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As if to bar the dawn's first light
These ruby gates are hung;
As if from Sinai's frowning height
These riven tablets flung.

But not the Orient's drowsy gaze,
Young Empire's opening lids
Greet these strange shapes, of earlier days
Than Sphinx or Pyramids.

Here the New West its wealth unlocks,
And tears the veil aside
Which hid the mystic glades and rocks
The Red men deified.

This greensward, girt with tongues of flame,
With spectral pillars strewn,
Not strangely did the savage name
A haunt of gods unknown.

Hard by the gentle Manitou
His healing fountains poured;
Blood-red, against the cloudless blue,
These storm-tossed Titans soared.

Not carved by art, or man's device,
Nor shaped by human hand,
These altars, meet for sacrifice,
This temple, vast and grand.

With torrents wild and tempest blast,
And fierce volcanic fires,
In secret moulds, has Nature cast
Her monoliths and spires.

Their shadows linger where we tread,
Their beauty fills the place:
A broken shrine—its votaries fled—
A spurned and vanished race.

Untouched by Time the garden gleams,
Unplucked the wild flower shines,
And the scarred summit's rifted seams
Are bright with glistening pines.

And still the guileless heart that waits
At Nature's feet may find,
Within the rosy, sun-lit gates,
A hidden glory shrined;

His presence feel to whom, in fear,
Untaught, the savage prayed,
And, listening in the garden, hear
His voice, nor be afraid.

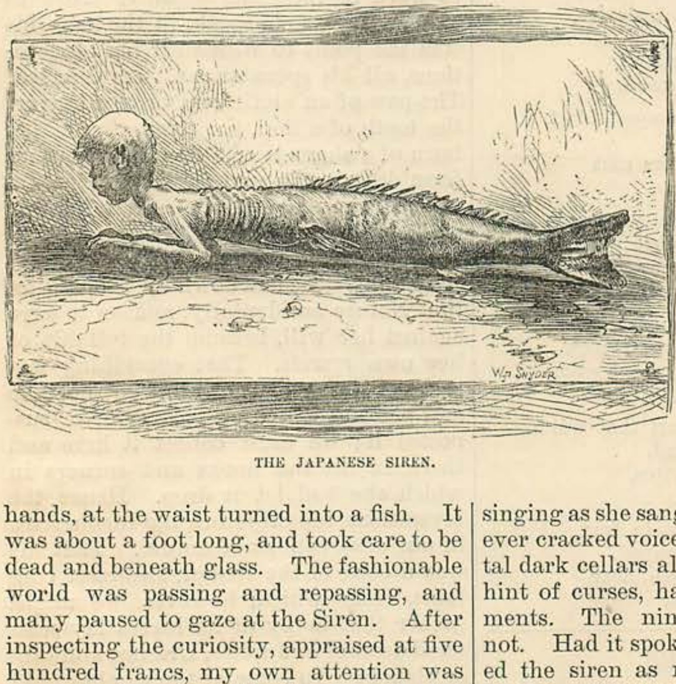
MONSTERS.

It is within the memory of the present generation with what indignation the world heard the official statement that there were children working in the mines of England who "had never seen a flower." The pathetic story was given wings by the genius of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and the "Cry of the Children" was heard in every land.

But, after all, how many people have ever really seen a flower? Perhaps we may say that no eye ever really saw a flower until Goethe looked upon one; and even he did not see one until a flower met him in form of a monster. By an abnormality he "caught nature in the act," to use his own favorite phrase. It was probably his abnormal flower that first suggested to Goethe that which has now become a scientific proverb—"Nature reveals her secrets in monsters." Falk von Müller says: "On calling on Goethe at three o'clock in the afternoon, I found him serious and thoughtful. He was busied in sorting a collection of coins. To a true observer of nature like Goethe it gave no little pleasure when he lighted upon a face among his coins the features of which expressed the peculiar character or acts of the person, such as they are handed down to us by history. With his collection of natural curiosities he went to work in the same manner. How to catch nature, so to speak, in the act—this was the point to which all his observations, all his speculations, were directed. The paw of an arctic bear or of a beaver, the tooth of a lion, the strangely twisted horn of a chamois or a deer, or any other form differing in part or wholly from familiar forms and organizations, sufficed to delight him for days and weeks, and to furnish him with matter for repeated observations. He laid down the proposition that Nature accidentally, and as it were against her will, became the tell-tale of her own secrets. That everything was told—at least once; only not in the time and place at which we looked for or suspected it; we must collect it here and there, in all the nooks and corners in which she had let it drop. Hence the Mysterious, the Sibylline, the Incoherent, in our observations of nature. That she was a book of the vastest, strangest contents, from which, however, we might gather that many of its leaves lay scattered around in Jupiter, Uranus, and other planets. To come at the whole would be difficult, if not utterly impossible. On this difficulty, therefore, must all systems suffer shipwreck."

Every unusual event or thing arresting attention by its enormity or abnormality is a marvel, a wonder. Such having appeared, the unsophisticated instinct of the human mind is to explain it by a rational use of what has lately been called the "scientific imagination," but which is only the common theoretical power disciplined to active living and present duty. It shows itself by expressing an original curiosity by the effort to gain insight into a fact, and not merely to add one more illustration to some well-worn legend. But the uncultured imagination relapses into the past; it is revealed at once by its limitation to the old ruts of speculation; it is enthralled amid images dead, sealed up, and buried, like the figures of Pompeii.

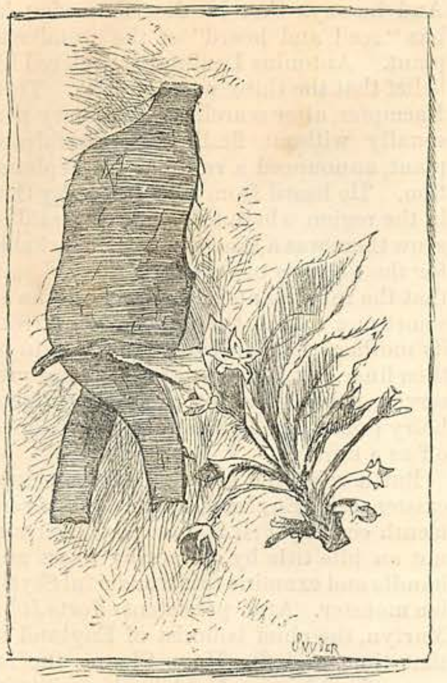
This age of invention and progress has a finer average look than it is entitled to. In some countries, where the popular mind and sentiment are trained to be retrospective, the very faculty of speculation seems to have faded. In a shop window at Ostend I found the "Japanese Siren." It was curious enough. A little human-like head and face, with hair, neck, shoulders, breast, arms, and delicately formed hands, at the waist turned into a fish. It was about a foot long, and took care to be dead and beneath glass. The fashionable world was passing and repassing, and many paused to gaze at the Siren. After inspecting the curiosity, appraised at five hundred francs, my own attention was presently transferred to the crowds who stopped to see and comment upon it. Some entered the shop and asked the keeper of it if the creature were "veritable." He assured them unhesitatingly that it was, and had been so pronounced by all the *savants* who had examined it. To each this assurance appeared satisfactory. No suspicion that the shop-keeper might not confess his possession to be fraudulent, even if it were, prevented the frequent repetition of the inquiry, or diminished the conviction it seemed to carry. It could not be expected, of course, that an average imagination unequal to the exigencies of speculative ventures in a sea-side curiosity-shop would be able to soar with the more daring vision of the Oriental artist. The Japanese contriver had rightly fathomed the mental shallows in which his sirens could float. He commissioned one or two to adventure London; one of these found its way to the scalpel of the Hunterian professor (Flower), who tells me that the upper part was part of a small monkey, and the connection at the waist with the fish most ingenious. The uncultured imagination was manifested strikingly in the comments made by well-dressed people in the crowd. One queried if it sang under the water, another thought it must be some lonely being undergoing a doom or spell, and several wondered if it had a soul to be saved. In these and other comments the imagination, as soon as stimulated, ran instinctively to the ancient grooves, mounted the old mythologic diligence as if no newer locomotion had been discovered, rehearsed the infancy of the race again, saw the conventional hair-combing mermaid, heard the superannuated siren singing as she sang to Ulysses with howsoever cracked voice, and evoked from mental dark cellars all the uncanny bats that hint of curses, hag-riding, and enchantments. The nineteenth century spoke not. Had it spoken to those who regarded the siren as real, there would have been a riotous competition to secure the monster at any cost whatever.



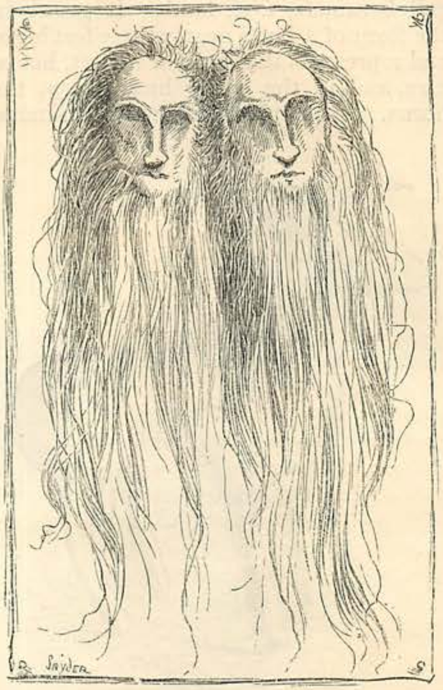
THE JAPANESE SIREN.

Both the cautious skepticism of the *savant*, and his interest in monsters, result from the cumulative experience of the human race. The history of Delusions teaches him caution; the history of Discovery teaches him the value of the exceptional in nature.

In the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London there are two relics which, when the history of scientific thought comes to be written, may emerge



THE NATURAL MANDRAKE.

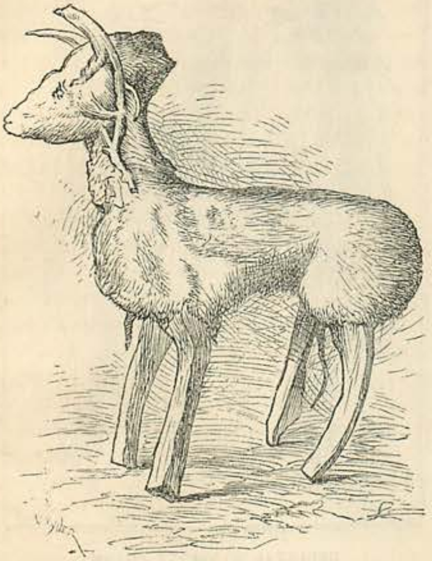


MEDIÆVAL MANDRAKE CHARM.

from their dark corner, and stand as landmarks in the journey from Fable to Fact. One is a mediæval mandrake, made into a charm. Because this root was forked and fleshy, and partly, perhaps, because it was narcotic, ancient wizards saw in it their opportunity. They added their cunning art, gave it human features, even cultivated the hair on it, and then declared that it came thus from the earth. Fable adopted it, related that it shrieked and dropped human blood when drawn from the ground, and asserted that when kept and ceremoniously treated it was a potent love charm, and also drew wealth and all desirable things to it. The human form was most skillfully made out of the root, and sometimes there were twin shapes, as in the example which has been drawn for me at the College of Surgeons. The career of this little thing has been more wonderful than that of many a great benefactor of mankind. It has been celebrated in sacred books; Josephus, Pliny, and other historians have related its preternatural sagas and virtues; manipulated mandrake roots spread through the mediæval world, and became important articles of traffic in every part of Europe; and it passed into the verse of Shakspeare:

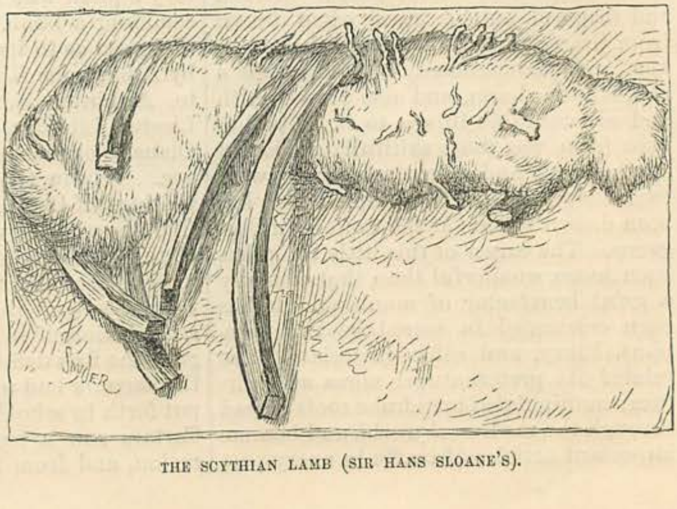
> "And shrieks like mandrake torn out of the earth,
> That living mortals, hearing them, run mad."

The second of the two relics in the Surgeons' Museum to which I have alluded is "the Scythian Lamb." In the sixteenth century it became noised abroad through Europe that there existed in Tartary a plant which bore a fruit closely resembling a lamb. It was mentioned or discussed as to its genuineness or nature by Athanasius Kircher, Sigismund, Hayto, Arminius, Surius, Franciscus Baco, Licetus, Libarius, Hierubergius, Olearius, Olans Wormius, and Julius Cæsar Scaliger. Within the period covered by the writings of these men a method of scientific observation was developed, and one of the first tests of its effectiveness seems to have been this "Scythian Lamb." Of these, Scaliger, the learned Italian, who settled himself in Paris in the year 1525, gave the first definite account with which the *savants* had to deal. His statement, put forth in scholastic Latin, is this. The Tartars sow a seed very like that of a melon, and from it springs a plant they call borametz, *i. e.*, lamb. It grows in the form of a lamb nearly three feet high, and represents that animal in feet, hoofs, ears, and in the entire head except the horns. In the place of horns it has hairs, with a kind of single horn. It is covered with a delicate skin, which is used by the Tartars as a covering for their heads. It is said the pulp is eaten as flesh, that blood issues from it, and it has wonderful sweetness. The root, when taken from the ground, reaches to your middle, and is very large. So long as it is surrounded by little herbs it lives, just as a lamb in a pasture; but if these be taken away it wastes away and dies. When brought back it revives. It is sought by wolves, but by no other flesh-eating animals. In conclusion, Scaliger discloses a doubt by adding: "This, indeed, seems put in as a kind of seasoning to the story of the lamb. What I would desire to know is whether from one trunk there depend four various legs and feet, and whether it is able to beget," etc.


THE SCYTHIAN LAMB (MARTYN'S).

And he says that he describes what he has "read and heard" of the wonderful plant. Antonius Deufingius declared his belief that the thing was fabulous. Then Kaempfer, after searching in Tartary personally without finding the wondrous plant, announced a rationalistic explanation. He heard from some traveller that in the region where this plant was said to grow there was a kind of sheep remarkable for the fineness of its skin and wool, and that the inhabitants had a cruel custom of sometimes taking the unborn lamb from its mother, the skin being supposed to be then finer. If, however, the lamb was preserved, it hardened into something like a hairy gourd, and in this form was palmed off as a miracle.

But a scientific society had come into existence in England, and in the seventeenth century F.R.S. showed that it was not an idle title by clamoring to see and handle and examine this wonderful Scythian monster. After persistent efforts John Martyn, the chief botanist of England in that time, and Sir Hans Sloane, the famous physician, each obtained specimens, of both of which I have obtained drawings. These men discovered that the so-called "lamb" was certainly vegetal; that it was a hairy root with many rootlets, of which all but four being amputated beneath, and the upper bulbs and leaves so manipulated as to answer to ears and quasi-horns, something like a sheep was artificially obtained. The vegetal *pecus* was largely pecuniary in origin. In Martyn's specimen it was found that one of the legs had been introduced by art;


THE SCYTHIAN LAMB (SIR HANS SLOANE'S).

and suspicion being thus aroused, a more careful scrutiny discovered that the head also was from another piece. The ingenuity was acknowledged. "This lamb," says Martyn in his report (*Phil. Trans.*, vol. vi., p. 317), "has been formed from a root or trunk by the same art by which little men were made from the roots of mandrake or bryony. I am nevertheless doubtful from what plant this plaything of art and nature could have been formed." Sir Hans Sloane came independently to the same conclusion. He also tried some of the potencies ascribed to it, particularly the power of its hair to stanch bleedings, and says, "Though I may think it harmless, I'm quite sure 'tis not infallible."

So the fate of the Scythian lamb was sealed. It was a very ingenious contrivance, probably suggested by some such peculiarity in the species of Tartary sheep as that of which Kaempfer heard. In some respects it was more artfully planned than the mandrake manikin. Yet one had a flourishing career of at least two thousand years; the other passed swiftly to the lower shelf of the museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where it now reposes in masterly inactivity. The mandrake was born into one intellectual formation of the world, the Scythian lamb into another; they rest together in one dark corner at last.

It is interesting to compare with this scientific attitude toward a proclaimed marvel that of the pre-scientific scholar. In the twelfth century the learned world was informed of certain birds in Ireland —a myth-haunted land—which were called barnacles, and grew on trees, being developed from the bark. Giraldus Cambrensis (whom Richard Cœur de Lion appointed to rule his kingdom when setting out on his crusade, and perhaps the ablest man of the time) writes of these "birds called barnacles which nature produces in a manner that is contrary to the laws of nature"; and he claims the generation of birds from wood as an argument that our first parents were "made of mud." (*Topographia Hibernica*, i., 15. Prima ergo generatio ex limo; et hæc ultima ex ligno.) Whatever may be thought of the startling idea of nature producing a thing counter to its own laws, it is sign of the old scholar's reverential presentiment of the yet unthought of potentialities of nature. It is the faint dawn of the rational method of looking at a phenomenon, though the conception to which it gives rise is almost as monstrous as the Hibernian bird itself.

But a firmer step was presently taken on the same road. On the margin of the valuable MS. of Giraldus Cambrensis we find a note by another scholar, Alexander Nequam. He is not prepared to question the main fact, because Giraldus is careful to say that he had himself seen a vast number of the "corpuscula" of these barnacle birds in Ireland, but he does see the inadequacy of the reference of a naturally produced thing to the class of confessedly non-natural phenomena. So he carries the problem straight to that metaphysic museum, so to call it, where so many insoluble things have been stored, before and since. Nequam argues: "Since there must have been birds before eggs, must there not have been birds produced otherwise than from eggs?" Here is a fairly scientific use of the imagination.

Let us see how the eyes of Giraldus might have been affected in ways unknown to himself. Herodotus and others relate the wonderful story of the phœnix burning itself to ashes on the altar of the sun, and then rising from its own ashes. Most probably this was an old metaphor of the sun, which seemed to be consumed in the fires of sunset and to soar up again in the morning, and, by extension, to the summer sun perishing in the colors of autumn and rising again in those of spring. But this solar poem gained a special connection with the palm. When the aged palm becomes barren, it is said that the custom is to burn it to the ground, and then in a remarkably brief period of time a small shoot appears (corresponding to the little worm which is the first sign of the legendary phœnix), and the new palm grows so quickly that some poet might easily have described it as "soaring," and its plumelike leaves perching at the top of its stem would have confirmed the metaphor. Hence it was that the Greek name of the palm, "phœnix," was given to the solar bird of mythology.*

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* In the month of September, 1876, the following phenomenon occurred, as described by the German journal *Der Naturforscher*, in an orchard near the village of Brachelheim. A large fire occurred in the village, and four weeks after it numerous trees in the orchard that had been singed by the fire began to vegetate anew, putting forth tender green leaves and blossoms, often by the side of fruits which the fire had spared. On examining the wood with

In the Northern countries the goose was a solar bird, and, indeed, from old Hindoo times laid the gold egg of morn. The flight of wild-geese is still to the man of the North the augury of the sky, and the Michaelmas goose in England is the remnant of a long mythologic evolution. The bird which was said, in both Ireland and Scotland, to be sprung from the barnacle, is the still so-called "barnacle goose" (*Anas lucopsis*), which winters in the South. It is remarkable that the very accent of the old phœnix, which first appeared in its ashes as a worm, recurs in the folk-lore of the barnacle goose. Thus, in Hall's "Vergidemiarum," we have

"The Scottish Barnacle, if I might choose,
That of a Worme doth waxe a wingèd Goose."

And in Marston's "Malecontent,"

"Like your Scotch Barnacle, now a block,
Instantly a Worm, and presently a great Goose."

What may originally have been only a poet's metaphor, more vital than the palm (phœnix) he looked upon, soars into a mythology, wings its way from the East, and burns itself into such ashes as were blown from popular tradition even into such eyes as those of Giraldus Cambrensis, Holinshed, and Gerard, who says, in his *Herbal:* "There are in the north parts of Scotland certaine Trees whereon do grow Shell-fishes, which falling into the water do become Fowls, whom we call *Barnakles*, in the north of England *Brant Geese*, and in Lancashire *Tree Geese.*" This northern phœnix being aquatic, had needs come from an aquatic worm.

There has recently come under my own personal observation evidence of the extreme anxiety of the common people to verify any alleged extraordinary phenomenon. Fifteen years ago one Charles Hindley, while editing certain old and worthless pamphlets that were hawked about London two hundred years ago, much as Zadkiel's Almanac is now, conceived the sorry notion of publishing the "Prophecies of Mother Shipton"—certain prophecies of his own forging. These fictitious utterances were embodied in that kind of runic doggerel which prevails in the Roxborough Ballads, and they represent the old female "astrologer" Mother Shipton (who was born about the year 1488) as predicting:

"Carriages without horses shall go.
Around the world thoughts shall fly
In the twinkling of an eye.
Iron in the water shall float
As easy as a wooden boat.
Gold shall be found, and found
In a land that's not now known.
Fire and water shall more wonders do.
England shall at last admit a Jew.

"A house of glass shall come to pass
In England—but, alas!
War will follow with the work,
In the land of the pagan and Turk;
And state and state in fierce strife
Will seek each other's life.
But when the North shall divide the South,
An eagle shall build in the lion's mouth.

"The world then to an end shall come
In eighteen hundred and eighty-one."

The allusions in this doggerel to steam, the telegraph, iron ships, California, Disraeli, the American war (going on while Hindley was writing), and even the Crystal Palace, at once attracted the attention of antiquarians. A correspondence occurred in *Notes and Queries* (Series IV., vol. ii.), and in the end Hindley's confession of the forgery was made and published. But the Chinese proverb was verified that the royal chariot and postilions can not overtake the word once escaped. These fictitious utterances obtained a wide circulation and belief among the class which is not accustomed to read *Notes and Queries*, and unfortunately among these appears to be some person authorized to write in a respectable London journal. In the *Globe* newspaper of February 17, 1877, portions of the forged predictions were printed as being very wonderful, and, still more wonderful, they were said to have been "published" in 1448, *i. e.*, before the introduction of printing! The allusion to the war in Turkey—the only hit really—attracted attention, and the immediate result was that the "prophecies" were printed on a card, price twopence, now sold in vast numbers throughout the length and breadth of the land. On the windows of hundreds of newspaper and candy shops in London one reads, "Read Mother Shipton's Wonderful Prophecies!" Having invested his twopence, one possesses a coarse piece of pasteboard, five inches by three, on which are the lines already quoted, and more of a similar kind, under the following heading: "Mother Shipton's Prophecies! Have recently been discovered in the

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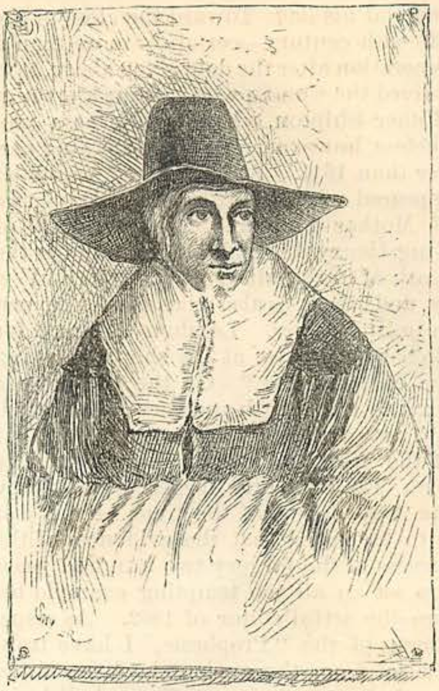
the microscope, it was found that the contents of the cells were transformed into a pulpy mass. Sugar was found to be present both in the singed and unsinged trees.

British Museum, written in an old manuscript work, A.D. 1448, and portions have been published in the *Globe* newspaper of February 17, 1877. This wonderful woman lived till she was of extraordinary age. She died at Clifton in Yorkshire, from which is taken the following epitaph, copied from a stone monument:

> "'Here lyes she who never ly'd,
> Whose skill often has been try'd.
> Her Prophecies shall survive,
> And ever keep her name alive.'"

But besides this cheap edition of the spurious additions to originally spurious "prophecies," there is on the market a sensationally decorated sixpenny book, which, I am told, is being circulated widely in all the colonies, and possibly it is known in America. On the cover Mother Shipton is represented careering amid comets and stars on her broomstick, her familiars accompanying her in shape of a cat crouching behind her, and an owl perched before her on the broom handle. The steam train and the balloon, which she is declared to have predicted, are included. Inside is related the old story of Mother Shipton's birth from the unhallowed marriage of her mother with the devil; the prodigies which attended her infancy, such as her cradle being found suspended up the chimney with the child in it without visible means of support, and her reading a book at first sight; and then the prophecies after the fact forged in the seventeenth century, followed by those forged in this nineteenth century. The fact is notable that on the placards and on the book-cover the thing made most prominent is the prediction that the world is to come to an end in 1881. This is the most fascinating item. It is notorious that English mines have within these recent years remained vacant for twenty-four hours where Zadkiel's Almanac had predicted an explosion on that day; and it is not at all unlikely that after the growing interest in the events of 1881, if that year shall be safely passed without an explosion of the planet, Mother Shipton will be blown as sky-high as in the picture, and a world of delusions will come to an end.

I fear it will be impossible otherwise to deliver the English masses from this unhappy piece of miseducation. And yet there has been revealed amid it all the popular hunger for truth. I am assured by friends of mine employed in the British Museum that for months that institution has been fairly besieged by people anxious to know if there be any such manuscript as that referred to, or if the predictions are genuine. And even after the uniform denial had been given for seven or eight months after the *Globe* article appeared, there were sometimes as many as fifty applications in a single day, most of them from working-people who could little afford the time.



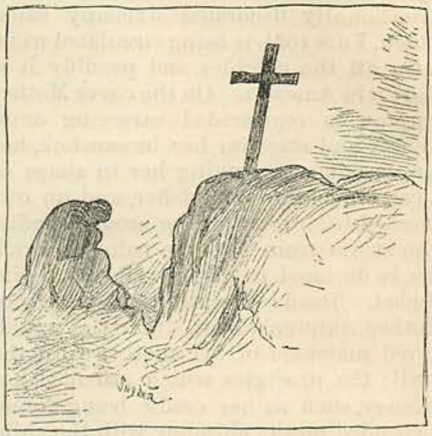
THE REAL MOTHER SHIPTON.

The forger of these "prophecies" may have been unconscious of the full character of his crime; but a little reflection will show that the class of minds which have been misled at a vital point is precisely that which most requires exact guidance in distinguishing the rational prevision from that which would be marvellous, and both of these from that which would be monstrous. They whose belief (or even quasi-belief) is built up by a certain process of honest reasoning, on however mistaken premises, do not yield a position merely to authority, and that is all the busy men at the Museum can spare time to give the multitudinous inquirers. What is mere unsupported denial against the vast number of facts built into the pyramid whose apex Hindley selects to pedestal his lie? Toward the close of the fifteenth century—certainly more than a generation after the date given above, 1448—lived the woman who became known as Mother Shipton, whose repute as a prophetess, however, rests upon nothing earlier than 1641. At that time a pamphlet appeared with this title: "The Prophesie of Mother Shipton. In the raigne of King Henry the Eighth. Foretelling the death of Cardinall Wolsey, the Lord Percy, and others, as also what should happen in insuing times. London. Printed for Richard Lowndes at his shop adjoyning the Ludgate, 1641." On the title-page is a nearly full-length and very coarse woodcut, not of the conventional "witch," but of the mediæval country-woman. The book was evidently forged, probably by the "astrologer" of the time, Lily, and it is to be feared that the evidences of the success of the forgery two hundred years ago set an all too tempting example before the artful editor of 1862. As a specimen of the "Prophesie," I have transcribed from the ancient book itself the concluding sentences: "Then shall be in the North that one woman shall say unto another, Mother, I have seen a man today, and for one man there shall be a thousand women; there shall be a man sitting upon St. James's Church Hill weeping his fill; and after that a ship come sayling up the Thames till it come against London, and the Master of the ship shall weep, and the Marriners shall aske him why hee weepeth, seeing he hath made so good a voyage, and hee shall say, Ah, what a goodly Citie this was! none in the world comparable to it, and now there is scarce left any house that can let us have drinke for our money." This was Lily's great and only hit—if, as is probable, he wrote the book—for the great fire of London occurred twenty-five years later, and the astrologers had no difficulty in putting that and this together. The last lines in the book are these:

> "Unhappy hee that lives to see these days;
> But happy are the dead, Shipton's wife says."

It is very likely that in this couplet we have some "old wives' rune," which had lasted like a nursery rhyme, or like "Poor Richard's" saws of a later day, and that this suggested the idea of fabricating a number of prophecies so vague that one or two at least might be fitted on to some events likely to come, and ascribing them to the old Dame Shipton.

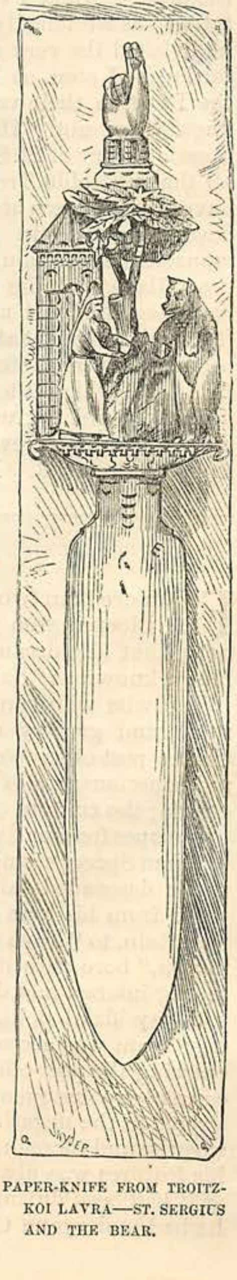
Nay, more, the student of nature may err in balancing too evenly the familiar constancy of the objective world against the familiar inconstancy of human nature, and may thus be led to reject too promptly the startling thing which merits investigation. On visiting the ancient monastery of Troitzkoi, in Russia, the object which chiefly arrested my attention among the many relics and treasures was a large agate, upon which were defined with a good degree of clearness a cross standing on a rock, and a cloaked form with bent head kneeling before it. It was affirmed by the priest who exhibited the agate that the picture on it was natural; and on taking it in my hands, and scrutinizing it in the clearest light for ten minutes, passing my finger repeatedly over the polished surface, I could not detect any evidence that the cross and priest were not really of the crystal's grain. The polish of the surface was uniform throughout. Had there been either of the two forms without the other, I should have had no difficulty in recognizing the probabilities as on the side of the gem's genuineness. As it was, however, it remained unsolved—for me a crystal monster, quite probably deriving its anomalous character from my ignorance alone, and at this moment explicable by existing experts as within the fair possibilities of crystallization, or disclosing unsuspected depths of priestly artifice. On returning to England, and relating to one and another what I had seen, it occurred to me in some cases to detach the object



DELINEATION UPON AN ANCIENT AGATE AT TROITZKOI.

carefully from the religious environment where I had seen it, and in other cases to emphasize that environment. It pretty soon appeared that the opinion of my friends was largely dependent upon these circumstances. If I said, "The Russian priests have an agate with a picture of a monk kneeling before a cross," the incredulous shrug or smile generally came. If I said, "Among stones of different kinds I saw the other day there was an agate which had on it the startling semblance of a cross and a cloaked form crouching before it," there was astonishment, but rarely any marked incredulity, but only remarks on the curious shapes often found in agates. It is no doubt necessary that the professional trader in miracles and ghosts shall be watched with extreme vigilance. But, on the other side, it is to be remembered that whoever finds a marvel or monster generally takes it straight to the said professional dealer in such things, who may, indeed, manipulate such things somewhat, but rarely ventures to manufacture his monster out of whole cloth.

In the London *Philosophical Transactions and Collections to the End of the Year* 1700, vol. iii., there is a chapter (vii.) in which eminent physicians and men of science in that time make reports of monstrous human births examined by themselves. There are ten of these monsters. One was substantially an ape; another was born with a long tail; and several others presented hardly less startling peculiarities. One of the remarkable phenomena, however, offered in this old chapter is what the contributors to it could not see, because it can only be seen through the perspective of five or six generations —this, namely, that not one sentence in either of the statements suggests any kind of theory in explanation of the monster described. Around those men—their observations were in various countries, and extend from 1647 to 1686—raged all the madness of the witchcraft agitation; excited villagers still believed in infernal births from Incubi and Succubi. But of all this environment there is here no trace. As the story reaches the circle of *savants* its details are stated as simply as if it were an every-day occurrence. Having emerged from the plane where such events were explained by reference to imps, these men evidently found sufficient satisfaction in merely recording and scrutinizing the dry fact, without even trying to theorize or generalize. They were no doubt sick of theories. But we can now see that the greatest generalizations of the scientific era from Lamarck and Buffon to Darwin and Huxley were speaking to them in those strange forms. Since that period of the Suspense of Theory, when, emerging from a hag-ridden world, the human mind set itself to take stock of the real materials of which the edifice of truth was to be built, the monsters have revealed to all something, at least, of the open secret of nature's method. The horse that puts forth toes instead of developing a single hoof; the double-headed animal; the joined twins — these are now monsters only to the ignorant. Each, beginning as an obscuration, has proved a window through which light has streamed in on the operations of nature.



PAPER-KNIFE FROM TROITZKOI LAVRA—ST. SERGIUS AND THE BEAR.

I have already spoken of the great Troitzkoi monastery in Russia. The legend of it is as follows. Many centuries ago the hermit St. Sergius came from Syria and settled himself here in the heart of a forest. For the latter years of his life his only companion was a huge bear, which came to destroy him, but remained to be his friend; and on the spot where the bear finally buried and mourned the saint, now stands the venerated Lavra Troitzkoi. Within its walls I listened to this legend, as related by a lady of that neighborhood, and at the end of it she said, "Do you not believe it?" I answered: "I can believe almost anything of the power of kindness. I do not see why St. Sergius might not have tamed this bear." But a shadow of pain passed over her face, which plainly told me that an outright assertion of disbelief would have pleased her better than my rationalistic interpretation. "It was," she said, gently, "the Holy Spirit that dwelt in St. Sergius which converted the bear." Then I felt that my interpretation was wretchedly inferior to hers. I had visited the very morning-land of the fairies, had seen, as it were, Beauty and the Beast in their very rose garden, and knew them not. Had she accepted my prosaic theory of St. Sergius and the bear, all the venerable Troitzkoi towers would have toppled down around us, burying the devout inmates in spiritual death, the monastery itself would have disappeared, the village and the earnest lady would have been left all alone in a primeval forest with no saint at all, but only a long-bearded old man feeding a tame bear. Her faith, which it took many a thousand years to build up, was not to be pulled down in an hour, even had I been in an iconoclastic mood. It seemed preferable to look at the lady's perfect faith as itself a part of nature, a force which had long been engaged in refining and taming the great Russian bear himself, and preparing him for his part in civilized society.

All such legends are culture-myths. They date from a time when man was making his first discovery that the world is not ruled by brute force; that there is a higher power which goes forth with the eye-beam of man, emanates from his spirit and his moral life to weave invisible chains round the ferocities of nature. From many sources had gathered those traditions which had built Troïtzkoi monastery, and in their strength its sisterhood is there, still softening things fiercer than bears—controlling deadly diseases, subduing wild passions, performing daily miracles harder than anything they tell of Sergius. Around them gather visions of a past paradise, where all beasts were kind and peaceful; a paradise to come, where lion and lamb shall lie down together, and the babe play unharmed with the asp. Such visions and prophecies have fed the human spirit as fair fountains flowing from many sources, and making glad the lowliest vales and weariest pathways of humanity.

SAM SPERRY'S PENSION.

FOR more than two years it was *the* joke of Bloomington Centre—that bright hope, that idle dream, that fond delusive fancy, known as "Sam Sperry's pension."

The wits who congregated in the bar-room and grocery of the Bloomington Centre post-office sometimes had only a sad consciousness of futility in their best efforts; the column of facetiæ in the local newspaper frequently palled on the senses; but Sam Sperry's lank and stooping figure as he descended faithfully, twice every week, from his lone home on the distant mountain, to "learn the news from Washington," bore with it an aroma of never-failing interest and diversion.

"Any 'ficial dokkerments arrived for me?" Sam was accustomed to inquire, on entering the post-office, with an air of ill-concealed consequence; and on being answered in the negative, the look of sudden surprise and incredulity which overspread his features was always as fresh and real as it had been during the first six months he had undergone the blow. His recovery was as complete and instantaneous, when, seated on the counter with the "boys," he derided the very existence of his proud nation's capital in terms of the most reckless sarcasm, or, in a softer mood, induced by certain grateful potations, palliated the weakness of official judges with a forbearance which his listeners found even more irresistibly entertaining.

"They think they're comin' it over me, down there to Washington," Sam observed on one occasion, rolling his eyes upon his near neighbor on the counter with a look which was dark without menace, and at the same time forcibly introducing the sharp point of his elbow to that gentleman's ribs—"they think they're comin' it over me, down there to Washington. And all the time they're hangin' off about my pension, what's accumulatin' down there?—what's accumulatin'?" Here Sam's companion was actually obliged to move an inch or two away in order to escape the too severe emphasis of that emaciated elbow. "Back pay!"