but two or three years since suit was brought by a man against his mother, in one of the counties of Pennsylvania, to recover damages for a dog which he charged her with having killed by witchcraft; and he not only brought suit, but obtained judgment from a justice of the peace. Various witnesses testified as to their experiences in witchcraft, and only one said that he had never had a friend or relative who was bewitched.

In divers villages in Pennsylvania, some of them in the Dunkard settlement, are women who are supposed to be witches. Some are shrewd enough not to apply their arts for

strangers, but to those whom they know, as stated in an article in the New York "Sun" some years ago, they will sell charms to ward off lightning from buildings, dry up the wells of the enemies of applicants, force cows to give bloody milk, cause sickness in the family, destroy beauty, separate man and wife, and reunite estranged lovers.

In the interior parts of the Southern States, where a large proportion of the white population cannot read, and there is little admixture of society, there are "witch-doctors," who, assuming that all disease is caused by witches, secure thriving practice in counteracting their influence. The Philadelphia "Times," on the authority of a reputable correspondent, who gives many facts to sustain his representations, says: "For generations the poor whites have believed in witches, and the belief is deep-seated and incurable."

The African population brought this belief from the Dark Continent, and it persists among them to this day, though the progress of religion and education is doing something to check it.

I have recently noted in various parts of the United States more than fifty suits instituted by persons against those who they claimed had bewitched them; but under existing laws the accused could not be prosecuted except where money had been obtained under false pretenses, or overt acts of crime had been suggested or committed.

During pedestrian tours in New England, in various parts of the West, and in every Southern State, I have frequently stayed for the night at the houses of poor farmers, laborers, fishermen, and trappers. In such journeys I have invariably listened to the tales of the neighborhood, stimulating them by suggestion, and have found the belief in witchcraft cropping out in the oldest towns in New England, sometimes within the very shadow of the buildings where a learned ministry has existed from the settlement of the country, and public schools have furnished means of education to all classes. The horse-shoes seen in nearly every county, and often in every township, upon the houses of persons, suggested the old horseshoe beneath which Lord Nelson, who had long kept it nailed to the mast of the *Victory*, received his death-wound at Trafalgar.

In Canada the belief is more prevalent than in any part of the United States, except the interior of Pennsylvania and the South. In the French sections, exclusive of the educated,—a relatively small number,—the belief, if not universal, is widely diffused. But it is by no means confined to Canadians of French extraction. Until within a few years the descendants of the English and Scotch in many parts of British

America were more widely separated from each other and from the progress of modern civilization than the inhabitants of the United States, or the settlers of the more recently populated continent of Australia, making due allowance for certain sections of New Zealand and Tasmania. In all these regions the educated generally dismiss it as a mystery, or repudiate it as an ancient superstition. Nevertheless it is often found in the more isolated communities, hamlets, and rural districts, liable on slight provocation to manifest itself in superstitious fears, insinuations, and accusations.

In the West Indies this belief prevails among the negroes, and is not unknown among the more ignorant whites. Of South America and Mexico travelers, missionaries, and foreign residents bring similar accounts.

In Italy those of the people who are not Protestants or free-thinkers generally believe in the possibility of witchcraft, and to the peasants it is a living reality. Nor are all who reject the Catholic Church or avow irreligion free from credulity as regards occult influences. Modern Greece, Bulgaria, Servia, and the neighboring States abound in similar superstitions. The common people of Hungary and Bohemia fear witchcraft, and it still dominates a considerable part of the rural population and the allied classes of Germany, and particularly of Austria.

French peasants are afraid of evil eyes, warlocks, ghosts, spells, omens, enchantments, and witches; not in every part of the country, but in the more primitive sections. In France their persistence is promoted by dialects, kinship, and other influences peculiar to the country. It has been but a few years since the world was shocked by the burning of an old woman as a witch in the district of Sologne, cupidity and superstition leading to the crime. Having softening of the brain, she did and said strange things, from which her children concluded that she was a witch and determined to burn her to death. When the time decided upon arrived, they sent for a priest, who confessed her. Soon after his departure her daughter screamed, "It is greatly borne upon me that now is the time to kill the hag; if we delay she may commit a sin in thought or deed, and the confession will go for nothing." As she burned, two of her three children cried, "Aroint thee, witch!" I do not refer to this to intimate that the French people sympathize with such things, for all France was filled with horror, and the murderers were brought to justice, but as an illustration of the persistence of the belief.

In Norway, Sweden, and Denmark witchcraft still throws a spell over many of the sailors, fishermen, and solitary farmers. In Lapland sorcerers and witches abound, the witches

claiming the power of stilling the wind and causing the rain to cease. It has been a comparatively short time since English seamen trading in Archangel were in the habit of landing and buying a fair wind from the witches.

But it is in Russia that the popular belief more generally resembles that of the whole world many centuries ago. Ralston, in "Songs of the Russian People," states: "But a little time ago every Russian village had its wizard, almost as a matter of course, and to this day it is said there is not a hamlet in the Ukraine that is not reported to keep its witch." When I was traveling in the interior of that country, accompanied by a master of the Russian language, I found that the peasants still believe that witches and wizards can steal the dew and the rain, send whirlwinds, hide the moon and the stars, and fly through the air on brooms and tongs. Their chief meetings take place three times a year, on "bald hills," and there are thousands of stories of witches going up chimneys and flying through the air; an analogy exists between these and the ancient German legends on the same subject. They chalk crosses on their huts and windows, hang up stove-rakes for protection, tie knots, and wear amulets. Plagues in men and cattle are popularly attributed to witches. Epileptics, and those afflicted with St. Vitus's dance, are supposed to be bewitched. According to popular belief in Russia, witches assume the form of dogs and cats and owls; but the shape they like best is that of a magpie. The Metropolitan Alexis solemnly cursed that bird, "on account of the bad behavior of the witches who have assumed its plumage."

In Scotland, Ireland, and England the belief in witchcraft lingers, and only those who are at the pains to inquire how far it extends, and how strong the impression is, can form an adequate idea of either.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

It is important to notice how late in the Christian era individual belief, popular excitements, and judicial proceedings have been sufficiently conspicuous for permanent record.

In "Reports of Trials for Murder by Poisoning," by Browne, a barrister at law, and Stewart, senior assistant in the laboratory of St. Thomas's Hospital, a standard work for physicians, chemists, and jurists, published in London in 1883, I find the case of Dove; and that in the said trial various references were made to the prevalence of the belief in witchcraft among persons of the prisoner's class. It appears from the evidence that his interviews with the witch-man on the subjects of lost cattle, removing strange noises from his house, the bewitching of his

live stock, and the deaths of persons inimical to him, and the promise of the witch-man to get him out of all difficulty, which led to the murder, were in the summer and autumn of 1855 and the spring of 1856.

In 1846 in England, and in 1845 in Scotland, cases of witchcraft attracted much attention.

The following case of witchcraft occurred in England about fifty years ago, and the son of the subject, now one of the most highly respected and well-informed clergymen west of the Alleghany Mountains, noted for his devotion to the physical sciences, writes me concerning it :

My father, like many others, fully believed in witchcraft. In a little ancient cottage about a mile from my father's lived an old woman who had the reputation of being a witch. One spring, as my father was planting potatoes in his field, the old lady came to him to beg a piece for a garden. This he said he could not grant, as he needed all for himself. She left the field muttering something, which I suppose my father understood to mean mischief. That evening, when still in the field, he was seized with a strange nervous sensation, and an utter inability to speak. Later in the evening he had a severe fit. This state of things continued for some years. Mother always sent one of the boys with him to render help or report his condition. Another phase of the witchcraft superstition was a belief in white witches, or those who could neutralize or destroy the work and influence of witches. My father heard of one living many miles away, and at once went to see him. I shall ever remember the interest with which we listened to his story. He said the white witch told him that he had been bewitched, as he supposed, by the old woman, but that her influence could be entirely destroyed. He then gave my father a little piece of paper upon which was written a charm which would in all future time protect him from all influence of witches. This paper must be worn over the breast, suspended by a piece of tape from the neck. It must never be opened, never touch wood, stone, or iron, nor be handled by any one but himself. Said my father in concluding his story: "The white witch told me to always wear this over my breast, and that inside of three days I shall have one fit more, but after that I will never have another symptom of the kind." The following evening when at supper he had another severe attack of his old trouble, but sure enough it was the last. He lived more than twenty years after that, but never had another symptom of fits, or nervous difficulty of any kind. He was absolutely cured, as I know.

In March, 1831, the case of an old woman in Edinburgh came before the court on account of her being attacked.

In 1827 a man was burned as a wizard in southwestern Russia; and in 1815 a person in northern Russia was sentenced by a legal tribunal to undergo thirty-five blows of the knout,

as well as a public church penance, for witchcraft.

In 1815 Captain Samuel Wardwell of Maine, captain of the schooner *Polly*, desiring to excel all his competitors in the number of trips made between Boston and Penobscot in one season, hired Mrs. Leach, a reputed witch, for a bushel of meal a trip, to guarantee him fair winds.

"Moll Pitcher," so famous that for more than fifty years "to her came the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the accomplished and the vulgar, the brave and the timid," died April 9, 1813, in Lynn, Massachusetts, aged seventy-five years.

Contemporary with her lived a woman in Newburyport, who came originally from Scotland in 1759 or 1760. Her career for many years was such as to command the respect and fear of the people. Mr. Samuel L. Knapp, who wrote in 1825, speaks of another supposed witch in Massachusetts named Danforth, who lived in a gloomy, hollow glen. On this Mr. Samuel G. Drake, writing in 1869, says :

The writer is not as old as he from whom the above extracts are made; but it was his fortune in youth to be acquainted in many towns, in nearly all of which there was a reputed witch.

In 1751, in Hertfordshire, two harmless people were mobbed, the woman beaten to death, the man nearly so. A similar incident happened as late as 1776 in Leicestershire. In Burlington, New Jersey, in January, 1731, a man and woman suspected of bewitching cattle were tried in the presence of the governor, by being weighed against a large Bible.

In 1728 Rhode Island reenacted its laws against witchcraft, which implies some agitation upon the subject; in 1720 there was a case in Littleton; prosecutions occurred in South Carolina in 1712; in 1706 there were disgraceful scenes, persons being subjected to ordeals and various barbarous tests; and in the year 1700 an execution for witchcraft took place in Albany, New York.

In noting these events we have reached the period of the dreadful outbreak in New England, which was separated by but a few years from a yet more dreadful frenzy of human nature in England, Scotland, and on the continent of Europe.

REVERSING THE POINT OF VIEW.

WHENCE came witchcraft? Writings, pictures, monuments, ruins, and traditions preserve the history of mankind; but man himself, in color, configuration, unconscious gesture, language, rites, customs, and unwritten laws, is a true encyclopedia of humanity more valuable than the contents of libraries.

As a general proposition, the uncivilized tribes of the world may be said to have been, from prehistoric times, what they are now. Mounds and other remains of uncertain date indeed often show a higher degree of development than at present exists among the inhabitants of particular regions; but this is not conclusive proof of degeneration, because of the vastness and complexity of ancient migrations of which no adequate history remains. The state of primitive uncivilized mankind, when widely scattered and numerous in population, may therefore be inferred from the present condition of barbarous tribes. In all these witchcraft is believed in, producing a mortal dread, and its practice punished by death in the most horrible forms. In China, India, and Japan it has always existed and still prevails.

Of the ancient empires, the Magism of the Median court, with its incantations, divining-rods, omen-reading, and dream-expounding, became closely allied to witchcraft, as in Scythia in previous ages, and subsequently in Persia. Many of its practitioners openly avowed the aid of evil spirits. While both Magism and Zoroastrianism had an essentially religious basis, witchcraft hung upon their skirts continually endeavoring to rival them. In Babylon the Magi included the scientists and philosophers of the age; but as quacks are parasites upon modern scientists, deriving from general names held in common with those entitled to them a particular reputation with the common people while practising the most shameless delusions, so many of the Babylonian astronomers were astrologers, and others of the Magi dealt avowedly with spirits.

In Egypt, notwithstanding the sublimity of the religion which taught a system of morality based upon a final judgment, a swarm of the basest superstitions and the most demoralizing influences counteracted its influence; and witchcraft prevailed among the people at the very time that Egypt was surpassing the world in science. In Benjamin's sack was found Joseph's cup, "whereby, indeed, he divineth"; and his own words, "Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?" reveal the custom in Egypt.

The various forms of consulting evil spirits, of seeking illegitimately preternatural help or knowledge, were all practised by the Canaanites and their descendants the Phenicians. Isaiah traces the existence of such things back to the Chaldeans and the Babylonians.

The answer of the Chaldeans to Nebuchadnezzar showed that throughout the world such a class existed; for they said, "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer or Chaldean."

THE ISRAELITES AND WITCHCRAFT.

THE Israelites came from a people surrounded by idolatry, and addicted to sorcery. They appear to have believed for a long time in the reality of the gods of the heathen, considering them inferior, however, to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and were continually lapsing from the true faith into idolatry and sorcery. During the hundreds of years that Jacob's descendants were in Egypt their faith was greatly corrupted; when Moses tarried long in the Mount, they compelled Aaron to make a golden image to represent God. Surrounded by the Egyptians, and in the midst of the Canaanites, who were not wholly driven out for centuries, their kings and many of their people frequently relapsed into witchcraft and idolatry.

Solomon, according to all the traditions of antiquity, as well as the testimony of the Bible, turned both to idolatry and magic. In D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" (Rabbinical Stories) it is said, "He is a favorite hero of the Talmudists, and the Arabs also speak of him as a magician." The son of the godly Hezekiah, Manasseh, "practised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards." There never was a time in the history of Israel that among its people were not those who practised every form of divination, astrology, magic, and witchcraft.

WITCHCRAFT AND CHRISTIANITY.

CHRISTIANITY originated among the Hebrews, who were firm believers in the reality of witchcraft. It was immediately brought into contact with the Romans, of whose empire Syria was a province; and with the Greeks, among whom it spread during the apostolic age. Among the Greeks and Romans the same general belief, with the corresponding practices, existed. Homer is said to have derived many of his verses from Daphne, the daughter of Tyreseis the Soothsayer, who was considered to surpass all women in the art of divination. Scot, in his "Discoverie of Witchcraft," gives extended extracts, among others the passage in Ovid:

Witches can bleed our ground by magic spell,
And with enchantment dry the springing soil;
Make grapes and currants fly at their command,
And strip our orchards bare without a hand.

Virgil and Horace make similar references. Lecky affirms that "Sorcery could say with truth that there was not a single nation of antiquity, from the polished Greek to the rudest savage, which did not admit a real art enabling men to foretell the future."

In Asia Minor and adjacent Oriental countries Christianity was saturated with superstitions of every kind, the entire mass directly or indirectly affecting Christians of every nation. The New Testament shows that Christianity did not at once eradicate preëxisting superstitions. It required a renunciation of the worship of idols, faith in God as superior to all antagonistic forms, natural and supernatural, and obedience to the precepts of Christ and his Apostles; but there is no reason to believe that it distinguished concerning the natural or supernatural origin of many superstitious beliefs not essentially incompatible with submission to the Gospel. The credulity of the early Christians is apparent in the writings of most of the ante-Nicene fathers. They believed in the supernatural origin of many of the alleged pagan miracles, some of them in the fable of the phoenix, and were prepared to accept any incredible tale which could be credited to the devil or his agents. Extraordinary knowledge, devotion to philosophy, and the practice of arts not understood by the people, especially by persons suspected of heresy, were made the foundation of social persecutions and legal executions for witchcraft.

Roger Bacon, in the thirteenth century, was charged with witchcraft on account of his scientific attainments, denounced by name by the Pope, and several times imprisoned. From time to time trials for witchcraft are recorded in Roman history. In the fourth century ecclesiastical decrees against it were made, and at various periods prosecutions took place under them. The whole of Europe was filled with the superstition.

The early Christian laws partake largely of the nature and of the spirit of the enactments of the same races when in paganism. The Ostrogoths punished it with death; the Visigoths with stripes, shaving the head, and exposure. The pagan Saxons burned witches and sorcerers, and even ate them. The Anglo-Saxons placed them under penalty of death; the ancient law of Scotland burned them at the stake. In Hungary they were first handed over to the bishop, then branded on the forehead, neck, and back in the form of a cross.

The charge of witchcraft was frequently used against societies, such as the Templars, from 1307 to 1313. It was on this charge that Joan of Arc was burned to death. In 1429 by means of it the Stedinger, who had fought for nearly thirty years against the Archbishop of Bremen and the Count of Oldenburg, were with the help of the Pope suppressed.

In 1488 Pope Innocent VIII. issued a bull establishing commissions of inquisitors, and succeeding popes appointed other commissions. Sometimes the suspects were accused of

heresy aggravated by witchcraft, and again of witchcraft leading to heresy. But witchcraft was the charge that especially inflamed the populace, and was pursued with the greatest zeal by the inquisitors. The epidemic raged in France so that by the end of 1320 fires for the execution of witches blazed in nearly every town. The more fires the more witches, accusations, and trials; so that the priests began to despair, wondering how it could be explained that it was impossible to commit "so great a number of the Devil's slaves to the flames, but that there shall arise from their ashes a sufficient number to supply their places." Seldom were there any acquittals.

Luther and the reformers believed as firmly in the existence of witchcraft as the Roman Catholics, though the latter charged that the Hussites in Bohemia, and the followers of Luther, deceived the people by magic and witchcraft. A Jesuit theological professor declared that Albert of Brandenburg was the king of wizards, a famous magician who laid waste the country with fire and sword. The same Jesuit affirmed that wherever the heresy of Calvin went in England, Wales, or Ireland, the "black and diabolical arts of necromancy kept pace with it." Professor Charlton T. Lewis, in his history of Germany, says, "Protestants and Catholics alike carried on their judicial barbarities, which desolated whole tracts of country. Neither age, sex, nor rank was a protection against this persecution. Counselors and scholars were sent to the stake, though women were the especial objects of vengeance; and the trials did not end until the reign of Frederick the Great."

In England laws, both ecclesiastical and civil, were enacted against witchcraft. Various changes were made in the phraseology of the law down to the time of Elizabeth, when sorceries, enchantments, charms, and witchcraft were made punishable with death when death ensued from their practice; in other cases, for a first offense, a year's imprisonment, and for a second, death. James I. was not satisfied with any previous act, as he was "an expert and specialist in the matter." In his time a law was passed making various distinctions. In Scotland similar acts were passed, the chief of them dating from 1563. In Ireland trials took place as early as 1324 in ecclesiastical courts.

THE PROBLEM.

THE history of witchcraft exhibits features common to all forms of mental and moral contagion, and its characteristics are similar everywhere; so that the study of its phenomena in New England, where the information is full, the date recent, and the habits, language, re-

ligion, and institutions analogous to those of all English-speaking races, will have special advantages.

The first settlers of New England brought across the Atlantic the sentiments which had been formed in their minds in Great Britain and on the Continent, as well as the tendencies which were the common heritage of such an ancestry. They were a very religious, and also a credulous people; having few books, no papers, little news, and virtually no science; removed by thousands of miles and months of time from Old-World civilization; living in the midst of an untamed wilderness, contending against a climate unlike anything they had experienced, surrounded by Indians whom they believed to be under the control of the devil, and whose medicine-men and soothsayers they accounted wizards. Such a mental and moral soil was adapted to the growth of witchcraft, and to create an invincible determination to inflict the punishments pronounced against it in the Old Testament; but the coöperation of various exciting causes was necessary to a general agitation and a real epidemic.

Samuel G. Drake's "Annals of Witchcraft in New England and Elsewhere in the United States, from their first Settlement," which I here epitomize, enables us to trace the sporadic manifestations of witchcraft step by step to the fearful explosion of 1692. The Pilgrims landed in Plymouth in 1620. In 1636 they included in the summary of offenses "lyable to death," "the solemn compaction or conversing with the Divell by the way of Witchcraft, conjuration, or the like." The colony of Massachusetts adopted the Body of Liberties, which contains a similar clause. In 1642 Connecticut included this in its Capital Code: "Yf any Man or Woman be a witch, that is, hath or comforteth with a Familiar Spirit, they fhall be put to death."

It is believed that the first actual trouble from witchcraft occurred in New Haven, and the first execution was in 1646 in Hartford. In 1647 Rhode Island made the penalty "Felone of Death."

The first execution for witchcraft in the colony of Massachusetts Bay was that of Mrs. Jones in Boston in 1648. Another woman was executed in Hartford in 1648.

From the settlement of Springfield in 1636 there was more or less trouble about witchcraft.

Mrs. Knapp suffered death in the New Haven colony in 1653. The troubles continued through 1654 and 1655. In 1656 Mrs. Ann Hibbens was executed in Boston. In the same year there was a trial at Portsmouth, but no conviction. In East Hampton, Long Island, in 1657, Mrs. Garlicke was tried for witchcraft.

There were troubles in 1659 at Saybrook,

Connecticut, and Andover, Massachusetts. In 1660 at Scituate, Plymouth, and at Oyster Bay, Long Island, there were disturbances, but no convictions. In 1662 Mr. and Mrs. Green Smith were executed at Hartford, and in 1665 the Court of Sessions in the State of New York tried Ralph Hall and his wife Mary. They were finally acquitted after three years' imprisonment. In 1669 Susannah Martin was prosecuted. She was one of those afterward executed at Salem. Catharine Harrison of Wethersfield was convicted, but the special court reversed the decision.

Mrs. Mary Parsons, of the highest social standing in Northampton, was charged with witchcraft in 1674, kept in prison several months, and acquitted. At that time three of the most enlightened men of the age, Governor Leverett and Generals Gookin and Denison, had charge of the administration.

In 1675 a queerly worded law was enacted to regulate the Pequot Indians: "Whofoever fhall Powau or vse Witchcraft, or any Worship of the Devill, or any fals Gods, fhall be convented punifhed."

In 1681 and 1682 in Massachusetts there was much excitement, and cases arose in 1683 which show a descent to the lowest depths of barbaric superstition. In 1684 Margaret Matson was tried in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, before William Penn. Philadelphia was then only three years old. The court brought in the verdict that she was "guilty of having the common fame of a witch, but not guilty in manner and form as she stands indicted." Tradition says that Penn said to her "Art thou a witch?" and "Hast thou ridden through the air on a broomstick?" When she answered yes, he said that she had a right to ride on a broomstick, that he knew no law against it, and thereupon ordered her discharge.

In 1685 Mary Webster, who had been acquitted in Boston in 1683, was accused of killing William Smith by sorcery. She was acquitted, but harassed by the people and often mobbed until her death in 1696. The famous case of the Goodwin children in Boston occurred in 1688. Mary Randall was arrested in Springfield in 1691, and kept in jail for a while, but there was no trial.

Thus it appears that, from the settlement of New England, wherever unaccountable events took place,—if horses and cattle were sick in an unusual manner or acted strangely; if adults or children were attacked by incurable or mysterious diseases; if lightning struck men, animals, or buildings, or storms disturbed sailors,—the cause was attributed to witchcraft. Under such circumstances any woman who had incurred the animosity of neighbors, especially if she had made threats against "afflicted" per-

sons, was liable to the suspicion of complicity with the devil. But as there had been only two or three executions at most in any one part of the country, and intelligence of the trials spread slowly, no great excitement arose until 1692.

In view of the preceding history, the events in Salem, Salem Village, and vicinity might have been expected in any community in New England where many social feuds existed, and where strong superstition, great energy, and force of will, with an entire want of discretion, were united in the character of the minister of the parish. All these conditions existed in Salem Village, where the epidemic originated.

Upham, in "Salem Witchcraft," has portrayed in a masterly and convincing manner the influence of local feuds upon the investigation of charges. But if the people of New England had not believed in the reality of witchcraft, and if their laws had not decreed the penalty of death, personal, social, and ecclesiastical animosities could not have caused such terrible deeds.

Salem witchcraft thus arose: The Rev. Mr. Parris, minister of the church in Salem Village, had formerly lived in the West Indies, and brought some negro slaves back with him. These slaves talked with the children of the neighborhood, some of whom could not read, while the others had but little to read. In the winter of 1691-92 they formed a kind of circle which met at Mr. Parris's house, probably unknown to him, to practise palmistry and fortune-telling, and learn what they could of magic and necromancy. This circle consisted of two or three negro slaves; Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. Parris, aged nine; his niece Abigail Williams, eleven; Ann Putnam, twelve (Upham says that the last-named was the leading agent in all the mischief that followed); Mary Walcot, seventeen; Mercy Lewis, seventeen (she was one of the worst, and fairly revealed in murder and misery); Elizabeth Hubbard, seventeen (almost as bad); Elizabeth Booth and Susannah Sheldon, each eighteen; and two servants, Mary Warren and Sarah Churchill, each twenty years of age. These servants hated the families of John Proctor and George Jacobs, with whom they lived. Besides these there were three married women, one the mother of Ann Putnam.

Before the winter was over some of them fully believed that they were under the influence of spirits. Epidemic hysteria arose; physicians could not explain their state; the cry was raised that they were bewitched; and some began to make charges against those whom they disliked of having bewitched them. In the end those of stronger mind among them became managers and plotters, directing the rest at their will. By the time public attention was attracted Mr. Parris had come to the conclu-

sion that they were bewitched, and, having a theory to maintain, encouraged and flattered them, and by his questions made even those who had not believed themselves bewitched think that they were.

From March, 1692, to May, 1693, about two hundred persons were imprisoned. Of these some escaped by the help of friends, some by bribing their jailors, a number died in prison, and one hundred and fifty were set free at the close of the excitement by the proclamation of the Governor. Nineteen were executed, namely: On July 19, Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Elizabeth Howe, George Jacobs, Susannah Martin (who had been tried and acquitted in Boston about twenty years before), and Rebecca Nurse; on August 19, John Proctor, Bridget Bishop, George Burroughs, minister of the gospel, Martha Carrier, and John Willard; on September 22, Martha Corey, Mary Eastey, Alice Parker, Mary Parker, Ann Pudeater, Willmet Redd, Margaret Scott, and Samuel Wardwell. Giles Corey, a man eighty years of age, when charged refused to plead, and was pressed to death—the only instance of the application of this ancient law on this continent.

When it is remembered that a number of these persons were among the most pious and amiable of the people of Salem, Salem Village, and other parts of Essex County; that they were related by blood, marriage, friendship, and Christian fellowship to many of those who cried out against them, both as accusers and supporters of the prosecutions, the transaction must be classed among the darkest in human history.

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THE REALITY OF WITCHCRAFT?

SIR MATTHEW HALE, in his "Trial of Witches," 1661, basing the conclusion upon the Scriptures, affirms that there is a real supernatural operation of the devil at the request of a witch. John Wesley, who was born only twelve years after the scenes in Salem, wrote in May, 1768: "They well know [meaning infidels, materialists, and deists]—whether Christians know it or not—that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." In a letter to his brother, written some years afterward, he declares that he believes all Cotton Mather's stories. His opinions upon these subjects were those of the age, but did not convince his brother Charles, who frequently expostulated with him for his credulity. With the same spirit and in the same way he affirmed it a giving up of the Bible to question various ideas now rejected by the most devout Christians, and did himself repudiate in later periods of his life what in similar language he had condemned others for disbelieving.

An examination of the references to witchcraft shows that only the existence and criminality of the *attempt* to practise it are to be concluded from the words of the Scriptures. The conclusion is not well founded that if there were no reality in witchcraft the prophets and apostles must necessarily have known it; for the Scriptures show that the prophets were limited in knowledge upon a variety of points, many of them closely allied to the religious truths which they taught. They drew illustrations from supposed facts of science, medicine, and natural history, which served their purpose for the time; and in *such particulars* wrote exactly as authors of to-day, who find their illustrations in the state of knowledge in the age in which they live. Moses declares that "the man or the woman who hath a familiar spirit, or is a wizard, shall be put to death"; and "thou shalt not suffer a witch [Rev. Ver. *a sorceress*] to live." It is clear that the same law would be needed and the same language would be employed if the *pretense* of having a familiar spirit, or the *attempt to practise* witchcraft were in question. In Deuteronomy xviii., Moses attempts to enumerate all possible forms of occult practices, when he warns the Israelites against the practices of the nations whose land the Lord had given them, condemning "divination," one that practiseth augury, or an "enchanter," or a "sorcerer," or a "charmer," or a "consulter with a familiar spirit," or a "wizard," or a "necromancer."

In the forty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, the Israelites are taunted with the multitude of their enchantments, and the multitude of their sorceries, and they are told to call upon "the astrologers, and the star-gazers, and monthly prognosticators" to save them if they can. The astrologers in this passage are "the dividers of the heavens"; the star-gazers, "the reviewers of the heavens"; the monthly prognosticators, "those who give predictions from month to month." The word translated "a consulter with familiar spirits" is from a term whose literal meaning is equivalent to that of our ordinary word ventriloquist, drawn from the fact that such persons chirp, mutter, speak as one from the ground, or from the abdomen. The only place where the word "witchcraft" occurs in the Revised Version of the New Testament is Galatians v., 20, where among the works of the flesh are named "idolatry and witchcraft." Witchcraft is there translated from *φαρμακεία*, signifying "enchanters with drugs."

The laws of Moses and the maledictions of the prophets show an attempt to prohibit, punish, and extirpate the whole host of occult practices of Egypt, Babylon, and Media, Persia, Phœnicia, and every other nation with which the Israelites came in contact. The theocratic nature

of the government of God as set forth by Moses could not allow any rival; the attempt was rebellion and treason, the punishment death.

Against the conclusion which we draw that the attempt, and the attempt only, was to be considered in the trial of a case, it is said, "How, then, could an Israelitish judge decide the case of a person arraigned under this law? Would not the whole issue of the case depend upon the proof that the accused really had an attendant spirit? And is not the law an express declaration, not merely of the possibility, but also of the actual occurrence of such connections?" Not at all. Unless the Israelite judges had the power of supernatural perception, the only thing that they could take cognizance of would be the *attempt*.

Those who reject this conclusion, if they would be consistent, must believe all the forms of imposture comprehended in the common law of Israel to be supernatural; they must believe in astrology, augury, and charms; and that the heathen gods were actual supernatural devils. St. Paul says, "We know that no idol is anything in the world"; and though when warning the people to flee from idolatry, he says that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to *devils* and not to God," it is a strained and long-drawn inference that he means to say that beyond the heathen gods there are real demons which they worship. If that were so the prophet Jeremiah was deceived himself, and deceived the people when he said, "Be not afraid of them [the heathen gods], for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

THE case of the Witch of Endor is the only instance in the Bible where a description of the processes and results is given. Whether any one appeared to the witch, and if so who it was, has caused endless debate. Lange gives a summary of the different views. The Septuagint and the Apocrypha represent that it was Samuel, and Justin Martyr held the same; Tertullian that it was a *pythoress*, exclaiming, "Far be it from us to believe that the soul of any saint, much less a prophet, can be drawn forth by a demon"; Theodoret, Justin, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, and some Jewish rabbis held that the "appearance of Samuel" was produced by God's power; and Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, and other moderns support it. Luther held that it was "the Devil's ghost"; Calvin that "it was not the real Samuel, but a spectre." Grotius thought that it was a deceptive spirit.

Amid the conflict I also will show "mine opinion." Saul, who was a man of strong pas-

sions, feeble judgment, and little self-control, had sinned, and God refused to hear him. With the Philistines visible at a distance of four miles, encamped in a better position than his own, being forsaken by God, his heart sank within him, and he determined to know the worst. Taking his servants into his confidence, he sought out a professed witch, or necromancer. After getting an oath that she would not be punished, she began in her usual way. "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" This was her professed business. "Bring me up Samuel!" Immediately afterward the woman cried with a loud voice, and said to Saul, "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" There is a strong presumption that she would have known him under any circumstances. He was "head and shoulders above all the people"; his face must have been familiar; his camp was less than twelve miles from her cave. It is incredible in that small country, with Saul ranging over it, and great public processions, that the witch had never seen him. Said he, "Be not afraid." She said, "I see gods ascending out of the earth." "What form is he of?" "An old man covered with a mantle." Then Saul, who never saw anything, but depended upon her description, "perceived that it was Samuel."

What such women did in those times they are doing now in the East. She had retired—her cave, according to the Oriental custom, being divided by a curtain—and had been performing her incantations and muttering. It has often been remarked that when such a giant as Saul appeared and said, "Bring me up Samuel," the witch must have been indeed a foolish woman not to suspect who he was that made such a strange request. Before Samuel is represented as speaking she knew that her interlocutor was Saul. Her motive for pretending not to know him at first was to increase her influence over his mind—a common resort of such performers.

In Saul's address to Samuel, before the witch gave the alleged answer, he had given her all the facts that she needed to form that answer. "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

The answer plainly consists of things which Samuel had said while living, and of things that could be conjectured from the situation. It is not necessary to assume that the woman was wholly a deceiver. Possibly she believed that her incantations brought up the dead, and she may have been wrought up into a species of trance in which she imagined the character suggested by her applicant. If so, she would

naturally personify the tone of another person, and would speak to a great degree in harmony with what the character might be expected to say under the known circumstances. The narrator, as certain ancient Church decrees, according to Reginald Scot, declare, "set fourth Saule's mind and Samuel's estate and certeine things which were said and scene, omitting whether they were true or false."

TRIAL OF CASES.

LITTLE aid in the understanding of the trials of witches in New England in 1692 can be derived from courts as now conducted. The Honorable William Sullivan, in an address before the Bar of Suffolk, Massachusetts, in March, 1824, says that in Massachusetts the governor and assistants were the only depositaries of power, exercising legislative, judicial, and executive authority. They inferred from the charter the rights to exercise whatever power the welfare of the community required; when that was silent the Scriptures were the resort, the clergy and the elders being the expounders in all new emergencies. Hutchinson says that for a number of years "the jury, if not satisfied with the opinion of the court, were allowed to consult any bystander." For several years there were no lawyers, though there were a few attorneys, in the country. According to Mr. Sullivan, the importation in 1647 of two copies each of several law-books, including "Coke on Lyttleton," "Magna Charta," and "Coke's Reports," was probably the first introduction of the common law into the colony. Few or none of the judges were professional lawyers.

On the 8th of December, 1885, the Honorable William D. Northend delivered an address before the Bar of Sussex County, which is to be found in the twenty-second volume of the "Historical Collections of the Sussex Institute." His estimate of the judges is that there was not a regularly educated lawyer on the Superior Court Bench of Massachusetts until 1712, long after the witch trials were over. At that time, and for many years afterward, counsel were not assigned or allowed in capital cases, except on questions of law when the court was in doubt, the theory being that the judges were counsel for the prisoner. On May 14, 1692, Sir William Phipps arrived, bringing the new charter. He was a weak man and a believer in witchcraft. One of the first things he did officially was to appoint seven persons of Oyer and Terminer to try the prisoners who had been committed under suspicion of witchcraft in Essex County.

The kind of evidence admitted appears from the records, which are now accessible. One

case may serve to illustrate all. Against Rebecca Nurse there were four indictments. The first sets forth that "she has afflicted Ann Puttnam, Jr., by certain detestable arts called witchcraft, and sorceries, wherewith she has hurt, tortured, afflicted, wasted, and tormented."¹ The other indictments use nearly the same language.

Mrs. Nurse was an aged woman of unspotted reputation, and was more tenderly treated during a portion of the time than any of the rest. The jury at first acquitted her, but the judges sent them out again, and practically forced them to bring in a verdict of guilty, notwithstanding Mrs. Nurse's assertion that she had failed to answer a question (which failure was used against her) because, being deaf, she did not hear it. The judges appeared to be convinced of the guilt of all from the time the afflicted declared them guilty, and badgered prisoners in a manner almost incredible. Most of the examinations were written down by the Rev. Samuel Parris; one of the strongest proofs of the utter blindness of the times being the frank and unequivocal manner in which the record is prepared.

The prejudices of the judges and the spirit in which they dealt with the defendants appear from the account of the examination of Elizabeth Cary, of Charlestown, given by her husband, Captain Cary, a shipmaster.

His wife, being conscious of innocence, went to the church. The girls came in, fell in fits, and cried out, "Cary! Cary!" Mrs. Cary had never seen nor heard of one of them in her life. As at every motion of the defendant the afflicted made the same, Mrs. Cary was ordered to stand with her arms stretched out. Mr. Cary says, "I requested that I might hold one of her hands, but it was denied me; then she desired me to wipe the tears from her eyes and the sweat from her face, which I did; then she desired that she might lean herself on me, saying she should faint. Justice Hathorne replied, 'She had strength enough to torment these persons, and she should have strength enough to stand.' I speaking something against their cruel proceedings, they commanded me to be silent or else I should be turned out of the room."

Mrs. Cary was committed, but escaped from jail, went to Rhode Island, and finally to New York, where the governor of the State interested himself in her and protected her. Captain Cary, after describing her sufferings, says: "To speak of their usage of the prisoners, and the inhumanity shown to them at the time of their execution, no sober Christian could bear."

No testimony as to previous good conduct and character availed anything. This may be illustrated by the case of a woman of whom

the Rev. William Hubbard, one of the most honored ministers in New England, characterized by Hutchinson as "a man of learning, and a logical and benevolent mind, accompanied with a good degree of catholicism," certifies:

I have known the wife of William Buckley of Salem Village, . . . ever since she was brought out of England, which is above fifty years ago. . . . She was bred by Christian parents, . . . was admitted as a member into the Church at Ipswich (of which he was the pastor) above forty years since. I never heard from others, or observed by myself, anything of her which was inconsistent with her profession, or unsuitable to Christianity.

But on evidence similar to that which convicted the others, and mostly from the same witnesses, she was hurried off to prison.

John Proctor went with his wife to support her under the charges; the "afflicted" cried out against him, and though many of the citizens testified as to his good character, as well as to hers, he was executed. But the children cried out that they could see "his shape afflicting them."

Against George Burroughs, a graduate of Harvard College and former minister of Salem, the principal evidence was that though a puny man he was remarkably strong physically; that he made nothing of carrying barrels of sugar, flour, etc., from one place to another, and that he could hold a gun straight out at arm's-length by taking hold of the end of the stock; that his wife told some one that he said "he knew all secrets, and made her promise to reveal none of his"; and that he accused his brother-in-law and his wife of talking about him on one occasion.

In his address Judge Northend remarks, "No better illustration can be given of the fallacy of the views of those who look upon legal rules as only a clog and hindrance in the administration of justice. Under the rules of laws now fully established, none of the evidence upon which the convictions were found would be admitted; spectral and kindred evidence could not be allowed, and without it not one of the accused could have been convicted."

EXPLANATION OF CONFESSIONS.

MANY persons acknowledged themselves witches, both in Europe and America, and gave detailed accounts of their interviews with the devil. This has led various writers to suppose that witchcraft has an objective reality; and certainly the problem is complicated by the fact that some of those who confessed were persons of undoubted piety. Yet it is not difficult of explanation.

In Europe tortures of the most terrible character were resorted to to compel confession. In his "Superstition and Force," Mr. Henry C. Lea quotes Rickens, a magistrate during an

¹ From the "Records of Salem Witchcraft," copied from the original documents, and privately printed for W. Elliott Woodward. Volume I.

epidemic of witchcraft at the close of the seventeenth century, as complaining that no reliance could be placed on legal witnesses to procure conviction. Del Rio avers that torture is to be more readily resorted to in witchcraft than in other crimes, in consequence of the *extreme difficulty of its proof*. This, Mr. Lea says, was the common opinion of the time. Constantine issued a decree in 358 A. D. that no dignity of birth or station should protect those accused of sorcery or magic from the severest application of torture. Old German records are full of accounts of men and women yielding and confessing, usually in language put into their mouths by the inquisitors.

In New England *none* of those who confessed themselves witches were executed, and every effort was made to induce them to do so. If any one confessed to being a witch, and afterward, driven by conscience, retracted, he was certain to be executed. This was the case with Samuel Wardwell, who confessed, retracted his confession, and died upon the gallows protesting his innocence.

But why did some religious and spiritually minded persons confess? Because they were saturated with erroneous views of the power of the devil, and his mode of exercising it. They believed that he was very near them all the time, endeavoring to effect an entrance; and when they were accused and saw "the afflicted," and realized that the magistrates and ministers thought they were guilty, their minds being weakened by the terrible pressure upon them, they came to the conclusion that in some unguarded moment the devil had gained an advantage over them; and that, though "they were unconscious of having done such things, their *spirits* must have committed them," and they therefore confessed.

Many thousands of persons in former centuries concluded in the same manner that they had committed "the unpardonable sin"; while of these very few had any clear idea of what the sin is. The pressure of the doctrinal beliefs of the age upon morbid conscientiousness, with a natural distrust, antagonized all the promises of the Gospel, and they despaired.

Many abandoned persons who believed in witchcraft and sought to obtain the power could easily find coincidences seeming to prove the truth of their claims, and in this way thought themselves to be wizards and witches.

EXPLANATION OF PHENOMENA.

IN the progress of science principles have been established and illustrative facts accumulated whereby the greater part of the authentic phenomena can be fully explained. There was a large amount of fraud and jugglery.

Dr. Hutchinson of England, the second edition of whose work appeared in 1720, has a chapter on "Seven Notorious Impostures Detected."

Seventy-eight years after the Salem witchcrafts, at Littleton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, a case involving three children whose performances were fully as remarkable and mysterious as those of the Goodwin children attracted great attention. But several years later the oldest girl offered herself as a candidate at the Rev. Mr. Terrell's church in Medford. "Her experience was considered satisfactory, but the minister chancing to preach against *liars*" (though he had not the least idea that she was an impostor), his sermon so powerfully affected her that she went to him and confessed the whole imposture, and showed how her sisters were drawn into it, "by love of mischief, imitation, vanity, and *necessity of going on after they had begun*." In the case of "the afflicted girls" of New England there is positive evidence that some were consciously and intentionally performing a part. Their conduct needs no explanation.

If those who were not performing a part believed that they were afflicted by the accused, their evidence and actions become simple. If the accused moved her head, they would move theirs automatically. The hypnotic performances, now well known, furnish a perfect analogy. Every hypnotizer has to be constantly on his guard lest all with whom he is experimenting should do whatever is done by one. That this is an adequate explanation appears from the fact that in those parts of the world where witchcraft is still believed in, and where a scientific knowledge of epidemic hysteria and of hypnotism does not exist, such attacks are believed to be produced by witchcraft.

The "London Medical Record" has recently published an article quoted from an Italian medical journal, giving an account of an epidemic of hysteria among the peasants of Albania. The priests had tried to exorcise the evil spirits, but without success. Fourteen girls under twenty years of age, one boy of eleven, a woman of fifty, and a robust peasant of nineteen were carefully studied. The muscles of the face and neck became rigid, and afterward those of the limbs. The woman went through the most violent contortions and muscular motions, beating her chest with her hands and then falling motionless. This was sometimes repeated again and again. She said that during the attacks she "saw the figure of the woman who bewitched her." The origin and history of the case are here given in brief:

A band of seventy girls had agreed to work for an old woman in rice-fields. Thinking that they could make a better bargain, they broke their

engagement. The old woman was angry, and as she was generally supposed to possess the power of witchcraft, the girls were constantly in dread of being bewitched. As they worked eleven hours a day, standing in water in the hot sun, living chiefly on unsalable beans, bad bacon, and decaying rice, they were reduced "to a state of very unstable mental equilibrium, which was completely upset by seeing the hystero-epileptic fits of the first patient." The medical men sent them off to their own homes, thus isolating them, and they were speedily cured.

The imitative principle in such cases sometimes goes so far that what one thinks he sees hundreds will think they see; what one does scores and hundreds will do. The precise manner of dissemination of the dominant idea is well known.

Testimony to marvels of a different kind is occasionally introduced, such as mysterious noises, the fastening of doors, overthrowing of chairs, tables, crockery, the extinguishing of lights without apparent cause, the entrance of hogs and other animals into a house, the appearance of lights the origin of which is not understood. A case of this kind occurred in New England in 1680, and was before the courts at Ipswich. William Morse and his wife, with whom in the house no one but a grandson lived, were disturbed by such occurrences. A neighbor, Caleb Powell, looked into the matter, and declared that the boy played the tricks; that he had seen him fling things at his grandfather's head while the old gentleman was at prayer. But the mere attempt to explain the mystery nearly cost Caleb Powell his life, for he was arrested on suspicion of witchcraft, and many witnesses were brought to swear that he said that by astronomy and astrology he could find out, as he "knew the working of spirits, some in one country and some in another." Little investigation could take place in any country where the investigator was liable to be accused of witchcraft and to lose his life for denying the reality of it.

Scientific investigation, with the meaning which is now given to these words, was never applied to the phenomena. Drake does not exaggerate when he declares that, during the period, "if anything occurred, the origin or reason of which was neither understood nor comprehended, and appeared stranger than usual, the mind instead of investigating fell back upon the ever-ready and easy solution that such was caused by witchcraft." There were, of course, a few doubters; but they seldom obtained access to primary sources of information, and when they did were denounced as "Sadducees," "defenders of witches," or "agents of the devil." So strong was this influence that certain clergymen, who

plainly did not approve the proceedings, were compelled to reaffirm continually their belief in witchcraft, and to protest against being considered defenders of witches. If persons became aggressive in the defense of the accused they were cried out upon by the accusers, and a mortal terror of the consequences led many to avoid being present at the investigation.

Electricity, magnetism, and the action of gases, as well as meteorological phenomena, were imperfectly understood in the times of the epidemic of witchcraft. Many mysteries then inscrutable could now be easily explained. The science of bacteriology, a discovery of the present generation, illustrates many of the facts which, being misunderstood, were supposed to indicate the presence of the devil, and to be the results of witchcraft. Dr. Prudden's "Story of the Bacteria, and their Relations to Health and Disease" gives many instances, and a circumstance easily explained recently occurred which two hundred years ago might have been the means of the death of many persons. Some time since there was brought to the physiological and pathological laboratory of the Alumni Association of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the City of New York for examination "a cluster of sausages which had been destined to grace a boarding-house breakfast-table. To the consternation of the maid who went into the dark cellar for them in the early morning, there hung in the place of the sausages a fiery effigy, which seemed to her more like the quondam spirits of their mysterious ingredients than the unctuous, homely friend of the homeless boarder." The microscope revealed at once the bacteria which produced the effect.

REACTION FROM THE FRENZY.

A DEEP conviction of the fallibility of spectral evidence arose in the minds of many. The recollection of the characters and good deeds of several who had been executed, of their dying protestations of innocence, and their religious bearing at the place of execution, and the recognition of the fact that if they had confessed they might have saved their lives, were powerful causes of the reaction.

But there were two others of still greater influence. The "afflicted" began to accuse persons of such high standing that the community instinctively felt that the charge was false. The Rev. Mr. Hale of Beverly had supported the prosecutions; but when his own wife was accused, he saw that they were going too far, and turned against them. Her case was but one of several: spiritual, devout, and consistent, she was not better than some of those to whose condemnation and execution her hus-

band had consented, upon evidence similar in all points to that alleged against her. But they were without such social relations as could effectually stem the tide, and were accused before a suspicion of the trustworthiness of the evidence had been engendered.

The other cause was the *retraction of the confessions*. In all fifty-five confessed. Some of them retracted, though they knew it would be certain death. Such was the case of Samuel Wardwell, who was executed protesting his innocence. Margaret Jacobs, who had testified against her grandfather in her confession, was so overwhelmed with grief and shame when she came to herself that she took it back, and addressed the court, saying :

They told me if I would not confess I should be put down into the dungeon, and would be hanged ; but if I would confess I should have my life ; the which did so affright me with my own vile, wicked heart, to save my life, made me make the like confession, I did, which confession, may it please the honored Court, is altogether false and untrue. The very first night after I had made confession I was in such horror of conscience that I could not sleep for fear the Devil should carry me away for telling such horrid lies.

The entire confession is one of the most touching compositions in literature. She was afterward tried and condemned to death, but escaped because her case was not disposed of until after the reaction.

Six of the women of Andover who had confessed signed a declaration retracting, and fifty of the inhabitants of that town testified to their good character. They say that their nearest and dearest relations told them that there was no hope of saving their lives but by confessing themselves to be witches ; that the confession which they made was suggested by some gentlemen,

they telling us that we were witches and they knew it, and we knew it, which made us think that it was so ; and our understanding, our reason, our faculties almost gone, we were not capable of judging of our condition. . . . And most of what we said was but, in fact, consenting to what they said. Some time after when we were better composed, they telling us what we had confessed, we did profess that we were innocent and ignorant of such things ; and we learning that Samuel Wardwell had renounced his confession and was quickly after condemned and executed, some of us were told we were going after Wardwell.

Andover was "the first to recover its senses" ; juries began to acquit ; the governor of the State issued a proclamation opening the prisons, and a general fast was ordered. The jurors who had convicted the accused signed

and circulated a document confessing that, "for want of knowledge in themselves and better information from others, they had taken up with evidence which on further consideration and better information they believed was insufficient for touching the lives of any" ; and they "humbly asked forgiveness of all and the surviving sufferers in special," and declared that "*according to our present minds we would none of us do such things again on such grounds for the whole world.*"

In 1697 the Rev. Mr. Hale wrote a book to show that the proceedings were erroneous. Memorials were sent and the ministers of the County of Essex presented an address to the General Court under date of July 8, 1703, expressing their belief that innocent persons had suffered, and finally the General Court, October 17, 1711, only nineteen years after the executions, and while the majority of the people were still living, reversed "the attainders of George Burroughs and others for witchcraft." This act declares that "some of the principal accusers and witnesses in these dark and severe persecutions have since discovered themselves to be persons of profligate and vicious conversation," and reversed the convictions, judgments, and attainders against all that died. The General Court reimbursed survivors and their heirs for expenses incurred. The petitions of such heirs duly proved and admitted are found in Woodward's "Records of Salem Witchcraft," and are valuable as testimony to the characters of the accused, apart from the impossible crime with which they were charged.

Judge Sewall, on the day of the general fast, arose in the old South Church in Boston and sent up to the pulpit a written confession of his error. This scene Whittier describes in the lines beginning, "Touching and sad a tale is told." To the day of his death this conscientious man set apart one day of every year for humiliation and prayer on account of the part he had taken.

The clergy of Salem and vicinity in the beginning fostered the delusion. Mr. Parris and Mr. Noyes, especially the former, must be classed with those representatives of any religion, true or false, who will stop at nothing to destroy those whose orthodoxy they doubt, or whose persons or characters they dislike.

There is evidence that many of the clergy of Massachusetts disapproved the proceedings, but because of the sentiments of the ruling civil authorities of Massachusetts they were not able to exert a restraining influence. In a petition drawn up by the opponents of Mr. Parris in Salem Village, they say that the reason they would not hold communion with him is "his declared and published sentiments referring to our molestations from the invisible

world: differing from the *opinion of the generality of orthodox ministers of this whole country.*" This was under date of April 21, 1693.

The terrible consequences of the belief forced the issue upon mind and heart; common sense and common humanity reasserted themselves. The horrid fiction was cast off; some denying the reality of witchcraft, others admitting it possible in the *abstract*, but affirming that it was impossible to prove it. As soon as the prosecutions ceased there was no further trouble. The transactions in New England exerted a great influence on the other side of the Atlantic against witchcraft, and in 1736 the English statute was repealed.

The investigation justifies the conclusion that where witchcraft is not believed in there are no cases of it; where it is believed there are many, and in proportion to the intensity of the belief. It must be remembered that medical men generally were ignorant and superstitious, and the scientific practice of the healing art unknown. The press did not exist; there was no opportunity for the kind of investigation now made by reporters, or for the free utterance of adverse opinion, or for any proper or generally circulated report of trials. If the clergy of this country generally believed in witchcraft, they could find an abundance of the kind of evidence that was admitted in 1692; and were there no press, free, active, and in-

telligent, it would be possible to originate an epidemic in a few weeks which would parallel any in the past.

The crucifixion of Christ, the cruelties of the Inquisition, the burning of Servetus, the atrocities of the first French Revolution, the hanging of witches and Quakers are but manifestations of the possible excesses of human nature when governed by false and deeply rooted ideas, when strong passions are excited, and no adequate force, either of authority or of public opinion, restrains.

The solemn words of Longfellow are true of New England's part in the universal tragedy:

Be not too swift in casting the first stone,
Nor think New England bears the guilt alone;
This sudden burst of wickedness and crime
Was but the common madness of the time,
When in all lands that lie beneath the sound
Of Sabbath bells a witch was burned or drowned.

If mankind as a whole had not been stronger than any of its passions, the race would long since have annihilated itself. Superstition and barbarism, though ostensibly expelled by modern civilization, lurk in the shadows stealthily seeking an entrance; and the united forces of reason, science, religion, law, self-interest, freedom of speech and of the press, with "eternal vigilance," are needed to prevent them from regaining a direful ascendancy.

J. M. Buckley.



A PARTING GUEST.

DEAR world, how shall I say farewell to thee
As from thy friendly house I go at last?
Let me not like an unloved wanderer be
From thy door cast.

No, I have been a little while thy guest;
Still there are light and music, down thy halls
The laughing recognition of a jest
Rises and falls.

Thou hast with love and bread my wants supplied,
And hurried on my hours in joyous flight;
But longer with thee now I cannot bide,—
I come to say good night;

But leave not other friends who need thee here,—
Give me thy hand and I am quickly gone;
Thy lamps will light me with their genial cheer
Until I meet the dawn.

Meredith Nicholson.