

imputed to him upon Cardinal Richelieu, who, with all his eminent qualities, had the infirmity of being inexorable upon the question of any personal attack that was made upon him. Grandier, beside his eloquence, was distinguished for his courage and resolution, for the gracefulness of his figure, and the extraordinary attention he paid to the neatness of his dress and the decoration of his person, which last circumstance brought upon him the imputation of being too much devoted to the service of the fair.

About this time certain nuns of the convent of Ursulines at Loudun were attacked with a disease which manifested itself by very extraordinary symptoms, suggesting to many the idea that they were possessed with devils. A rumour was immediately spread that Grandier, urged by some offence he had conceived against these nuns, was the author, by the skill he had in the arts of sorcery, of these possessions. It unfortunately happened, that the same capuchin friar who assured Cardinal Richelieu that Grandier was the writer of the libel against him, also communicated to him the story of the possessed nuns, and the suspicion which had fallen on the priest on their account. The cardinal seized with avidity on this occasion of private vengeance, wrote to a counsellor of state at Loudun, one of his creatures, to cause a strict investigation to be made into the charge, and in such terms as plainly implied that what he aimed at was the destruction of Grandier.

The trial took place in the month of August, 1634; and, according to the authorised copy of the trial, Grandier was convicted upon the evidence of Astaroth, a devil of the order of Seraphims, and chief of the possessing devils, of Easas, of Celsus, of Acaos, of Cedon, of Asmodeus of the order of thrones, of Alex, of Zabulon, of Naphthalim, of Cham, of Uriel, and of Achas of the order of principalities, and sentenced to be burned alive. In other words, he was convicted upon the evidence of twelve nuns, who, being asked who they were, gave in these names, and professed to be devils, that, compelled by the order of the court, delivered a constrained testimony. The sentence was accordingly executed, and Grandier met his fate with heroic constancy. At his death an enormous drone fly was seen buzzing about his head; and a monk, who was present at the execution, attested

that, whereas the devils are accustomed to present themselves in the article of death to tempt men to deny God their Saviour, this was Beelzebub, which in Hebrew signifies the God of flies, come to carry away to hell the soul of the victim.¹

ASTROLOGY.

The supposed science of astrology is of a nature less tremendous, and less appalling to the imagination, than the commerce with devils and evil spirits, or the raising of the dead from the peace of the tomb to effect certain magical operations, or to instruct the living as the events that are speedily to befall them. Yet it is well worthy of attention in a work of this sort, if for no other reason, because it has prevailed in almost all nations and ages of the world, and has been assiduously cultivated by men, frequently of great talent, and who were otherwise distinguished for the soundness of their reasoning powers, and for the steadiness and perseverance of their application to the pursuits in which they engaged.

The whole of the question was built upon the supposed necessary connection of certain aspects and conjunctions or oppositions of the stars and heavenly bodies, with the events of the world and the characters and actions of men. The human mind has ever confessed an anxiety to pry into the future, and to deal in omens and prophetic suggestions, and, certain coincidences having occurred however fortuitously, to deduce from them rules and maxims upon which to build an anticipation of things to come.

Add to which, it is flattering to the pride of man, to suppose all nature concerned with and interested in what is of importance to ourselves. Of this we have an early example in the song of Deborah in the Old Testament, where in a fit of pious fervour and exaltation, the poet exclaims, "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."²

The general belief in astrology had a memorable effect on the history of the human mind. All men in the first instance have an intuitive feeling of freedom in the acts they perform, and of

¹ Menagiana, tom. II., p. 252, *et seqq.* ² Judges, v., 20.

consequence of praise or blame due to them in just proportion to the integrity or baseness of the motives by which they are actuated. This is in reality the most precious endowment of man. Hence it comes that the good man feels a pride and self-complacency in acts of virtue, takes credit to himself for the independence of his mind, and is conscious of the worth and honour to which he feels that he has a rightful claim. But, if all our acts are predetermined by something out of ourselves, if, however virtuous and honourable are our dispositions, we are overruled by our stars, and compelled to the acts, which, left to ourselves, we should most resolutely disapprove, our condition becomes slavery, and we are left in a state the most abject and hopeless. And, though our situation in this respect is merely imaginary, it does not the less fail to have very pernicious results to our characters. Men, so far as they are believers in astrology, look to the stars, and not to themselves, for an account of what they shall do, and resign themselves to the omnipotence of a fate which they feel it in vain to resist. Of consequence, a belief in astrology has the most unfavourable tendency as to the morality of man; and, were it not that the sense of the liberty of our actions is so strong that all the reasonings in the world cannot subvert it, there would be a fatal close to all human dignity and all human virtue.

WILLIAM LILLY.

One of the most striking examples of the ascendancy of astrological faith is in the instance of William Lilly. This man has fortunately left us a narrative of his own life; and he comes sufficiently near to our time to give us a feeling of reality in the transactions in which he was engaged, and to bring the scenes home to our business and bosoms.

Before he enters expressly upon the history of his life, he gives us incidentally an anecdote which merits our attention, as tending strongly to illustrate the credulity of man at the periods of which we treat.

Lilly was born in the year 1602. When certain circumstances led his yet undetermined thoughts to the study of astrology as his principal pursuit, he put himself in the year 1632 under the

tuition of one Evans, whom he describes as poor, ignorant, drunken, presumptuous and knavish, but who had a character, as the phrase was, for erecting a figure, predicting future events, discovering secrets, restoring stolen goods, and even for raising a spirit when he pleased. Sir Kenelm Digby was one of the most promising characters of these times, extremely handsome and graceful in his person, accomplished in all military exercises, endowed with high intellectual powers, and indefatigably inquisitive after knowledge. To render him the more remarkable, he was the eldest son of Everard Digby, who was the most eminent sufferer for the conspiracy of the Gunpowder Treason.

It was, as it seems, some time before Lilly became acquainted with Evans, that Lord Bothwell and Sir Kenelm Digby came to Evans at his lodgings in the Minories, for the express purpose of desiring him to show them a spirit. Sir Kenelm was born in the year 1603; he must have been therefore at this time a young man, but sufficiently old to know what he sought, and to choose the subjects of his enquiry with a certain discretion. Evans consented to gratify the curiosity of his illustrious visitors. He drew a circle, and placed himself and the two strangers within the circle. He began his invocations. On a sudden, Evans was taken away from the others, and found himself, he knew not how, in Battersea Fields near the Thames. The next morning a countryman discovered him asleep, and having awaked him, in answer to his enquiries told him where he was. Evans in the afternoon sent a messenger to his wife, to inform her of his safety, and to calm the apprehensions she might reasonably entertain. Just as the messenger arrived, Sir Kenelm Digby came to the house, curious to enquire respecting the issue of the adventure of yesterday. Lilly received this story from Evans; and, having asked him how such an event came to attend on the experiment, was answered that, in practising the invocation, he had heedlessly omitted the necessary suffumigation, at which omission the spirit had taken offence.

Lilly made some progress in astrology under Evans, and practised the art in minor matters with a certain success; but his ambition led him to aspire to the highest place in his profession. He made an experiment to discover a hidden treasure in West-

minster Abbey ; and, having obtained leave for that purpose from the bishop of Lincoln, dean of Westminster, he resorted to the spot with about thirty persons more, with divining rods. He fixed on the place according to the rules, and began to dig ; but he had not proceeded far before a furious storm came on, and he judged it advisable to "dismiss the demons," and desist. These supernatural assistants, he says, had taken offence at the number and levity of the persons present ; and, if he had not left off when he did, he had no doubt that the storm would have grown more and more violent, till the whole structure would have been laid level with the ground.

He purchased himself a house to which to retire in 1636 at Hershams near Walton on Thames, having, though originally bred in the lowest obscurity, twice enriched himself in some degree by marriage. He came to London with a view to practise his favourite art in 1641 ; but, having received a secret monition warning him that he was not yet sufficiently an adept, he retired again into the country for two years, and did not finally commence his career till 1644, when he published a "Prophetical Almanack," which he continued to do till about the time of his death. He then immediately began to rise into considerable notice. Mrs. Lisle, the wife of one of the commissioners of the great seal, took to him the urine of Whitlocke, one of the most eminent lawyers of the time, to consult him respecting the health of the party, when he informed the lady that the person would recover from his present disease, but about a month after would be very dangerously ill of a surfeit, which accordingly happened. He was protected by the great Selden, who interested himself in his favour ; and he tells us that Lenthall, speaker of the house of commons, was at all times his friend. He further says of himself that he was originally partial to King Charles and to monarchy ; but, when the parliament had apparently the upper hand, he had the skill to play his cards accordingly, and secured his favour with the ruling powers. Whitlocke, in his "Memorials of Affairs in his Own Times," takes repeated notice of him, says that, meeting him in the street in the spring of 1645, he enquired of Lilly as to what was likely speedily to happen, who predicted to him the battle of Naseby, and notes in 1648 that some of his prog-

nostications "fell out very strangely, particularly as to the king's fall from his horse about this time." Lilly applied to Whitlocke in favour of his rival, Wharton, the astrologer, and his prayer was granted, and again in behalf of Oughtred, the celebrated mathematician.

Lilly and Booker, a brother-astrologer, were sent for in great form, with a coach and four horses, to the head-quarters of Fairfax at Windsor, towards the end of the year 1647, when they told the General that they were "confident that God would go along with him and his army, till the great work for which they were ordained was perfected, which they hoped would be the conquering their and the parliament's enemies, and a quiet settlement and firm peace over the whole nation." The two astrologers were sent for in the same state in the following year to the siege of Colchester, which they predicted would soon fall into possession of the parliament.

Lilly in the meanwhile retained in secret his partiality to Charles I. Mrs. Whorwood, a lady who was fully in the king's confidence, came to consult him, as to the place to which Charles should retire when he escaped from Hampton Court. Lilly prescribed accordingly; but Ashburnham disconcerted all his measures, and the king made his inauspicious retreat to the Isle of Wight. Afterwards he was consulted by the same lady, as to the way in which Charles should proceed respecting the negotiations with the parliamentary commissioners at Newport, when Lilly advised that the king should sign all the propositions, and come up immediately with the commissioners to London, in which case Lilly did not doubt that the popular tide would turn in his favour, and the royal cause prove triumphant. Finally, he tells us that he furnished the saw and *aqua fortis*, with which the king had nearly removed the bars of the window of his prison in Carisbrook Castle, and escaped. But Charles manifested the same irresolution at the critical moment in this case, which had before proved fatal to his success. In the year 1649 Lilly received a pension of one hundred pounds per annum from the Council of State, which, after having been paid him for two years, he declined to accept any longer. In 1659 he received a present of a gold chain and medal from Charles X., King of Sweden, in ac-

knowledge of the respectful mention he had made of that monarch in his almanacs.

Lilly lived to a considerable age, not having died till the year 1681. In the year 1666 he was summoned before a committee of the House of Commons, on the frivolous ground that, in his "Monarchy or No Monarchy," published fifteen years before, he had introduced sixteen plates, among which was one, the eighth, representing persons digging graves, with coffins and other emblems significative of mortality, and, in the thirteenth, a city in flames. He was asked whether these things referred to the late plague and fire of London. Lilly replied in a manner to intimate that they did; but he ingenuously confessed that he had not known in what year they would happen. He said that he had given these emblematical representations without any comment, that those who were competent might apprehend their meaning, whilst the rest of the world remained in the ignorance which was their appointed portion.

MATTHEW HOPKINS.

Nothing can place the credulity of the English nation on the subject of witchcraft about this time, in a more striking point of view, than the history of Matthew Hopkins, who, in a pamphlet published in 1647 in his own vindication, assumes to himself the surname of the Witch-finder. He fell by accident, in his native county of Suffolk, into contact with one or two reputed witches, and, being a man of an observing turn and an ingenious invention, struck out for himself a trade, which brought him such moderate returns as sufficed to maintain him, and at the same time gratified his ambition by making him a terror to many, and the object of admiration and gratitude to more, who felt themselves indebted to him for ridding them of secret and intestine enemies, against whom, as long as they proceeded in ways that left no footsteps behind, they felt they had no possibility of guarding themselves. Hopkins's career was something like that of Titus Oates in the following reign, but apparently much safer for the adventurer, since Oates armed against himself a very formidable party, while Hopkins seemed to assail a few only here and there, who were poor, debilitated, impotent, and helpless.

After two or three successful experiments, Hopkins engaged in a regular tour of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Huntingdon. He united to him two confederates, a man named John Stern, and a woman whose name has not been handed down to us. They visited every town in their route that invited them, and secured to them the moderate remuneration of twenty shillings and their expenses, leaving what was more than this to the spontaneous gratitude of those who should deem themselves indebted to the exertions of Hopkins and his party. By this expedient they secured to themselves a favourable reception, and a set of credulous persons who would listen to their dictates as so many oracles. Being three of them, they were enabled to play the game into one another's hands, and were sufficiently strong to overawe all timid and irresolute opposition. In every town to which they came, they enquired for reputed witches, and having taken them into custody, were secure for the most part of a certain number of zealous abettors, who took care that they should have a clear stage for their experiments. They overawed their helpless victims with a certain air of authority, as if they had received a commission from heaven for the discovery of misdeeds. They assailed the poor creatures with a multitude of questions constructed in the most artful manner. They stripped them naked, in search for the devil's marks in different parts of their bodies, which were ascertained by running pins to the head into those parts, that, if they were genuine marks, would prove themselves such by their insensibility. They swam their victims in rivers and ponds, it being an undoubted fact, that, if the persons accused were true witches, the water, which was the symbol of admission into the Christian Church, would not receive them into its bosom. If the persons examined continued obstinate, they seated them in constrained and uneasy attitudes, occasionally binding them with cords, and compelling them to remain so without food or sleep for twenty-four hours. They walked them up and down the room, two taking them under each arm, till they dropped down with fatigue. They carefully swept the room in which the experiment was made, that they might keep away spiders and flies, which were supposed to be devils or their imps in that disguise.

The most plentiful inquisition of Hopkins and his confederates was in the years 1644, 1645, and 1646. At length there were so many persons committed to prison upon suspicion of witchcraft, that the government was compelled to take in hand the affair. The rural magistrates before whom Hopkins and his confederates brought their victims, were obliged, willingly or unwillingly, to commit them for trial. A commission was granted to the earl of Warwick and others to hold a sessions of jail-delivery against them for Essex at Chelmsford. Lord Warwick was at this time the most popular nobleman in England. He was appointed by the parliament lord high admiral during the civil war. He was much courted by the independent clergy, was shrewd, penetrating, and active, and exhibited a singular mixture of pious demeanour with a vein of facetiousness and jocularly. With him was sent Dr. Calamy, the most eminent divine of the period of the Commonwealth, to see (says Baxter¹) that no fraud was committed, or wrong done to the parties accused. It may well be doubted however whether the presence of this clergyman did not operate unfavourably to the persons suspected. He preached before the judges. It may readily be believed, considering the temper of the times, that he insisted much upon the horrible nature of the sin of witchcraft, which could expect no pardon, either in this world or the world to come. He sat on the bench with the judges, and participated in their deliberations. In the result of this inquisition sixteen persons were hanged at Yarmouth in Norfolk, fifteen at Chelmsford, and sixty at various places in the county of Suffolk.

Whitelocke, in his Memorials of English Affairs, under the date of 1649, speaks of many witches being apprehended about Newcastle, upon the information of a person whom he calls the Witchfinder, who, as his experiments were nearly the same, though he is not named, we may reasonably suppose to be Hopkins; and in the following year about Boston in Lincolnshire. In 1652 and 1653 the same author speaks of women in Scotland, who were put to incredible torture to extort from them a confession of what their adversaries imputed to them.

The fate of Hopkins was such as might be expected in similar

¹ Certainty of the World of Spirits.

cases. The multitude are at first impressed with horror at the monstrous charges that are advanced. They are seized, as by contagion, with terror at the mischiefs which seem to impend over them, and from which no innocence and no precaution appear to afford them sufficient protection. They hasten, as with a unanimous effort, to avenge themselves upon these malignant enemies, whom God and man alike combine to expel from society. But, after a time, they begin to reflect, and to apprehend that they have acted with too much precipitation, that they have been led on with uncertain appearances. They see one victim led to the gallows after another, without stint or limitation. They see one dying with the most solemn asseverations of innocence, and another confessing, apparently she knows not what, what is put into her mouth by her relentless persecutors. They see these victims, old, crazy, and impotent, harassed beyond endurance by the ingenious cruelties that are practised against them. They were first urged on by implacable hostility and fury, to be satisfied with nothing but blood. But humanity and remorse also have their turn. Dissatisfied with themselves, they are glad to point their resentment against another. The man that at first they hailed as a public benefactor, they presently come to regard with jealous eyes, and begin to consider as a cunning impostor, dealing in cool blood with the lives of his fellow-creatures for a paltry gain, and, still more horrible, for the lure of a perishable and short-lived fame. The multitude, we are told, after a few seasons, rose upon Hopkins, and resolved to subject him to one of his own criterions. They dragged him to a pond, and threw him into the water for a witch. It seems he floated on the surface, as a witch ought to do. They then pursued him with hootings and revilings, and drove him for ever into that obscurity and ignominy which he had amply merited.

CROMWELL.

There is a story of Cromwell recorded by Echard, the historian, which well deserves to be mentioned, as strikingly illustrative of the credulity which prevailed about this period. It takes its date from the morning of the 3rd of September, 1651,

when Cromwell gained the battle of Worcester against Charles the Second, which he was accustomed to call by a name sufficiently significant, his "crowning victory." It is told on the authority of a Colonel Lindsey, who is said to have been an intimate friend of the general, and to have been commonly known by that name, as being in reality the senior captain in Cromwell's own regiment. "On this memorable morning the general," it seems, "took this officer with him to a woodside not far from the army, and bade him alight, and follow him into that wood, and to take particular notice of what he saw and heard. After having alighted, and secured their horses, and walked some little way into the wood, Lindsey began to turn pale, and to be seized with horror from some unknown cause. Upon which Cromwell asked him how he did, or how he felt himself. He answered that he was in such a trembling and consternation, that he had never felt the like in all the conflicts and battles he had ever been engaged in : but whether it proceeded from the gloominess of the place, or the temperature of his body, he knew not. 'How now?' said Cromwell, 'What, troubled with the vapours? Come, forward, man.' They had not gone above twenty yards further, before Lindsey on a sudden stood still, and cried out, 'By all that is good I am seized with such unaccountable terror and astonishment, that it is impossible for me to stir one step further.' Upon which Cromwell called him, 'Faint-hearted fool!' and bade him, 'stand there, and observe, or be witness.' And then the general, advancing to some distance from him, met a grave, elderly man with a roll of parchment in his hand, who delivered it to Cromwell, and he eagerly perused it. Lindsey, a little recovered from his fear, heard several loud words between them : particularly Cromwell said, 'This is but for seven years ; I was to have had it for one-and-twenty ; and it must and shall be so.' The other told him positively, it could not be for more than seven. Upon which Cromwell cried with great fierceness, 'It shall however be for fourteen years.' But the other peremptorily declared, "It could not possibly be for any longer time ; and, if he would not take it so, there were others that would.' Upon which Cromwell at last took the parchment : and, returning to Lindsey with great joy in his

countenance, he cried, 'Now, Lindsey, the battle is our own! I long to be engaged.' Returning out of the wood, they rode to the army, Cromwell with a resolution to engage as soon as possible, and the other with a design to leave the army as soon. After the first charge, Lindsey deserted his post, and rode away with all possible speed day and night, till he came into the county of Norfolk, to the house of an intimate friend, one Mr. Thoroughgood, minister of the parish of Grimstone. Cromwell, as soon as he missed him, sent all ways after him, with a promise of a great reward to any that should bring him alive or dead. When Mr. Thoroughgood saw his friend Lindsey come into his yard, his horse and himself much tired, in a sort of maze, he said, 'How now, Colonel? We hear there is likely to be a battle shortly: what, fled from your colours?' 'A battle,' said the other; yes there has been a battle, and I am sure the king is beaten. But, if ever I strike a stroke for Cromwell again, may I perish eternally! For I am sure he has made a league with the devil, and the devil will have him in due time.' Then, desiring his protection from Cromwell's inquisitors, he went in, and related to him the story in all its circumstances." It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that Cromwell died on that day seven years, September the 3rd, 1658.

Echard adds, to prove his impartiality as an historian, "How far Lindsey is to be believed, and how far the story is to be accounted incredible, is left to the reader's faith and judgment, and not to any determination of our own."

DOROTHY MATELEY.

I find a story dated about this period, which, though it does not strictly belong to the subject of necromancy or dealings with the devil, seems well to deserve to be inserted in this work. The topic of which I treat is properly of human credulity; and this infirmity of our nature can scarcely be more forcibly illustrated than in the following example. It is recorded by the well-known John Bunyan, in a fugitive tract of his, entitled the "Life and Death of Mr. Badman," but which has since been inserted in the works of the author in two volumes folio. In minuteness of particularity and detail it may vie with almost any story which

human industry has collected, and human simplicity has ever placed upon record.

"There was," says my author, "a poor woman, by name Dorothy Mateley, who lived at a small village, called Ashover, in the county of Derby. The way in which she earned her subsistence, was by washing the rubbish that came from the lead-mines in that neighbourhood through a sieve, which labour she performed till the earth had passed the sieve, and what remained was particles and small portions of genuine ore. This woman was of exceedingly low and coarse habits, and was noted to be a profane swearer, curser, liar and thief; and her usual way of asserting things was with an imprecation, as, 'I would I might sink into the earth, if it be not so,' or, 'I would that God would make the earth open and swallow me up, if I tell an untruth.'

"Now it happened on the 23rd of March, 1660 [according to our computation 1661], that she was washing ore on the top of a steep hill about a quarter of a mile from Ashover, when a lad who was working on the spot missed twopence out of his pocket, and immediately bethought himself of charging Dorothy, with the theft. He had thrown off his breeches and was working in his drawers. Dorothy, with much seeming indignation, denied the charge, and added, as was usual with her, that she wished the ground might open and swallow her up, if she had the boy's money.

"One George Hopkinson, a man of good report in Ashover, happened to pass at no great distance at the time. He stood a while to talk to the woman. There stood also near the tub a little child, who was called to by her elder sister to come away. Hopkinson, therefore, took the little girl by the hand to lead her to her that called her. But he had not gone ten yards from Dorothy when he heard her crying out for help, and turning back, to his great astonishment he saw the woman with her tub and her sieve twirling round and round, and sinking at the same time in the earth. She sunk about three yards, and then stopped, at the same time calling lustily for assistance. But at that very moment a great stone fell upon her head, and broke her skull, and the earth fell in and covered her. She was afterwards dugged up, and found about four yards under ground, and the

boy's two pennies were discovered on her person, but the tub and the sieve had altogether disappeared."

WITCHES HANGED BY SIR MATTHEW HALE.

One of the most remarkable trials that occur in the history of criminal jurisprudence, was that of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender at Bury St. Edmund's in the year 1664. Not for the circumstances that occasioned it; for they were of the coarsest and must vulgar materials. The victims were two poor, solitary women of the town of Lowestoft in Suffolk, who had by temper and demeanour rendered themselves particularly obnoxious to their whole neighbourhood. Whenever they were offended with any one, and this frequently happened, they vented their wrath in curses and ill language, muttered between their teeth, and the sense of which could scarcely be collected; and ever and anon they proceeded to utter dark predictions of evil which should happen in revenge for the ill-treatment they received. The fishermen would not sell them fish; and the boys in the street were taught to fly from them with horror, or to pursue them with hootings and scurrilous abuse. The principal charges against them were, that the children of two families were many times seized with fits, in which they exclaimed that they saw Amy Duny and Rose Cullender coming to torment them. They vomited, and in their vomit were often found pins, and once or twice a two-penny nail. One or two of the children died; for the accusations spread over a period of eight years, from 1656 to the time of the trial. To back these allegations, a waggoner appeared, whose waggon had been twice overturned in one morning, in consequence of the curses of one of the witches, the waggon having first run against her hovel, and materially injured it. Another time the waggon stuck fast in a gateway, though the posts on neither side came in contact with the wheels; and, one of the posts being cut down, the waggon passed easily along.

This trial, as I have said, was no way memorable for the circumstances that occasioned it, but for the importance of the persons who were present, and had a share in the conduct of it. The judge who presided was Sir Matthew Hale, then chief baron

of the exchequer, and who had before rendered himself remarkable for his undaunted resistance to one of the arbitrary mandates of Cromwell, then in the height of his power, which was addressed to Hale in his capacity of judge. Hale was also an eminent author, who had treated upon the abstrusest subjects, and was equally distinguished for his piety and inflexible integrity. Another person, who was present, and accidentally took part in the proceedings, was Sir Thomas Browne, the superlatively eloquent and able author of the "*Religio Medici*." (He likewise took a part on the side of superstition in the trial of the Lancashire witches in 1634.) A judge also who assisted at the trial was Keeling, who afterwards occupied the seat of chief justice.

Sir Matthew Hale apparently paid deep attention to the trial, and felt much perplexed by the evidence. Seeing Sir Thomas Browne in court, and knowing him for a man of extensive information and vast powers of intellect, Hale appealed to him, somewhat extrajudicially, for his thoughts on what had transpired. Sir Thomas gave it as his opinion that the children were bewitched, and enforced his position by something that had lately occurred in Denmark. Keeling dissented from this, and inclined to the belief that it might all be practice, and that there was nothing supernatural in the affair.

The chief judge was cautious in his proceeding. He even refused to sum up the evidence, lest he might unawares put a gloss of his own upon any thing that had been sworn, but left it all to the jury. He told them that the Scriptures left no doubt that there was such a thing as witchcraft, and instructed them that all they had to do was, first, to consider whether the children were really bewitched, and secondly, whether the witchcraft was sufficiently brought home to the prisoners at the bar. The jury returned a verdict of guilty; and the two women were hanged on the seventeenth of March, 1664, one week after their trial. They showed very little activity during the trial, and died protesting their innocence.¹

This trial is particularly memorable for the circumstances that

¹ Trial of the Witches executed at Bury St. Edmund's.

attended it. It has none of the rust of ages; no obscurity arises from a long vista of years interposed between. Sir Matthew Hale and Sir Thomas Browne are eminent authors; and there is something in such men, that in a manner renders them the contemporaries of all times, the living acquaintance of successive ages of the world. Names generally stand on the page of history as mere abstract idealities; but in the case of these men we are familiar with their tempers and prejudices, their virtues and vices, their strength and their weakness.

They proceed, in the first place, upon the assumption that there is such a thing as witchcraft, and therefore have nothing to do but with the cogency or weakness of evidence as applied to this particular case. Now what are the premises on which they proceed in this question? They believe in a God, omniscient, all-wise, all-powerful, and whose "tender mercies are over all his works." They believe in a devil, awful almost as God himself, for he has power nearly unlimited, and a will to work all evil, with subtlety, deep reach of thought, vigilant, "walking about, seeking whom he may devour." This they believe, for they refer to "the Scriptures, as confirming beyond doubt that there is such a thing as witchcraft." Now what office do they assign to the devil, "the prince of the power of the air," at whose mighty attributes, combined with his insatiable malignity, the wisest of us might well stand aghast? It is the first law of sound sense and just judgment,

————— *servetur ad imum,*
Qualis ab incoepto processerit, et sibi constet;

that every character which we place on the scene of things should demean himself as his beginning promises, and preserve a consistency that, to a mind sufficiently sagacious, should almost serve us in lieu of the gift of prophecy. And how is this devil employed according to Sir Matthew Hale and Sir Thomas Browne? Why, in proffering himself as a willing tool of the malice of two doting old women. In inflicting with fits, in causing to vomit pins and nails, the children of the parents who had treated the old women with barbarity and cruelty. In judgment upon these two women sit two men, in some respects the

most enlightened of an age that produced "Paradise Lost," and in confirmation of this blessed creed two women are executed in cool blood, in a country which had just achieved its liberties under the guidance and the virtues of Hampden.

What right we have in any case to take away the life of a human being already in our power, and under the forms of justice, is a problem, one of the hardest that can be proposed for the wit of man to solve. But to see some of the wisest of men sitting in judgment upon the lives of two human creatures in consequence of the forgery and tricks of a set of malicious children, as in this case undoubtedly it was, is beyond conception deplorable. Let us think for a moment of the inexpressible evils which a man encounters when dragged from his peaceful home under a capital accusation, of his arraignment in open court, of the orderly course of the evidence, and of the sentence awarded against him, of the "damned minutes and days he counts over" from that time to his execution, of his being finally brought forth before a multitude exasperated by his supposed crimes, and his being cast out from off the earth as unworthy so much as to exist among men, and all this being wholly innocent. The consciousness of innocence a hundred fold embitters the pang. And, if these poor women were too obtuse of soul entirely to feel the pang, did that give their superiors a right to overwhelm and to crush them?

WITCHCRAFT IN SWEDEN.

The story of witchcraft, as it is reported to have passed in Sweden in the year 1670, and has many times been reprinted in this country, is on several accounts one of the most interesting and deplorable that has ever been recorded. The scene lies in Dalecarlia, a country for ever memorable as having witnessed some of the earliest adventures of Gustavus Vasa, his deepest humiliation, and the first commencement of his prosperous fortune. The Dalecarlians are represented to us as the simplest, the most faithful, and the bravest of the sons of men, men undebauched and unsuspecting, but who devoted themselves in the most disinterested manner for a cause that appeared to them worthy of support, the cause of liberty and independence against

the cruelest of tyrants. At least such they were in 1520, one hundred and fifty years before the date of the story we are going to recount.—The site of these events was at Mohra and Elfdale in the province that has just been mentioned.

The Dalecarlians, simple and ignorant, but of exemplary integrity and honesty, who dwelt amidst impracticable mountains and spacious mines of copper and iron, were distinguished for superstition among the countries of the north, where all were superstitious. They were probably subject at intervals to the periodical visitation of alarms of witches, when whole races of men became wild with the infection without any one's being well able to account for it.

In the year 1670, and one or two preceding years, there was a great alarm of witches in the town of Mohra. There were always two or three witches existing in some of the obscure quarters of this place. But now they increased in number, and showed their faces with the utmost audacity. Their mode on the present occasion was to make a journey through the air to Blockula, an imaginary scene of retirement, which none but the witches and their dupes had ever seen. Here they met with feasts and various entertainments which it seems had particular charms for the persons who partook of them. The witches used to go into a field in the environs of Mohra, and cry aloud to the devil in a peculiar sort of recitation, "Antecessor, come and carry us to Blockula!" Then appeared a multitude of strange beasts, men, spits, posts, and goats with spits run through their entrails and projecting behind that all might have room. The witches mounted these beasts of burthen or vehicles, and were conveyed through the air, over high walls and mountains, and through churches and chimneys, without perceptible impediment, till they arrived at the place of their destination. Here the devil feasted them on various compounds and confections, and, having eaten to their hearts' content, they danced, and then fought. The devil made them ride on spits, from which they were thrown; and the devil beat them with the spits, and laughed at them. He then caused them to build a house, to protect them against the day of judgment, and presently overturned the walls of the house, and derided them again. All sorts of obscenities

were reported to follow upon these scenes. The devil begot on the witches sons and daughters: this new generation intermarried again, and the issue of this further conjunction appears to have been toads and serpents. How all this pedigree proceeded in the two or three years in which Blockula had ever been heard of, I know not that the witches were ever called on to explain.

But what was most of all to be deplored, the devil was not content with seducing the witches to go and celebrate this infernal sabbath; he further insisted that they should bring the children of Mohra along with them. At first he was satisfied if each witch brought one; but now he demanded that each witch should bring six or seven for her quota. How the witches managed with the minds of the children we are at a loss to guess. These poor, harmless innocents, steeped to the very lips in ignorance and superstition, were by some means kept in continual alarm by the wicked, or, to speak more truly, the insane old women, and said as their prompters said. It does not appear that the children ever left their beds, at the time they reported they had been to Blockula. Their parents watched them with fearful anxiety. At a certain time of the night the children were seized with a strange shuddering, their limbs were agitated, and their skins covered with a profuse perspiration. When they came to themselves, they related that they had been to Blockula, and the strange things they had seen, similar to what had already been described by the women. Three hundred children of various ages are said to have been seized with this epidemic.

The whole town of Mohra became subject to the infection, and were overcome with the deepest affliction. They consulted together, and drew up a petition to the royal council at Stockholm, intreating that they would discover some remedy, and that the government would interpose its authority to put an end to a calamity to which otherwise they could find no limit. The King of Sweden was at that time Charles XI., father of Charles XII., and was only fourteen years of age. His council in their wisdom deputed two commissioners to Mohra, and furnished them with powers to examine witnesses, and to take whatever proceedings they might judge necessary to put an end to so unspeakable a calamity.

They entered on the business of their commission on the thirteenth of August, the ceremony having been begun with two sermons in the great church of Mohra, in which we may be sure the damnable sin of witchcraft was fully dilated on, and concluding with prayers to Almighty God that in his mercy he would speedily bring to an end the tremendous misfortune with which for their sins he had seen fit to afflict the poor people of Mohra. The next day they opened their commission. Seventy witches were brought before them. They were all at first steadfast in their denial, alleging that the charges were wantonly brought against them, solely from malice and ill-will. But the judges were earnest in pressing them, till at length first one, and then another, burst into tears, and confessed all. Twenty-three were prevailed on thus to disburthen their consciences; but nearly the whole, as well those who owned the justice of their sentence as those who protested their innocence to the last, were executed. Fifteen children confessed their guilt, and were also executed. Thirty-six other children (who we may infer did not confess), between the ages of nine and sixteen, were condemned to run the gauntlet, and to be whipped on their hands at the church-door every Sunday for a year together. Twenty others were whipped on their hands for three Sundays.¹

This is certainly a very deplorable scene, and is made the more so by the previous character which history has impressed on us, of the simplicity, integrity, and generous love of liberty of the Dalecarlians. For the children and their parents we can feel nothing but unmingled pity. The case of the witches is different. That three hundred children should have been made the victims of this imaginary witchcraft is doubtless a grievous calamity. And that a number of women should have been found so depraved and so barbarous, as by their incessant suggestions to have practised on the minds of these children, so as to have robbed them of sober sense, to have frightened them into fits and disease, and made them believe the most odious impossibilities, argued a most degenerate character, and well merited severe reprobation, but not death. Add to which, many of these

¹ Narrative translated by Dr. Horneck, *apud* Satan's Invisible World by Sinclair, and Sadducismus Triumphatus by Glanville.

women may be believed innocent, otherwise a great majority of those who were executed, would not have died protesting their entire freedom from what was imputed to them. Some of the parents, no doubt, from folly and ill-judgment, aided the alienation of mind in their children which they afterwards so deeply deplored, and gratified their senseless aversion to the old women, when they were themselves in many cases more the real authors of the evil than those who suffered.

WITCHCRAFT IN NEW ENGLAND.

As a story of witchcraft, without any poetry in it, without anything to amuse the imagination, or interest the fancy, but hard, prosy, and accompanied by all that is wretched, pitiful and withering, perhaps the well known story of the New England witchcraft surpasses everything else upon record. The new Englanders were at this time, towards the close of the seventeenth century, rigorous Calvinists, with long sermons and tedious monotonous prayers, with hell before them for ever on one side, and a tyrannical, sour and austere God on the other, jealous of an arbitrary sovereignty, who hath "mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." These men, with long and melancholy faces, with a drawling and sanctified tone, and a carriage that would "at once make the most severely disposed merry, and the most cheerful spectators sad," constituted nearly the entire population of the province of Massachusetts Bay.

The prosecutions for witchcraft continued with little intermission, principally at Salem, during the greater part of the year 1692. The accusations were of the most vulgar and contemptible sort, invisible pinchings and blows, fits, with the blastings and mortality of cattle, and wains stuck fast in the ground, or losing their wheels. A conspicuous feature in nearly the whole of these stories was what they named the "spectral sight;" in other words, that the profligate accusers first feigned for the most part the injuries they received, and next saw the figures and action of the persons who inflicted them, when they were invisible to every one else. Hence the miserable prosecutors gained the power of gratifying the wantonness of their malice,

by pretending that they suffered by the hand of any one whose name first presented itself, or against whom they bore an ill will. The persons so charged, though unseen by any but the accuser, and who in their corporal presence were at a distance of miles, and were doubtless wholly unconscious of the mischief that was hatching against them, were immediately taken up and cast into prison. And what was more monstrous and incredible, there stood at the bar the prisoner on trial for his life, while the witnesses were permitted to swear that his spectre had haunted them, and afflicted them with all manner of injuries. That the poor prosecuted wretch stood astonished at what was alleged against him, was utterly overwhelmed with the charges, and knew not what to answer, was all of it interpreted as so many presumptions of his guilt. Ignorant as they were, they were unhappy and unskilful in their defence; and, if they spoke of the devil, as was but natural, it was instantly caught at as a proof how familiar they were with the fiend that had seduced them to their damnation.

The first specimen of this sort of accusation in the present instance was given by one Paris, minister of a church at Salem, in the end of the year 1691, who had two daughters, one nine years old, the other eleven, that were afflicted with fits and convulsions. The first person fixed on as the mysterious author of what was seen, was Tibuta, a female slave in the family, and she was harassed by her master into a confession of unlawful practices and spells. The girls then fixed on Sarah Good, a female known to be the victim of a morbid melancholy, and Osborne, a poor man that had for a considerable time been bed-ridden, as persons whose spectres had perpetually haunted and tormented them: and Good was twelve months after hanged on this accusation.

A person who was one of the first to fall under the imputation, was one George Burroughs, also a minister of Salem. He had, it seems, buried two wives, both of whom the busy gossips said he had used ill in their life-time, and consequently, it was whispered, had murdered them. This man was accustomed foolishly to vaunt that he knew what people said of him in his absence; and this was brought as a proof that he dealt with the devil. Two women, who were witnesses against him, interrupted their testi-

mony with exclaiming that they saw the ghosts of the murdered wives present (who had promised them they would come), though no one else in the court saw them; and this was taken in evidence. Burroughs conducted himself in a very injudicious way on his trial; but, when he came to be hanged, made so impressive a speech on the ladder, with fervent protestations of innocence, as melted many of the spectators into tears.

The nature of accusations of this sort is ever found to operate like an epidemic. Fits and convulsions are communicated from one subject to another. The "spectral sight," as it was called, is obviously a theme for the vanity of ignorance. "Love of fame," as the poet teaches, is a "universal passion." Fame is placed indeed on a height beyond the hope of ordinary mortals. But in occasional instances it is brought unexpectedly within the reach of persons of the coarsest mould; and many times they will be apt to seize it with proportionable avidity. When, too, such things are talked of, when the devil and spirits of hell are made familiar conversation, when stories of this sort are among the daily news, and one person and another, who had a little before nothing extraordinary about them, become subjects of wonder, these topics enter into the thoughts of many, sleeping and waking: "their young men see visions, and their old men dream dreams."

In such a town as Salem, the second in point of importance in the colony, such accusations spread with wonderful rapidity. Many were seized with fits, exhibited frightful contortions of their limbs and features, and became a fearful spectacle to the bystander. They were asked to assign the cause of all this; and they supposed, or pretended to suppose, some neighbour, already solitary and afflicted, and on that account in ill odour with the townspeople, scowling upon, threatening, and tormenting them. Presently persons, specially gifted with the "spectral sight," formed a class by themselves, and were sent about at the public expense from place to place, that they might see what no one else could see. The prisons were filled with the persons accused. The utmost terror was entertained, as of a calamity which in such a degree had never visited that part of the world. It happened, most unfortunately, that Baxter's Certainty of the

World of Spirits had been published but the year before, and a number of copies had been sent out to New England. There seemed a strange coincidence and sympathy between vital Christianity in its most honourable sense, and the fear of the devil, who appeared to be "come down unto them, with great wrath." Mr. Increase Mather, and Mr. Cotton Mather, his son, two clergymen of the highest reputation in the neighbourhood, by the solemnity and awe with which they treated the subject, and the earnestness and zeal which they displayed, gave a sanction to the lowest superstition and virulence of the ignorant.

All the forms of justice were brought forward on this occasion. There was no lack of judges, and grand juries, and petty juries, and executioners, and still less of prosecutors and witnesses. The first person that was hanged was on the tenth of June, five more on the nineteenth of July, five on the nineteenth of August, and eight on the twenty-second of September. Multitudes confessed that they were witches; for this appeared the only way for the accused to save their lives. Husbands and children fell down on their knees, and implored their wives and mothers to own their guilt. Many were tortured by being tied neck and heels together, till they confessed whatever was suggested to them. It is remarkable, however, that not one persisted in her confession at the place of execution.

The most interesting story that occurred in this affair was of Giles Cory, and Martha, his wife. The woman was tried on the ninth of September, and hanged on the twenty-second. In the interval, on the sixteenth, the husband was brought up for trial. He said he was not guilty; but, being asked how he would be tried, he refused to go through the customary form, and say, "By God and my country." He observed that, of all that had been tried, not one had as yet been pronounced not guilty; and he resolutely refused in that mode to undergo a trial. The judge directed therefore that, according to the barbarous mode prescribed in the mother-country, he should be laid on his back, and pressed to death with weights gradually accumulated on the upper surface of his body, a proceeding which had never yet been resorted to by the English in North America. The man persisted in his resolution, and remained mute till he expired.

The whole of this dreadful tragedy was kept together by a thread. The spectre-seers for a considerable time prudently restricted their accusations to persons of ill repute, or otherwise of no consequence in the community. By-and-bye, however, they lost sight of this caution, and pretended they saw the figures of some persons well connected, and of unquestioned honour and reputation, engaged in acts of witchcraft. Immediately the whole fell through in a moment. The leading inhabitants presently saw how unsafe it would be to trust their reputations and their lives to the mercy of these profligate accusers. Of fifty-six bills of indictment that were offered to the grand jury on the third of January, 1693, twenty-six only were found true bills, and thirty thrown out. On the twenty-six bills that were found, three persons only were pronounced guilty by the petty jury, and these three received their pardon from the government. The prisons were thrown open; fifty confessed witches, together with two hundred persons imprisoned on suspicion, were set at liberty, and no more accusations were heard of. The "afflicted," as they were technically termed, recovered their health; the "spectral sight" was universally scouted; and men began to wonder how they could ever have been the victims of so horrible a delusion.¹

CONCLUSION.

The volume of records of supposed necromancy and witchcraft is sufficiently copious, without its being in any way necessary to trace it through its latest relics and fragments. Superstition is so congenial to the mind of man, that, even in the early years of the author of the present volume, scarcely a village was unfurnished with an old man or woman who laboured under an ill repute on this score; and I doubt not many remain to this very day. I remember, when a child, that I had an old woman pointed out to me by an ignorant servant-maid, as being unquestionably possessed of the ominous gift of the "evil eye," and that my impulse was to remove myself as quickly as might be from the range of her observation.

But witchcraft, as it appears to me, is by no means so desir-

¹ Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*; Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*; Neal, *History of New England*.

able a subject as to make one unwilling to drop it. It has its uses. It is perhaps right that we should be somewhat acquainted with this repulsive chapter in the annals of human nature. As the wise man says in the Bible, "It is good for us to resort to the house of those that mourn;" for there is a melancholy which is attended with beneficial effects, and "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." But I feel no propensity to linger in these dreary abodes, and would rather make a speedy exchange for the dwellings of healthfulness and a certain hilarity. We will therefore, with the reader's permission, at length shut the book, and say, "Lo, it is enough."

There is no time, perhaps, at which we can more fairly quit the subject than when the more enlightened governments of Europe have called for the code of their laws, and have obliterated the statute which annexed the penalty of death to this imaginary crime.

So early as the year 1672, Louis XIV. promulgated an order of the Council of State, forbidding the tribunals from proceeding to judgment in cases where the accusation was of sorcery only.¹

In England we paid a much later tribute to the progress of illumination and knowledge; and it was not till the year 1736 that a statute was passed, repealing the law made in the first year of James I., and enacting that no capital prosecution should for the future take place for conjuration, sorcery and enchantment, but restricting the punishment of persons pretending to tell fortunes and discover stolen goods by witchcraft, to that appertaining to a misdemeanour.

As long as death could by law be awarded against those who were charged with a commerce with evil spirits, and by their means inflicting mischief on their species, it is a subject not unworthy of grave argument and true philanthropy, to endeavour to detect the fallacy of such pretences, and expose the incalculable evils and the dreadful tragedies that have grown out of accusations and prosecutions for such imaginary crimes. But the effect of perpetuating the silly and superstitious tales that have survived this mortal blow, is exactly opposite. It only

¹ Menagiana, tom ii., p. 264. Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV. chap. xxxi.

serves to keep alive the lingering folly of imbecile minds, and still to feed with pestiferous clouds the thoughts of the ignorant. Let us rather hail with heart-felt gladness the light which has, though late, broken in upon us, and weep over the calamity of our forefathers, who, in addition to the inevitable ills of our sublunary state, were harassed with imaginary terrors, and haunted by suggestions,

Whose horrid image did unfix their hair,
And make their seated hearts knock at their ribs,
Against the use of nature.

THE END.



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