INDIANA
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Indiana University

http://www.archive.org/details/magicdivination00glea

Magic and Divination

by the same author

★

ASTROLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

MAGIC AND DIVINATION

by

RUPERT GLEADOW

Folklore

FABER AND FABER LIMITED
24 Russell Square
London

DH

First published in May Mcmxli
by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C.1
Printed in Great Britain by
Latimer Trend & Co Ltd Plymouth
All Rights Reserved
FKL
BF1589
.G55

INDIANA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

To

HELEN *and* BETTY

4-26-66

Acknowledgments

Here I should like to express my gratitude to a number of friends who have assisted me in the preparation of this work. First of all to Helen, who spent weeks of daylight in invaluable research; then to Mr. Cyril Fagan, President of the Irish Astrological Society, who kindly calculated the horoscopes of several old magicians; to Dr. William Brown for advice on various points; to Dr. Jaffé and Miss Smalley for information about the Ars Notoria of Roger Bacon; and to Dr. Guillaume for references to Solomon. The illustrations on pages 108 and 224 are reproduced by courtesy of Bodley's Librarian, and that on page 63 by courtesy of Messrs. Kegan Paul, as is the quotation from Hartmann's *Life of Paracelsus*. Most particularly I wish to acknowledge the kindness of the author of the anonymous contribution to the final chapter; and last but not least that of Mr. T. W. Thacker of Durham University for his advice concerning the translation from the Westcar papyrus. Unless otherwise stated all translations in modern idiom have been made by the author.

Contents

I.	Principles of Magic	*page* 13
II.	Egypt	37
III.	Solomon and the Djinn	52
IV.	The Greatest White Magician	64
V.	Alexander the Oracle-Maker	76
VI.	Merlin	86
VII.	Michael Scot	99
VIII.	The Secret Arts	109
IX.	Witchcraft	128
X.	Cornelius Agrippa	145
XI.	The Golden Doctor	170
XII.	John Dee and the Alteration of Kingdoms	194
XIII.	Madness and Adventure	217
XIV.	The Magical Predictions of Nostradamus	233
XV.	Count Cagliostro	248
XVI.	Magic in Modern Times	268
	Index	297

Illustrations

1. Table and Seals of the Sun — *page* 29
2. Solomon's Seal — 53
3. Pentagram — 59
4. The First Pentacle of Venus — 63
5. Glycon the Human-Headed Serpent — 85
6. The Dragon — 108
7. Pentacle used in Black Magic — 126
8. Seals of the Fixed Stars — 169
9. Sigil of Sagittarius — 189
10. Jerome Cardan's Experiment — 224
11. Magic Square for Divination — 283

CHAPTER I

Principles of Magic

Hitherto most books on magic have been written from one of two biased and therefore unreliable points of view; that is to say, they are either for it or against. A few are written by admirers who are inclined to exaggerate what stirs their wonder, and whose critical sense is always suspect. (Fewer still were written by magicians, intelligent men who really knew what they were writing about.) The great majority are put out of court by the angry heat of religious hatred or by the cold contemptuous disapproval of ignorant materialism. In what follows we shall try to avoid the comfortable misrepresentations of both these methods. We shall accept nothing without reason; but the prejudice of the scornful scoffing sceptic has for so long been so popular an emotion that we must justify ourselves in attempting to take a more broad-minded view.

We shall not here attempt to tell the whole truth about magic; that, nobody can learn without becoming a magician; and those who need to discover dangerous

secrets will always find them out for themselves. The interest of magic lies not only in its formulas and rites, but principally in the psychological attitude of the men who practised it, and in the success which they achieved.

In the idea of many modern people magic is commonly —and incorrectly—defined as an attempt to do something contrary to the laws of nature or by the aid of non-existent devils—which is impossible, therefore magic cannot exist. But magic does exist and is still practised; that definition therefore must be scrapped.

The reason for its adoption is very simple. People are afraid to confess to any belief in magic for fear of being despised for not sharing the scepticism of the would-be scientific. It is a popular superstition—and as erroneous as any other popular superstition—that to be scientific one must be sceptical. On the contrary, the true attitude for a scientist is a detached agnosticism on any matter on which he cannot speak with certainty; when he does not really know, the true scientist will refrain from either affirming or denying.

Scepticism, like credulity, is merely a prejudiced attitude of mind, and the two fulfil exactly the same purpose. Man hates uncertainty and in the normal way can hardly ever refrain from committing himself either to belief or to unbelief. The balanced mind which can remain suspended and decide nothing until the proof is very rare. In the search for mental security it is the pessimist, the critic, the disillusioned disbeliever in human nature who takes refuge in scepticism, while to credulity gravitate the simple, the

kind-hearted and the optimists. Your sceptic almost invariably considers himself to be superior to the credulous; but he evidently is not, for both credulity and scepticism are the results of innate temperament. The only man who can claim superiority is one who is carried away to neither of these emotional refuges. Such a man the scientist ought to be, and on his own subject he often is.

Now magic, as it happens, is an unscientific problem—though in the twentieth century it seems dangerous to say so. This is because man always wants some kind of security to fall back on in his mind. In the search for it he makes his gods and his religion much more absolute than, scientifically speaking, they ought to be. In past centuries the dictatorship of the Church was absolute, and now that the Church has lost its mental hold men turn for security to welcome the absolute dictatorship of the State, which is worse, or of science, which is not so bad, but which still, like all absolute dictatorships, is out of place and therefore ephemeral in a world where everything is relative.

If anyone in the Middle Ages had dared to suggest in print that there were some subjects which were no business of the Church he would have been courting excommunication. To-day the situation is similar, for if anyone dares to say that there are some subjects which are nothing to do with science he is risking the accusation of a crank.

Nevertheless there are some subjects which are nothing to do with science, as is very easily seen. Anything that science may say about a violoncello concerto by Haydn or a lyric of Shakespeare will be so gratuitous and pedantic as to appear insufferable. Religion too is quite beyond the

reach of science, despite the argumentations of our popular scientists to the contrary; for their discussions fall undoubtedly under the definition of speculative philosophy, and speculative philosophy is not science.

Magic is not perhaps a subject with which science has no concern, but it is one on which the exact sciences have nothing at all to say and the inexact sciences (which hardly deserve the same name) very little; so the best we can do is to try to take up an intelligent attitude of mind, one worthy of the ideal scientist, and to rid our minds of those twin disastrous prejudices, scepticism and credulity.

The origin of magic is far too ancient to be known. Like religion, it is one of the earliest ideas of man, and no one can tell us which of the two is older. Some authorities, feeling sure that religion is a more elevated conception than magic, believe that religion must have evolved later; others, with precisely the same idea, are unwilling to admit that religion can have developed from anything which they despise so much as magic. Both classes are inclined to represent magic as a kind of undesirable poor relation of religion, a disreputable connection whose escapades must be concealed or explained away.

But the opposition between religion and magic exists only in the minds of Christian theologians and those who have been influenced by them; for although the Christian churches condemned magic, many religions were so bound up with it that the combination appears entirely natural. And though the Christian churches did condemn it in the same intolerant way in which they condemned any heathen practice which they had not adopted, that did not prevent

the subject from being widely studied by Christian people for many centuries.

There is of course a difference between magic and religion, and it was this which enabled Christianity to be jealous of magic; but the difference is not always easy to find, and that is what made it possible for the two to become so inextricably interwoven. Each of course is a way of looking at life, and the difference theoretically is this, that a God is supreme in religion, but in magic man is supreme. It is the principle of most religions to pray to a god whose will is certain to prevail; but in magic it is the will of man which is supposed to prevail, even against those of higher powers. Hence the despisal of magic by the religious, because it reduces its gods to mere instruments for achieving the will of man. Yet that was not the original point of view of the magician, nor is it the present one.

Children easily attribute personality to inanimate objects, and so do savages. Primitive people always have anthropomorphic notions, that is to say, their minds are so entirely limited to the understanding of human methods of action that they cannot imagine any other, and attribute to every event an almost human motive and to every active power a purely human mentality. Thus in the beginning the savage could not imagine the rain raining without any purpose. In his experience things did not do themselves; pots did not cook themselves, nor houses build themselves, not flints flake themselves; action could only be taken by a living being. If it rained, therefore, it could only be because someone wanted it to rain. And that someone was probably the rain or the sky, which thus became a being,

the rain-god or the sky-god, and was credited with consciousness and will-power. Thus it was that the whole world became populated with spirits.

Now this anthropomorphic way of thinking is by no means dead, even in civilized countries; and its persistence rather reduces the civilized person's right to look down on the savage for the simple credulity of his untutored mind. At this present day we often see advertisements in which inanimate objects are given faces and made to grin in what is supposed to be an alluring way; or they are even laid together to form a shape which vaguely resembles that of the human body and are christened Bill or Bertie and given observations to make. This type of advertisement appeals to the primitive mind which cannot think except in terms of human emotion, and that is why it is sometimes so unappealing to people who have developed the power of abstract thought.

The civilized person who is amused by the sight of a human figure composed of sweets or motor-car tyres imagines himself ten thousand miles removed from the ancient Egyptians who actually worshipped gods with the heads of ibis, hawk, or jackal. But really the difference is much smaller than he dreams. The animal-headed gods of Egypt may have originated as the totems of different clans, but in historical times there were very few people who really thought of them as human beings with animal heads who really lived and walked about in definite places. It was not the animal head that was most important, but the human body. This dates back to the period when the god, who began his existence as a bird or beast, had been

endowed with a human intelligence, though still preserving the characteristics which are signified by his head. The sacred bulls of Apis and Mnevis were never represented in human form, for they were really and truly bulls; but to Thoth the ibis head was a sign of wisdom like the owl of Athene, and the hawk head of Horus signified his power to soar supremely over all, like Jupiter's eagle. Some gods never had animal heads, and so fall in the same class as the gods of Greece and the representations in countless Christian churches of God the Father as an old man with a beard. Christians are careful to explain that God is not really an old man with a beard, just as the Egyptians would have explained that Thoth was not really a man with an ibis head; but for all that many Christians still address God in their prayers as if He had a human mentality; which shows that they have not yet passed beyond the anthropomorphic stage of religion. Even in Christianity there are traces of magic, as we shall see.

Now when the primeval savage at the beginning of civilization had decided that rain and storm and sunshine and fertility and disease depended on the action of spirits, he could not refrain from asking himself what kind of spirits they were. He thought quite naturally that each had a separate function; it was no business of the rain-god, for example, to send him game; and so, since each ruled over a very limited field, it was evident that they could not all be tremendously powerful gods. And since he could only think of them as human, he imagined that, like human beings, some would be kindly and some ill-disposed, and that they might be induced to change their mind by promises

or threats. It all depended on the mentality of the primitive magician whether, impressed by nature's grandeur, he approached them with supplications and promises, or whether, feeling himself the lord of creation, he ordered them to obey him. From the humble magician developed religion with its acceptance of the will of God, from the haughty developed magic with its encouragement of the will of man.

But so long as gods were thought of as having a human mentality it followed that they could be appeased by prayer and offerings, or offended by the omission of their rites. It is thus in ritual that religion and magic became entirely intermingled.

One of the differences between religion and magic is that the priest can only ask and entreat his god, but the magician commands. In a modern invocation under the formula of the wand the practitioner begins by devoutly praying the god of the sphere he is concerned with to send down the archangel of that sphere; then he beseeches the archangel to send the angel; the angel he conjures to send the intelligence of the sphere, to the intelligence he speaks with authority, demanding that the spirit be sent, and to the spirit he issues orders. It is in the essence of magical spells, when dealing with spirits, to issue orders. The object of raising the devil is to compel him to execute one's wishes. A man's familiar, though only seen as an animal and most commonly as a very common animal such as a black dog or cat, was thought of as an attendant spirit obediently ready to perform anything in the twinkling of an eye. In the many ancient spells that have come down to us, when

spirits are addressed they are commanded with authority, for the obvious psychological reason that the magician could not be so confident of success if he only spoke with timid humility. When devils and diseases are cast out they are not prayed but ordered to depart, as in the Bible. In the same way spirits may be ordered to appear to people in dreams, or to perform operations at a distance.

But if the essence of magic lies in man's ability to command spiritual forces, that does not separate magic from religion. In ordination the holy spirit is supposed to be infused into the new priests by the laying on of hands, but it is obviously possible to believe what is psychologically true, that the new spirit can only be bestowed on the receiver in so far as he is fit to receive it. On that understanding this may be called a purely religious ceremony. By contrast it is one of the dogmas of the Church of Rome that in the eucharist the bread is actually changed into the body of Christ by the recitation of the words: '*Hoc est corpus meum*'. Here God is given no choice but to obey the priest, the ceremony is accordingly a magical one, and the words recited are a spell. It is for this reason that the ceremony is accompanied by the burning of incense.

But magic consists not only in the compelling of spirits to obedience: any means of attracting a god's attention is magical. From a purely religious as from a pantheistic point of view, God is everywhere and there is no need to call His attention; in fact it is impossible to be away from Him or out of His sight. It is a very small and local divinity whose regard can be captured by the smell of burnt-offerings or incense. When Elijah called to the priests of

Baal on Mount Carmel: 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened,' he was not merely trying to rile them; they really believed that Baal might be doing any of those things, and so they would not have seen the joke. The spirits that are conjured up in magic are always thought of as arriving from somewhere else; for only one God can be present everywhere, and Him there is no need to call.

There is magic therefore in every invocation, and magic spreads to include not only spells, but any form of ritual. For the religious man is so conscious of the presence of his god that no ritual is needed to assure him of it. Magic is a performance, a ritual, and the object of the ritual is to impress the officiant and also, if there is any, the audience. Magic began as the attempt of the medicine-man to influence the rain-god and at the same time to convince himself that he was capable of doing so. As head of the tribe he needed to assure his fellows of the same thing. Thus, the essence of magic is the attempt to make a dynamic psychological impression on those who are present at the ceremony, with a view to achieving some desired result. As a rule a religious ceremony has not any particular result in view; but when, like magic, it attempts to direct the will-power of all those present to a certain end, it is at least tinged with magic. This is most obviously the case in prayers for rain, or when the ceremony is performed for the sanctification of particular people, as a coronation or a wedding.

Magic, however, is usually thought of as being carried

out in private and in secret ways. That is only because in Christian countries it was under the disapproval of the church. In pagan lands secrecy was only needed for certain operations, particularly those having anti-social objects such as causing people to fall ill or be injured or to fall in love. Magic may be defined as the attempt to achieve one's ends by a consciously abnormal concentration of will-power. The end may be good or bad, and black magic consists of devoting oneself to evil ends. White magic is much more useful and much less dangerous. In either the technique of sympathetic magic may be used, but that is not the only form of ritual although it is the most widely known.

Sympathetic magic consists of imitating on a small scale the effect desired. Thus to provoke rain the sky is invoked and water is sprinkled on the ground. To increase fertility sexual orgies used to be held beside the new-sown fields. These are examples of sympathetic magic for laudable objects. The most widespread and notorious practice of black magic is the making of wax figures for spiteful purposes.

In doing this a conscientious magician would try to give his doll a resemblance to the person whom he intended to damage; but in general it would be enough to indicate its sex, and then it would be given that person's name with whatever ceremony was current at the naming of infants in the magician's country. To cause sudden death the figure would then be stabbed through the heart, and buried, if possible, under the doorstep of the prospective victim. To cause a lingering death the figure was laid by a fire

until it slowly lost its shape and melted away, and spells would be recited over it daily, saying: 'As this figure wastes away, so shall N. son of N. (naming his mother) waste away.' The third method was to stick pins into the image in whatever part it was desired to injure. In magical spells a person is often identified by his own name and that of his mother.

The practice of sympathetic magic agrees with a belief in the so-called Law of Correspondences which is a part of all magical teaching. This law declares that there is a correspondence, or resemblance of nature, between things of the same kind in heaven or earth. The most obvious example is the planet Mars, which is red, the colour of anger and blood, and is the planet responsible for angry and bloody deeds. The sunflower has the shape of the sun and turns to face the sun; as a drug therefore its juices ought to affect the part of the body ruled in the horoscope by the sun. Lungwort is so called because it has a mottled leaf shaped like a lung; it ought therefore to be a good medicine for the lungs.

The belief that the virtues of things can be discovered from their external appearance is called the doctrine of signatures; it includes of course physiognomy, but maintains also that, for example, the juice of a plant having long loose fluttering leaves would be relaxing as a medicine, but that of tough, knotty, spiny or round-leaved plant would be astringent.

The law of correspondence goes further than this, for it does not insist on the external appearance but on the inward nature or indeed on any correspondence that can be

found. Red is the colour of fire, therefore people who have colds should be wrapped in a red blanket, as it will keep them warmer than a white one. There is an obvious correspondence between a thing and its picture, and so prehistoric man in his cave dwellings of Les Eyzies and Altamira and other places drew on the wall a picture of a wounded bison—one of the earliest masterpieces of art—believing perhaps that the bison he went to hunt would be more easily speared because of the speared bison in the picture.

There is a correspondence also between a thing and its name, and that is why the wax doll of sympathetic magic could be christened after a person whom it did not at all resemble. In ancient Egypt to combat the high rate of infant mortality children were frequently named Senbi, meaning Healthy One. A Greek child would be named Pericles, which means Very Glorious, a Mohommedan child Ahmed, which means Much Praised, and a German child Wilhelm, which means Helmet of Resolution. The bestowal of these names seems rarely to have all the desired effect; but that is because the meaning of modern names is usually unknown. Where it is known there is often a psychological consequence.

For the influence of names is not only owed to the law of correspondences; it is largely due to the power of suggestion, which is of tremendous importance in magic. One of the great foundation-stones of magic is the principle of the Omnipotence of the Word, which is a way of using the power of suggestion. This may go back to the days when language was a new and wonderful instrument; at any rate in historic times practical magic consists of two ele-

ments, ritual and spells, both of which are intended to make a tremendous impression on the officiant and so enable him to exert his will. The ritual is performed to prepare, not least in the magician's mind, an atmosphere suitable for the reception of the spirits to be evoked; the spoken word is supposed to bind and compel them to obedience. Magic is thus no more than an extravagant way of bringing to bear the power of suggestion.

Among primitive peoples the greatest 'word of power' has always been the name. To know the name of a thing enabled one to put a spell on it. To name anything was to call it, or to call its spirit, and there are some things which must not be called. Thus in the jungles of Malaya the natives will not pronounce the name of tiger for fear that the tiger-god should hear them; they call them instead buffalo, with a hint to their own god that buffalo is not what they really mean. The Hebrews in the same way would not speak aloud the name of Jehovah. Christians on the other hand imagined that the devil would leave them at once if they so much as mentioned the name of Jesus or began the paternoster. But, as we shall see, the name of God is not a sufficient protection against evil-spirits, nor is the sign of the cross; the efficacy of these symbols is entirely dependent on the faith of the user. In pagan countries there was no supposedly facile way of getting rid of an evil spirit by pronouncing a sacred name; consequently at the end of every conjuration the magician before he leaves the circle which he has drawn to protect himself must pronounce a banishing spell to drive away by authority whatever spirits he has evoked.

At its invention the power of writing was as rare and wonderful as had previously been the power of language; so the belief in the omnipotence of the word extended itself to written as well as spoken spells. Thus people began to protect themselves and their goods and houses by means of inscriptions. Just as men nowadays hope to protect their estates by putting up notices saying 'Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted', so ancient nations wrote upon tombs and dwellings and holy places their invocation of the protection of their god. For the protection of their person they would wear a charm, which might be written on a skin or a piece of papyrus, or engraved on stone or baked in earthenware, and then was hung round the neck, often in a little bag. The phylacteries of the Pharisees were amulets of this kind. Another way to protect oneself was by wearing little images of the gods, which in ancient times were always consecrated or blessed to give them effectiveness.

If there is one direction in which the modern world has made no advance at all upon the ancient it is in the matter of superstitions. Primitive amulets were either simply protective or else homoeopathic! to make him swift a man would carry a little figure of a greyhound, and to preserve his sight the feathers of a hawk. Twentieth-century man will scoff at this homoeopathic idea, despite the obvious chance it gives to the power of suggestion; yet the use of amulets and charms is as abundant now as ever it was, and in a more unreasonable way. A few people wear the sign of the cross about their necks to ward off evil. On innumerable motor-cars a plaque of St. Christopher invokes the magical protection of a modern god of travels. The shops

are full of lucky horse-shoes and wishbones and black cats and other charms, none of which have the least known reason to be lucky but are worn as amulets by the superstitious, who think to excuse themselves by saying egregiously: 'Of course, my dear, I don't believe in it.' In ancient times it was at least known in what the protective power of an amulet was supposed to consist; but no one can justify or explain the alleged luckiness of a black cat; the animal comes to a violent end in youth as often as any other kind of cat.

Another form of amulet still used in India is the magic square, which is so constructed that every line in either direction adds up to the same total, and the numbers used are in order 1, 2, 3, and so on, up to the square of the number of figures in each side. There are seven magic squares, one for each of the old planets. Saturn's has three figures to a side, Jupiter's four, Mars's five, the Sun's six, Venus's seven, Mercury's eight, and the Moon's nine. In this magic square of the Sun (*see Fig. 1*), which is taken from the Occult Philosophy of Cornelius Agrippa, the numbers count from 1 to 36 and every line both horizontal and vertical adds up to 111. The square itself adds up to 666.

The magical seals or characters written below it could also be used as amulets, as were a fair number of seals of the fixed stars, which are equally abstract in design. The antiquity and persistence of this tradition is proved by the fact that, for example, the sigil of Venus as drawn in medieval manuscripts may be found exactly represented on Gnostic talismans of the second century. The function of the seal of the Sun was to render a man successful and

amiable if it was constructed when the Sun was strong, but tyrannical if it was made under an afflicted Sun; and with the other planets the effect would be analogous according to their character. These seals must always be made of the

The Table of the Sun in his compas

6	32	3	34	35	1
7	11	27	28	8	30
19	14	16	15	23	24
18	20	22	21	17	13
25	29	10	9	26	12
36	5	33	4	2	31

The Seal or Characters

Of the Sun — Of the intelligence of the Sun — Of the Spirit of the Sun,

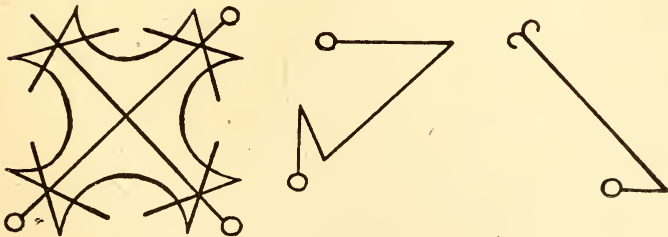


Figure 1. Table and Seals of the Sun

appropriate materials, just as the magic squares must be inscribed upon the proper metal of each planet. An example is given in the last chapter of the use of a magic square in divination, and in evoking spirits magic squares of letters are also used.[4]

The preparation of amulets, like every other magical performance must always be begun at an astrologically appropriate moment. The conjuring of a spirit in order to obtain knowledge should be performed, according to most authorities, on a Wednesday or a Saturday, Wednesday being the day of Mercury the lord of intelligence and Saturn being the planet of deep study. The conjurations of black magic are performed on Tuesday or Saturday, Tuesday being sacred to Mars the god of bloodshed and Saturn having significance of all the evil that is in the depths. It is desirable also that on every occasion the planet ruling the operation should be strongly placed and in good aspect, and that no hostile planet should be stronger than it. Furthermore, magicians always insist on the importance of the planetary hours.

The tradition of the planetary hours is one of the most ancient in astrology, and one of the most equivocal. The days of the week are in French called after the planets (except Sunday), and in English after the corresponding Scandinavian gods: Tiw god of war for Mars, Woden god of knowledge for Mercury, Thor god of thunder for Jupiter, and Frigga goddess of beauty for Venus. But this order is irregular. The hours however are attributed to the planets in order of slowness, thus: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon—and then of course Saturn again. Now if we begin the week on Sunday with the hour of the Sun we shall find that, since there are seven planets, the Sun will rule on Sunday the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-second hours; the twenty-third and twenty-fourth hours on Sunday will fall to Venus and Mercury, and then

the first hour on Monday to the Moon. Similarly the Moon on Monday will rule the same hours as the Sun on Sunday, the last two hours will fall to Saturn and Jupiter, and the first hour on Tuesday is the hour of Mars. The days of the week are attributed to the planets in the apparently irrational order Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, because they are derived from the planetary hours, and the hours follow the planets in order of slowness, which is called the Chaldean order and seemed the natural order to people of ancient times.

Yet, apart from their order, there is no certainty about the planetary hours. The civil day is considered now to begin at midnight, yet not so long ago the astronomical day began at noon; in medieval Italy the day began at sunset, and among the Jews it begins with the appearance of the stars. The astrological day is usually taken to begin at sunrise; but as regards the hours, Michael Scot in his *Liber Introductorius* says that they should all be measured with one measure, which gives twenty-four equal hours regardless of the length of daylight, and Cornelius Agrippa says that there should be twelve hours of the day and twelve of the night; by which the daylight hours in England may be as short as forty minutes in winter, and twice that length in summer. A modern magician might be tempted to inquire why Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto should be omitted from the rulerships; and in this confusion he would probably be wise to pay more attention to the actual planets than to their hours.

It should be obvious by now that magic is not the denial of reason nor an attempt to achieve the impossible. The

powers of suggestion and of the human will are extraordinary and quite beyond any scientific explanation at present. Magic attempts to use these powers for ends which could not be achieved without them. But it is not possible to effect by magic that which in cold blood you believe to be contrary to the laws of nature. Those who evoke spirits must believe in spirits, as many modern people do, and to work up their faith they need the stimulus of a long and dramatic ritual. The idea of spirits coming at no more than a call, as Mephistopheles appears to Faust in the opera, would be denounced by any magician as impossible. And yet we do find spells which we are cautioned not to read aloud for fear the demons named therein should appear, as for example in a manuscript purporting to come from Michael Scot. In the same way we read that Miles Wagner, Roger Bacon's servant, picked up a magic book and read it aloud, and then when devils appeared and began to turn the furniture upside down he merely laughed, although he was as yet unlearned and did not know how to get rid of them; which proved that he would be a great magician. Such stories show an exaggerated belief in the omnipotence of the word.

Since one of the most important practices of magic is the evocation of spirits it cannot well be denied that spiritualism is the most popular modern form of magic. The ritual has changed and the spirits are not as a rule supposed to be visible; but the other conditions are very much the same. Prayers are said and hymns are sung in the hope of creating an atmosphere which will drive away evil spirits, but in point of fact those incantations are entirely ineffective;

the devil can pray with anyone, and as we shall see in the case of Dr. Dee it is not difficult for an evil spirit to pass itself off as a good one. Spirits (whatever they are) are exceedingly clever at deceptions; sincerity and goodwill are no defence against them; in fact they can sometimes take in religious people more easily than others.

The nature of spirits will be discussed in the last chapter; but there is a good deal more to magic than evocation; in fact magic has many branches. The difference between black magic and white is simply a difference of intention, whether harm is intended or not, and whether angels are summoned or devils. An amulet is normally intended as a protection, but by treachery it can be used to attack the wearer's health. The burial of magical composts under a doorstep can be practised for good or evil alike. Clairvoyance is a super-normal way of obtaining knowledge, and so if practised on purpose as a kind of divination must be classed as magic. Magic in many ways is an attempt to gain one's end by means which nobody understands; all the wonders of science were magic until they were understood. The object of complicated ceremonies and the use of ingredients which are hard to find is simply to increase and sustain, if necessary for weeks on end, the determination of the magician.

But though most magical rituals have for their object to increase the will-power of the officiant and his partners in the enterprise, magic has also been used to break a man's will-power. Thus the Homeric heroes in front of Troy would taunt each other before beginning a single combat in the hope of shaking each other's nerve and destroying

each other's aim through anger. Taunting is still practised by the Bedouin, and also in America. When two men are about to begin a contest an English audience will watch in respectful silence; but in America it is quite fair play for the supporters of one man to attract the other's attention and then try to shake his nerve by shouting insults. This is a magical way of winning the contest before it is begun.

There is a difference between magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and necromancy. Magic is the most comprehensive term, and has been divided into two kinds, goetic or black, and theurgic or white. Sorcery is the evil art of causing harm and deceit by magical means. The term witchcraft should strictly be applied only to the practices attributed to witches, which we shall discuss in a later chapter. Necromancy means the convocation of the souls of the dead, and of this there are two very famous ancient stories; one is that of the Witch of Endor who called up Samuel's spirit to speak with Saul, and the other is in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, where Ulysses on his way home to Ithaca descends to the world of shades and digs a trench with his sword and fills it with blood, and the spirits come and when they have drunk the blood they are able to speak to him.

Magic certainly does try to do things which are not in the ordinary course of nature. But there is justification for its existence in the fact that things do happen which nobody yet can explain or understand—such things as telepathy, clairvoyance, spiritualism, and the power of suggestion, which has even produced authenticated miracles.

There are two differences between miracles and magic, one of principle and one of practice. In principle, as Paracelsus says, the saint operates by means of God, the magician by means of Nature. The magician, in other words, is trying to make use of those obscurer forces of nature which are not commonly understood, but in which he believes; the saint has not this respect for the laws of nature, since he believes that God can transcend them. The practical difference is that magic often works with a long and arduous ritual, whereas miracles are described as occurring through such comparatively simple processes as prayer and the laying on of hands.

Both saint and magician work through faith, but that does not make magic religious or irreligious. When Jesus said: 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' He did not say in what it is necessary to have faith. Saints and magicians have existed outside of Christianity, and faith is needed only in the occurrence of the desired event. But since magic is not thought of as religious, miracles do not strictly count as magic, though they may achieve the same results; they therefore do not fall into the compass of this book.

Besides its practice, magic necessitates a special state of mind, so that the man who looks at the world from the magical point of view can understand things about it which others do not see. No one can be a magician who has not the temperament; the virtue of spells and ritual does not reside in the words alone. As will be seen in the following chapters, most magicians have been seekers after truth; sometimes magic was their religion because it was

the highest truth they knew. For others it had no connection with religion. But though no two magicians have been alike, it is certain that a magician must be born, and not merely made.

CHAPTER II

Egypt

For several thousand years now Egypt has had the reputation of being the home of magic. And with good reason. It was. Never has a country existed where magic was a more intimate and inevitable part of people's daily lives. It was hardly surprising therefore that foreigners imagined the streets of Thebes as alive with strange spirits conjured up by the royal magicians, or that when an Egyptian master came on a visit to Baghdad he was reported to have begun by turning the whole population into apes for half an hour.

But to the Egyptians magic was a serious matter. Mr. F. Lexa in his excellent book on Egyptian magic has even shown that it was a logical one. The blood of a black calf is blood of a creature that grows abundant strong black hair. Now the Egyptians knew quite well about the circulation of the blood; and since the blood maintains and supports the body it is plain that one of the functions of the blood of a black calf must be to enable the creature to grow its strong black hair. By a logical deduction it there-

fore followed that an ointment made with the blood of a black calf would be the best remedy against incipient baldness and against going grey.

Magic was inevitable to the Egyptians because they were not materialists like the Romans nor intellectuals like the Greeks; their turn of mind was spiritual; and though their spirituality was not always of an elevated kind they did naturally believe in the working of spiritual causes. They had no god like the jealous god of monotheism; their gods were the spirits that informed the world, the spirit of light which the sun personified, the spirit of death and destruction which the crocodile represented, the spirit of fertility in the pullulation of frogs and the never-failing Nile. It would be quite wrong to represent the Egyptian gods as cruel judges or tyrannical masters; they were living spirits whose aid was often wanted and might be given or withheld, but who, unlike Jehovah, did not descend in spiteful punishment on their forgetful people. Everything to the Egyptians had a spiritual meaning; misfortune and disease were not the work of angry gods, but the interference of spirits like the gods, but of ill nature or intentions. An illness was treated as a being, and one means to remove it was to feed the patient on as repulsive a diet as he could stomach; then the illness, which had to live on the same things, would go away in disgust.

But if human life was affected by magical influences and entities, much more so was that of the gods. Their lives were made up of the interplay of those natural forces which the Egyptians considered to be spiritual beings, and they too needed protection against evil. When the sun-god in

his boat sank under the horizon to the kingdom of darkness it was no feat of imagination that saw him threatened by the spirit of death and destruction, the crocodile Apopi. Therefore all through the night Isis stood at the prow and recited magic spells, and the other gods in the sacred boat of the Sun gave him untiringly the protection of their magic.

Egyptian theology was extremely varied and inconsistent, and some of the gods were amalgamated together into one in a way that is very puzzling to monotheists and those who think of each god as a definite personality. But the Egyptian gods were rarely personalities; they were natural spirits who had been given different names in different places. When it was realized that the supreme ram-god Amon discharged the same function of chief life-giver as the sun-god Re^{c}, the Egyptians did not plunge into civil war and accusations of heresy, but wisely realized that under the two names they had all the time been meaning the one natural force. So Amon-Re^{c} was not a mere dead and artificial god, but one living god with two names and two sets of attributes.

Thus as time went on almost all the gods were amalgamated one with another, though that did not prevent them from preserving their individual character and existence. The most individual gods were Thôth, or Djehutyi, who was never absorbed; he was the ibis-headed god of wisdom, and went down to history as Hermes Trismegistus, whose name still stands as author of a number of books; and Osiris, who was perhaps a prehistoric king of Egypt. Osiris was never king of hell like other gods in other

countries; he merely presided at the judgment while a man's heart acquitted or betrayed him. He was always kind and benevolent, since he represented also the renewal of fertility in the spring, and it was he who ruled the land of the blessed in the west. For the dead man to reach it meant a long and perilous journey where he would need the help of all the magic at his command.

To the protection and comfort of the dead a great deal of magic was directed. Against the attacks of demons there were special chapters of the Book of the Dead, and these were placed in the tomb, or inscriptions were left there stating that the owner knew them by heart. There were amulets also to ward off these dangers; and, to ensure that a man should enjoy the companions and pastimes which had pleased him on earth, his relatives were represented on the walls of the tomb, with food for him to eat and whatever else would give him pleasure. For his soul a statue was made in which it could take up residence and thus be provided with a substitute for the body.

The habit of burying with the dead their favourite jewels and other objects, and a little food, was perhaps universal in the earliest stage of civilization. But whereas among other peoples it died out with the growth of culture, among the Egyptians, because of their belief in the spiritual counterpart of all material things, it only grew. To ensure that a man's spirit had sustenance it was only necessary to carve a leg of beef upon the wall of his tomb, and then his spirit could live upon the spirit of the beef. So real was this idea that in some tombs the more dangerous hieroglyphics are drawn in a special way to prevent their spirits coming

and hurting the owner: the lion (1) is cut in half; the horned viper (2) is cut in two and sand is put in to keep the two halves apart (3); the bee (4) is drawn headless (5); and the long winding serpent (6) is stabbed with knives (7).

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

(7)

Magic began, perhaps, with the beginning of language. Before men could talk it was only with difficulty and gesticulation that they could convey their meaning. Once things had names the difference was miraculous. He who was called came; an object named was fetched. The power of the word appeared amazing, for it enabled a man's will to be done without a finger lifted. Here was the beginning of the power of suggestion which is so important in magic.

The first form of magic spell was a simple order. From this developed all the other forms of spells which are found in Egypt or elsewhere, separate or combined. An order is more effective if it can be backed by a sanction; so the next

form of spell is an order accompanied by a menace. 'O malady, I command thee to depart; for if thou dost not depart I, even I, who am Horus of Edfu, will cause thy children to be devoured by crocodiles.' The menace is often one which can never be fulfilled; but the threatened spirit is not supposed to be aware of that. Magic sometimes makes use of bluff, and when the magician announces himself to the Horus of Edfu the malady is not expected to know that he is lying; or according to a more spiritual interpretation, he really identifies himself with the god and relies on his approval and help.

But just as some people prefer to achieve their ends by gentle methods and others by violence, so there are two common types of spells. The more powerful spirits are approached not with orders and threats, but with prayers and promises; and unlike the threats, the promises have the advantage that they can be fulfilled. These spells are made in the same spirit as those vows to the Virgin Mary in which men promised to erect a chapel in her honour if they were saved from a violent storm at sea.

Often mythology would be called upon. If a man were wounded in the eye the magician would recall the story of the eye of Horus, which was wounded by a fiery blow from a black pig, which was the god Sutekh disguised; and as the god won back his sight, so should the magician's client. If necessary a myth would be invented for the purpose, as in the Hearst Papyrus, where a spell for curing constipation tells how the god Horus was cured of constipation. The force of suggestion, when myths are used, was originally in the comparison between the patient and the god—

'as Horus was cured, so may this man be cured'—or else was made by describing instead of the actual state of affairs the state which it was desired to bring about, by saying for example, 'this man is not ill, he is well, the malady has left him'. Later the magician went beyond the mere comparison and asserted that he was the god who spoke, or even identified his patient with a god, until finally every limb of the patient was identified with the same limb of some appropriate god.

Thus evil spirits were approached not only with prayers and menaces, but with guile. The poison of a snake is told that it must come out because the serpent has made a mistake and bitten the wrong man, or because it cannot presume to inhabit a body which is said to be that of a god.

Since magicians were as common in Egypt as doctors are to-day it follows that they had very various reputations. The remote and the unknown appear more marvellous, and doubtless most Egyptians had more respect for a magician from a distant town than for their family practitioner. A magician in his own country is even less honoured than a prophet. In the attempt to keep up the illusion of their mysterious power some even invented formulas of meaningless noises, which passed among the vulgar for a mere effective spell than the ordinary language which they understood. And it is not rare in magical and medical papyri to find a note remarking: 'This formula has been proved valid innumerable times.' Such formulas were to be recited when applying the remedy to the patient.

Means of making the spells effective were naturally as varied as the spells themselves. The general principle of

magic is the recitation of words of power; but the Egyptians had also other methods. Their writing was a series of pictures, often of living beings, and so it was not surprising that they should think that the validity of the spell was inherent in the written as well as the spoken word. Written spells were accordingly placed among the wrappings of a mummy, or worn about the neck, and amulets tied up with seven knots were worn as a protection against evil spirits. One way of learning, or at least effectively absorbing, a spell, was to write it out on a piece of new papyrus, then wash off the writing with beer and drink the beer. Later, to save time and trouble, it became the custom not to write the spell, but simply to say it over the beer before drinking. This practice still continues in the custom of drinking healths.

Communication with the dead was of course a branch of Egyptian magic. For them the dead were divided into two classes. Those who had been acquitted at the tribunal of Osiris were called 'true of voice', in other words justified or beatified; the rest were spoken of as 'dead'; and curiously enough, in later times it was still possible to get in touch with these although it was theologically supposed that any who were condemned before Osiris became the prey of the crocodile Apopi. These 'dead' inhabited the desert in the west where they had been buried, and sometimes would stray among the homes of men and take possession of living bodies, giving them fits and illnesses and madness; they were exceedingly dangerous. The justified spirits were supposed to live in happiness in the kingdom of Osiris or in the boat of the sun-god Re^{c}, but they too

could be reached and could divulge to the living secrets of the present and future; they were benevolent and helpful and could acquire the powers of gods.

In ancient times the Egyptians did not evoke the dead in the hope of actually seeing them appear; that is, they did not practise necromancy. They called to them and to the gods in the hope that their prayers would be heard and their requests granted. The Egyptians used to write letters to the dead, and even in modern times some Coptic woman may be seen bending down and talking into the tomb of her dead husband; the most probable explanation is that she has seen him in a dream and is asking him not to trouble her any longer; or possibly she is asking him to appear that evening and tell her where he hid his money.

The following method of evoking a god in order to discover something unknown is translated by Mr. Lexa from a British Museum papyrus; it dates from the third century A.D.

'Formula to be pronounced before the sun, before thou pronounce it over the boy, in order that what thou art about to do may succeed:

' "Great god Tabao, Basookham, Amo, Akhagharkhan-graboonzanooni, Etsikmeto, Gathooba-sathoori-thmilaalo" (seven times).

'The day thou intendest to do this, thou shalt rise early from thy bed in the morning, earlier than on other days. In order that all that thou doest may succeed thou shalt purify thyself from all uncleanness and thou shalt recite this formula before the sun three or seven times: "Yo Tabao, Sokham-mwa, Okhokh-khan-boonasanaw, An-

yesi, Eghompto, Gnetho, Sethouri, Thmila, Alnapokhri! Cause that any work that I undertake with my hands this day may succeed."

'Take a new lantern not yet painted with red lead; lay in it a clean lock of hair and fill it with the purest oil; place it in a shadowed place washed in water of saltpetre, and set it on a new brick.

'Bring in a boy and make him sit on another new brick so that his face is turned towards the lantern, and close his eyes.

'Then say the preceding formula seven times, speaking downwards on to the head of the boy; then tell him to open his eyes, and ask him: "Dost thou see light?" He will answer: "I see the light in the lantern flame." Shout nine times "Hewe!" Then ask him whatever thou willst, after having pronounced the formula which has already been said early in the morning before the sun.

'Do this in a room whose doorway faces east, turn the window of the lantern towards the door and the boy's face towards the lantern.

'Place thyself on the boy's left and recite the formula downwards on to his head, and strike his head with the second finger of thy right hand.'

The use of a boy as medium is thus tolerably ancient, and it was the regular practice of many later magicians when a medium was needed. We shall see that Cagliostro used it, and it still continues.

When Egypt became Christian the holy fathers were served by angels just as the old magicians had been served by spirits; the chief difference was that the Coptic fathers were very much more ambitious and stopped at nothing,

whereas their predecessors had been content to attempt small and useful miracles. The following story, translated from a Coptic book entitled *Apophthegms of the Egyptian Fathers* shows a somewhat perfunctory attitude to miracles and is one of the earliest detective stories on record.

'Father Milesios was once passing by a certain place when he saw one of the monks being arrested by some men as if he had done a murder. The old man approached and asked him of it, and when he knew they were accusing him falsely he said to those who held him, "Where is the man who has been killed?" And they showed him. He approached him and said to them: "Pray, all of you." And when he had spread out his hands before God he raised up the man who had been killed and said unto him in the presence of them all: "Tell us who hath killed thee." And he said: "I had gone into the church and I gave some money to the priest; and he rose up against me and slew me and dragged me into the great man's cloister. But I adjure you, take the money and give it to my children." And the old man said unto him: "Go to sleep until the Lord shall come and wake thee." And immediately he went to sleep.'

It is commonly supposed that the Egyptian magicians excelled particularly in cursing; that they put curses on anyone who should violate their tombs; and in particular that Lord Carnarvon died as the result of a curse written in Tutankhamen's tomb. This last idea is so mistaken that it can only be compared for mistakenness to the popular misconception that the Sphinx was female and the somewhat less popular idea that the Great Pyramid was not a

tomb but a monument of some sort. Now no Egyptian sphinx is ever anything but male, and the Great Pyramid is merely one of six dozen pyramids all of which were tombs and all of which are situated in royal cemeteries and all of which are surrounded by other tombs. In the same way there is no written curse in Tutankhamen's tomb, Lord Carnarvon was in England when it was discovered, it was not he who first broke into it, and Howard Carter, the man who found the tomb and made the first entrance into it with his own hands, died a natural death in 1939 at the age of sixty-five, seventeen years after his epoch-making discovery. Nor did the other workers on the tomb come to unexpected ends. This story of Tutankhamen's curse is nothing more than a piece of journalistic imagination.

The Egyptians had of course every reason to try to protect their royal tombs; the incredible wealth that was buried there was a great temptation to robbers, and sooner or later almost all the tombs were robbed. Occasionally too they did write curses in them against the violators, but not often. As a race the ancient Egyptians were gentle and inoffensive, hating war and cruelty and very fond of having a good time. It would be quite out of character to think of their kings as a list of cruel tyrants or their magicians as engaged in cursing their enemies and furthering the designs of cold ambition. Their racial preoccupation with spiritual matters made them desire each other's good opinion, and also made them idealists, while in everyday life they were gay, friendly, and obliging. Their magic was used very rarely to do harm, usually to procure some benefit from the spiritual powers, and sometimes for other help-

ful purposes, as may be illustrated by a story taken from the Westcar papyrus.

This papyrus was discovered in 1838 by a German egyptologist named Lepsius in Miss Westcar's private collection of antiquities. How it came to England is unknown. It is a hieratic text written about 1900 B.C., and tells how Khufu, or Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid, called before him his courtiers to tell him stories about magic—for the Egyptians like all oriental nations have always liked to hear stories about magic—and heard from the lips of an aged magician named Dedi how he should build the pyramid to be his tomb, and the origin of the dynasty that was to succeed his own. And this is one of the tales that he was told, translated from a hieroglyphic version of the original text.

'Prince Baû-f-re' next stood up to speak, and said: "Let thy majesty hearken to a wonder which happened in the time of thy father Sneferu the beatified, one of the deeds of the chief lector Jaja-em-anekh. It happened one day that King Sneferu was bored, so he summoned the officials of the palace to seek a diversion for him; but he did not find it. So he said: 'Go and fetch me the chief lector and scribe of the sacred books Jaja-em-anekh.' And he was brought to him promptly. Then his majesty said to him: 'I have summoned the officials of the palace to seek some amusement for me and I have not found it.' So Jaja-em-anekh said to him: 'I would that thy majesty would betake thee to the lake of the Royal House. Fill thee a boat with all the beautiful girls of thy palace! Thy majesty's heart will be diverted to watch their rowing as they row up and down

Thou shalt see the pleasant nesting-places of thy pond, thou shalt see its reed-beds, and its beautiful flowery banks, and thereby thy heart will be diverted.'

' "His majesty answered: 'I will certainly go and do my boating. Let there be brought to me the twenty ebony paddles wrought with gold, which have handles of almug-wood inlaid with electrum. And let there be brought to me also twenty girls who are shapely of limb, with beautiful breasts and braided tresses, who have never given birth. And have brought to me also twenty nets, and give the nets to the girls instead of their clothes.' So it was all done as his majesty had ordered, and they went rowing to and fro, and his majesty's heart was happy to watch their rowing.

' "Then one of them, who was stroke, entangled herself with her braided hair, and a fish-ornament of new turquoise fell in the water, and she stopped her singing and did not row, and so her side stopped singing and did not row either. Then his majesty said: 'Can you not go on rowing?' And they said, 'Our stroke is silent and does not row.' His majesty said to her: 'Why rowest thou not?' And she said: 'It is because my fish-ornament of new turquoise has fallen in the water.' He said to her: 'I will give thee another instead.' But she answered: 'I would rather my own than one like it.'

' "Then said his majesty: 'Go and fetch me the chief lector Jaja-em-anekh.' And he was brought to him promptly. And his majesty said: 'Jaja-em-anekh my brother, I have indeed done as thou saidst, and my majesty's heart was diverted at the sight of their rowing.

But a fish-ornament of new turquoise belonging to one of the strokes fell in the water, and she stopped singing and did not row, and so she put her side out. And I said to her: "Why rowest thou not?" and she said to me: "Because of my fish-ornament of new turquoise which has fallen in the water." So I said to her: "Row, and see, I will replace it for thee." And she said to me: "I would rather my own than one like it." '

' "Then the chief lector Jaja-em-anekh said his say of spells, and he placed one side of the water of the lake upon the other and found that fish-ornament lying on a potsherd; and he brought it and gave it to its owner. Now therefore the water, which was twelve cubits deep in the middle, reached to twenty-four cubits after it was doubled back. Then he said his say of spells and brought back the water of the lake to its place. And his majesty and all the royal household spent the day making merry; and he rewarded the chief lector Jaja-em-anekh with every good thing. This was a wonder that happened in the time of thy father King Sneferu the beatified, one of those done by the chief lector and scribe of the sacred books Jaja-em-anekh."

'Then said the majesty of King Khufu the beatified: "Let there be given a thousand loaves of bread, a hundred jars of beer, an ox, and two balls of incense to the majesty of King Sneferu the beatified, and let there be given a cake, a jug of beer, and a ball of incense to the chief lector and scribe of the sacred books Jaja-em-anekh, for I have seen an example of his skill." And it was done according to all his majesty's commands.'

CHAPTER III

Solomon and the Djinn

Solomon the son of David was the third and last king of the united kingdoms of Judah and Israel; but Suleiman-ibn-Daood, who is precisely the same person, was the wisest man and greatest king in the world, and had a thousand wives and power over all kinds of spirits. To this day Solomon is one of the great prophets of Islam, although he lived a millennium and a half before Mahomet. He was a mohammedan in much the same way that Isaiah was a Christian. The myths about him are innumerable, but the truth is hard to find, harder even than with more modern magicians.

One of the pentacles used in ceremonial magic is known as Solomon's seal; it consists of a six-pointed star made of two interlaced triangles, and it exists also as a common symbol of Judaism and also of freemasonry; in masonic buildings it may be found let into the floor or in some other essential place. It is by means of a ring engraved with this design that Solomon is supposed to have controlled the djinn. In Mohammedan mythology there are at least five

kinds of spirits called by different names, such as afrit and jann, but in English it is simpler to allude to them all as djinn.

Figure 2. Solomon's Seal

Solomon probably owes his position in Moslem literature to the fact that Mahomet unthinkingly adopted the mythology of his time which represented Solomon as supremely wise; and since the authority of the Koran is absolute and unquestionable in Islam, Solomon has become for the Moslem world the greatest of all magicians. The stories told about him are full of penetration of human nature, and his character as a magician cannot be estimated without a consideration of some of them.

There is a Jewish legend that at the end of his reign Solomon incurred the wrath of Jehovah for the idolatry of his many heathen wives and in consequence lost his throne

and became a wandering beggar under the name of Koheleth. The Mohammedan version of this story is as follows. Solomon one evening gave his signet-ring to his favourite wife as he always did when he went to wash. While he was absent God permitted Sachr, the greatest of the demons, to assume his form and obtain the signet from his wife. When Solomon returned, therefore, he was laughed to scorn and expelled as an impostor. So for forty days Sachr reigned in a manner so ungodly as to excite the fury of the people. But on the fortieth day the elders broke into the palace where Sachr had shut himself up, and as soon as he heard them reading aloud the writings of Moses, which were the word of God, he vanished away, and dropped the ring in the sea. But it so happened that Solomon had that day found employment with a fisherman, who was to give him two fish a day; and on cutting open one of the fish Solomon found the ring, and having thus won back his power he commanded the djinns and genies to carry him straight to Jerusalem.

Solomon was the first owner of a magic carpet. His carpet is said to have been of green silk, and so enormous that all his servants could find room upon it. The men were placed on his right hand and the spirits on his left, and at his command the wind would lift the carpet and carry it wherever he wished. One day Solomon caused the djinn to weave him an even more enormous carpet, and on this he took all the inhabitants of his kingdom on the sacred pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca; but he would not allow them to step off the carpet because the holy places were still inhabited by infidels.

The coming of the queen of Sheba was surrounded with marvellous tales. It was said that Solomon carried off her throne out of a locked chamber from her capital to Jerusalem; and that he first heard of her by the hoopoe—or perhaps the lapwing. It was also alleged that she had hairy legs, even a cloven hoof, but Solomon very ingeniously put the matter to the test by preparing in his palace a room with a floor of crystal and fish swimming underneath. At the sight of this the queen, believing she had to wade, pulled up her skirts, and Solomon's curiosity was satisfied. Some say that her legs were perfect; others that they were hairy, and Solomon did not marry her until he had made the demons prepare for her an effective depilatory.

When the angel of death appeared to Solomon the temple was not finished, but he knew that once he was removed the spirits would stop working and mere men could never achieve the task. He therefore besought the angel of death to follow him to his crystal hall, and there he leant on his staff and prayed to God and the angel took his soul. It was not until a year later that a worm burrowing in his staff caused it to break, and so he fell down. The temple was then just finished, but the djinn was so furious at the deception that they hid under his throne a collection of books about black magic in order to make him pass for a sorcerer.

The magic of the *Arabian Nights* is the same as that of the Moslem traditions about Solomon in the *Koran* and other books. Both of them are derived largely from a document called 'The Testament of Solomon' which was written in Greek about the first century A.D. or rather later; it is full

of Christian ideas and Jewish traditions intermingled. This work is not so much a testament as a history of Solomon's magical life, and it begins by describing how he obtained his power over the demons. The account is as follows:

'And behold as the temple of the city of Jerusalem was being built, and the craftsmen were working on it, there came among them about sunset the demon Ornias, and he took away from the foreman's little boy half his pay and half his rations; and he also used to suck the thumb of his right hand every day; and the boy grew thin, though he was very much loved by the king. So king Solomon called the boy one day and questioned him saying: "Do I not love thee more than all the craftsmen who are working on the temple of God, giving thee thy pay doubled and double rations? How is it that thou growest thinner with every day and hour?" And the little boy said to the king: "I beseech thee, O king, hear what happens and how much thy child obtains. After we are all dismissed from our work on the temple of God, after sunset when I am resting, comes one of the evil demons and takes away from me the half of my pay and half my rations. And then he even takes hold of my right hand and sucks my thumb. And behold my soul is oppressed, and so my body grows thinner with every day."

'And when I heard this I Solomon went into the temple of God and prayed with my whole soul night and day that the demon might be delivered into my hands and that I might have power over him. And it came to pass that as I was praying there was given to me grace from the Lord of Hosts through Michael his archangel. He appeared hold-

ing a little ring with a signet carved from a precious stone, and said unto me: "King Solomon, son of David, take the gift when the Lord God the highest Sabaoth hath sent thee; and thou shalt lock up all the demons of the earth, male and female; for it is with their help that Jerusalem must be built, and thou must wear this ring of God. And the engraving of the signet of the ring that is sent thee is a pentagram." And I Solomon was full of joy, and sang and praised the God of heaven and earth.

'And on the morrow I called the boy and gave him the ring and said to him: "Take this, and at whatever time the demon shall approach thee, throw this ring at his chest and say to him: 'In the name of God King Solomon calls thee hither!' And then come thou running to me, and have no anxiety nor dread for what thou mayest hear from the demon." So the boy took the ring and departed.

'And behold at the customary hour Ornias the troublesome demon came like burning fire to take the boy's wages. But the boy, according to the instructions that he had from the king, threw the ring at the demon's chest and said: "King Solomon calls thee hither!" And he made off at a run towards the king. And the demon bellowed and said: "Child, why hast thou done this to me? Take the ring away from me and I will give thee the gold of the earth, only take this away from me and do not lead me off to Solomon!" But the boy said to the demon: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth I will not suffer thee! Come hither!" And the boy came running joyfully to the king and said: "I have brought the demon, O king, as thou commandest me, my lord, and behold he is standing before the doors of

thy palace hall shouting and entreating in a loud voice, trying to give me the silver and gold of the earth not to bring him to thee!"

'And when he heard this Solomon stood up from his throne and came out to the porch of his royal hall. And he watched the demon shuddering and trembling and said unto him: "Who art thou?" And he said: "I am called Ornias." And Solomon said unto him: "Tell me, O demon, to what sign of the zodiac art thou subject?" And he said: "To the Waterman—and those that lie and lust after well-born virgins upon earth, these I throttle, unless indeed I cast them into a trance; for I turn into three shapes; when men are overcome with desire for women I change myself into a comely female, and at my touch men fall asleep and I play with them; and presently I take wing again and fly off to the celestial regions; I appear also as a lion, and I am commanded by all the demons. I am the offspring of the archangel Uriel, the power of God."

'And I Solomon when I heard the name of the archangel prayed and glorified God, the Lord of heaven and earth. And I sealed him and set him to work at stone-cutting, cutting the stones for the temple which had been brought across the Arabian sea and were lying by the shore.'

Among the demons which follow Ornias into slavery are Beelzeboul, Asmodaeus, and the thirty-six decanates of the zodiac, which are represented as human beings with the heads of birds and beasts. Origen in his book against Celsus said that to believe in these decanates was to bring back the soul under the sway of demons, and that Jesus alone should be worshipped; but Celsus being an astrolo-

gical doctor would have replied that as these decans ruled the sickness and health of the body they ought to be respected.

It will be noticed that in the Testament Solomon's ring is said to have borne a five-pointed star and not the usual Solomon's Seal.

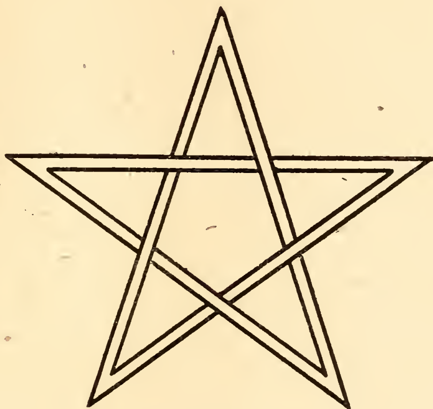


Figure 3. Pentagram

The saga of Solomon is really so enormous that it would take a very big book to describe it. The stories about him usually relate his miracles and learning, or else how his pride in his own greatness was reproved. They very frequently show a penetration of human nature which is probably the one most certain feature of his character. How his reputation came to be so grossly exaggerated it is hard to say. No one romance can be blamed. Given the Jewish aspiration for a Messiah it would not be surprising that many temperaments should look back wistfully to the

good old days at times when there was no personal reason for looking forward to the better new ones.

To represent a lost Golden Age Solomon was easily the best qualified of the Jewish kings. Not only did he rule over the greatest extent of territory of any of them, but he built the famous temple, and he also enjoyed peace throughout his reign, whereas not only Saul and David but most of his successors were perpetually disturbed by wars. His wealth also was greater than ever was seen in Jerusalem before or since, and that fact was bound to make an impression on the people. Furthermore he must without question have been a remarkable character.

The nearest approach to a reliable document about Solomon is the First Book of Kings, which was largely written during the Babylonian captivity, about 550 B.C. It does not speak of Solomon in exaggerated terms. It destroys the myth of his realm extending from the Euphrates to Egypt by admitting the existence of Rezon the son of Eliadah, who 'was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did; and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.' Furthermore, Solomon gave Hiram, King of Tyre, twenty cities in Galilee, with which Hiram was not well satisfied. And that Solomon's reign was in many ways a reign of oppression is proved by Rehoboam's famous cry: 'My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.' To provide Solomon's enormous revenue the taxation must have been unwisely heavy.

Like his father, Solomon was a poet, but he was also a learned man; he composed a comprehensive book on trees

and plants, and other books about beasts and birds and fishes and insects. Here is the root of the legend that he could understand the language of animals. His power over devils has been interpreted as due to the misunderstanding of a difficult passage in the book of Ecclesiastes. Another example of his wisdom was his method of preserving peace, which in fact has been practised in many countries before and since, but incurred the anger of the Hebrew priests and prophets. He married the daughters of all the neighbouring sovereigns, beginning with Pharaoh King of Egypt, and permitted their strange religions to be practised at Jerusalem. That he also married a large number of concubines is very probable; even the First Book of Kings gives the number as a thousand; but this did not offend the Hebrew religion so much as his idolatry.

A man who went to such lengths to show his own magnificence cannot have been untouched by pride; but whether Solomon in all his glory was ever a match for the Pharaohs in their prosperity may be doubted. He may also have been a magician, in fact it is not unlikely seeing that he was a learned man, and closely in touch with Egypt; but it is rather less probable that he really wrote the famous magical book entitled *The Key of Solomon the King*.

He obtained his wisdom, so the record tells us, as a gift from God, who appeared to him in a dream a short time after his accession; and God was pleased because he had chosen wisdom and not long life or riches or vengeance on his enemies. But in reality Solomon had good reason to choose wisdom. He was a younger son of his father, and

his mother Bathsheba had been married under rather dishonourable circumstances; there was a strong party in the State supporting his elder brother Adonijah, in spite of David's expressed wish to the contrary; and Solomon at his accession was only about eighteen. He may well have felt that he would need remarkable skill to master a very dangerous situation. Wisdom in fact was a very natural thing for him as an intellectual to pray for. He wanted to become king for fear of being killed by Adonijah; his real interests were learning, philosophy, and the study of nature. To this he added unusual penetration, a rare dislike of fighting and a great love of show and splendour. The combination was unexpected and marked him out as a striking character. And so began the myth of Solomon, on whom have been fathered more spells and charms and magical practices and precepts than on any other personage.

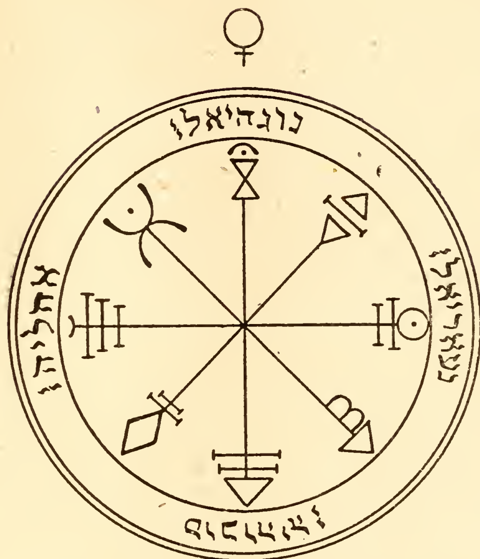


Figure 4. The First Pentacle of Venus

Used for performing works of love, friendship, and reconciliation. (From 'The Key of Solomon the King', translated by S. L. M. Mathers.)

CHAPTER IV

The Greatest White Magician

Magic is always intimately connected with religion, and so in setting out to do good a white magician has much the same objects as a saint. He must lead a pure and holy life, and if he becomes famous he is certain to be taken for a religious teacher.

The one religious teacher who has succeeded in not being misrepresented by his followers was Apollonius of Tyana; and accordingly his name is almost unknown today. But he was unquestionably one of the most remarkable men who ever lived, and though he did not practise magic in the ordinary way he entirely achieved the aims which any white magician must set himself.

White magic as a rule is less sensational than black and in consequence does not appeal so strongly to the popular mind. And it is not surrounded by the same conditions of malice and secrecy, the compounding of fearful mixtures and the performances of exhausting rites. It may be practised with ceremonies and due attention to the positions

of the planets; but if the magician can succeed without these they are at once superfluous. The object of the white magician is to obtain a perfectly balanced life and to do good both physically and by helping to raise the spiritual level of the people. It is not right to say that his object is to transcend nature, for he only uses those forces which he believes to be natural; others may think them supernatural, but that is the opinion of ignorance. So far as we can judge Apollonius lived in many ways a perfect life and appeared superior to ordinary human limitations. His was that universal and cosmic religion which has been the religion of all the great religious teachers and hardly anyone else.

Apollonius disappeared about A.D. 80 and at the age of eighty or rather more—some say ninety or even a hundred. He was thus a contemporary of Jesus, but lived much longer. For sixty years at least his reputation had covered the Roman Empire. But despite his pure and admirable life he fell into disrepute because of an event which happened after his death; one of the Christian fathers falsely alleged that his biographers were trying to set him up as a teacher and miracle-worker in opposition to Christ. The accusation might quite well have been true, for Apollonius had renounced women and wine and wealth, and went about doing good, working miracles, and giving wise and irrefutable answers; but actually it was not. Apollonius never attempted to found a religion; as no other man he was an accepted member of all religions.

The most extraordinary thing in the life of Apollonius is that wherever he went, in India, in Spain, in Greece, in Ethiopia, or in Italy, he was accepted by the priests as one

possessing the secret of their mysteries, and he proceeded to instruct them in the proper way of understanding and practising their rites. He was received as a teacher by those who themselves were supposed to teach, and that from Babylon to Cadiz and from Rome to the depths of the Sudan. Only on two occasions was he rejected.

When he arrived at Athens for the Eleusinian Mysteries the people crowded to see him instead of attending to their religious duties. He reproved them and presented himself for initiation, but the hierophant refused on the ground that he was a sorcerer. Apollonius, no whit abashed, is said to have answered: 'Thou hast omitted the greatest charge on which I might be accused—that though I know more of the Mysteries than thou I have come to seek initiation as from one wiser than myself!' The hierophant, seeing the people applaud Apollonius, then offered to accept him, but Apollonius refused, naming the man who was to become hierophant and initiate him four years later.

The only other occasion of any hostility to Apollonius was in Egypt, when he tried to induce the priests to abolish bloody sacrifices and offer instead an image of the animal made of incense. He was not at first successful, but he made a long stay in Egypt and visited every temple, ascending the Nile beyond the cataracts to the depths of Nubia.

When Apollonius prayed it is related that he prayed to the sun; but if he had been an ordinary sun-worshipper how could he have been accepted as an authority by priests of every kind? Like the Emperor Hadrian, he seems to have acknowledged also an unknown god. The only rational explanation is this, that there was more harmony

in ancient polytheistic cults than some people care to suppose. Serapis and Aphrodite of Paphos and Vesta were not local gods like Jehovah and Baal, but their priests had discovered that there can only be one Universal God, and He is necessarily nameless. For the weakness of human nature and the love that people have of their godlings and their rites it was impossible to teach this doctrine only; but behind the façade the priests were there to help all seekers after truth, and Apollonius as an apostle of the universality of true religion was able to instruct them.

It is a pity that sources of information about him are so little to be trusted. There exist a few fragments of his writings and also of his letters; but it cannot be said for certain that they are either genuine or representative. His biographies have all been lost but one, and that one is more romantic than reliable. It came to be written in a quite unusual way.

There was at Rome a man named Septimius Severus who was full of ambition; he longed to become emperor. He had a chance, but since the hour of his birth was quite unknown the astrologers could not say for certain whether he would succeed or no. His wife's horoscope was anything but promising. But it so happened after a time that his wife died; and so immediately Severus began to search for a girl who had a royal nativity. At length he found one in Julia, the daughter of Bassianus who was priest of the sun at Emesa in Syria. Immediately he married her, and in due course succeeded to the empire. Julia was an intelligent woman, very fond of literature, and as queen-mother during the reign of Caracalla she collected round her a

large literary clique. It was from this group that she chose as Apollonius's biographer Flavius Philostratus.

The work which Philostrate produced suggests that Domna Julia, despite her reputed learning, was not very far removed from the type of woman whom the Victorians condemned as being too fond of reading novels; for the *Life of Apollonius* reads like a novel, and makes a thrilling one. It is written in very short chapters, full of the wise and clever sayings of Apollonius and in particular of his adventures and miracles. Philostrate was an antiquarian and took considerable pains to collect his material, travelling to a number of countries; and he had occasion to visit the temple to Apollonius set up at Tyana at the imperial expense; but it is to be feared that he was more occupied to put in whatever would make an interesting book than to give an exact historical impression of his subject. Consequently it is impossible to believe his tales, and the character of Apollonius must be judged much more by what is implied than by what is expressed.

The *Life* by Philostrate is full of such anecdotes as the following. Apollonius 'repaired to Greece about the time of the rising of Arcturus. After a pleasant voyage he said on landing at Leucas: "Let us leave this ship, for it would be better not to sail in it to Achaea." No one attended to this remark except those who knew him, but he and those who wished to travel with him went on to Lechaeum on a Leucadian ship, and the Syracusan ship sank as it entered the gulf of Crisa.'

'This too is a miracle of Apollonius. A girl appeared to have died at the hour of her marriage, and the bridegroom

was following the bier, lamenting as well he might his thwarted union, and all Rome was mourning with him, for the girl happened to belong to a family of consular rank. And Apollonius coming on this sad spectacle said: "Put down the bier and I will stop your weeping for this girl." And immediately he enquired her name. The crowd, of course, thought that he would deliver an oration like those which are made to honour funerals and stir up lamentation, but he, by merely touching her and whispering some secret words, awoke the girl from her seeming death; and she spoke aloud and returned to her father's house like Alcestis when she was restored to life by Hercules. And when the relatives of the girl wished to give him a hundred and fifty thousand sesterces he told them to give them to the girl for her dowry. And whether he noticed a spark of life in her, which had escaped her nurses —for it is said that it was raining, and a vapour went up from her face—or whether he warmed and restored a life that had been extinct, is a matter not to be explained either by me or even by its witnesses.'

On another occasion Apollonius was giving an address in a garden at Ephesus at the same moment that Domitian was being assassinated at Rome, and 'first', says Philostrate, 'he dropped his voice as if he were apprehensive; then he continued his exposition, but with less than his usual force, like one who between phrases is distracted by something irrelevant; finally he became silent, like one who has lost the thread of his subject, and giving a terrible look at the ground he stepped forward three or four paces from the platform and shouted: "Strike the tyrant, strike!"

—and not as though he received some image of the actuality in a glass, but as if he thought himself a witness and partaker of the drama. All Ephesus was astonished—for all Ephesus was at his lecture—and he paused, like one who waits to see the end of an ambiguous matter, and then said: "Courage, gentlemen, the tyrant has to-day been slain! To-day, do I say? This moment, by Athena, this very moment, at the instant of my last words before I became silent." And when they were still incredulous he added: "You may postpone your thankful sacrifices until the moment when the news arrives, but I shall go and give thanks to the gods for what I have seen." '

Apollonius never attempted to found a school or produce a coherent system of philosophy; he probably thought there was no value in the definiteness of systems. He largely followed the rule of Pythagoras, neither eating meat nor wearing clothes of animal origin. As he came from a wealthy family he had the advantage of a good education; he completed it in the temple of Aesculapius, where he was the most skilful of the healing priests. On coming of age he gave away almost all his money and took a vow of five years' silence; but this did not prevent him from travelling, and even quelling a riot by his gestures and by writing on a tablet which someone else read out to the rioters. This five years' silence he imposed on all his followers, and thus effectually hindered the weak and the insincere from wasting his time. After his death there was a school of 'Apollonians', but it probably did not long survive his immediate pupils.

He was a personal friend of the emperors Vespasian,

Titus, and Nerva, both before and after their elevation to the empire. He used to talk to them of wisdom and advise them about government. For this reason Nero and Domitian suspected him of plotting with those who wished to be their successors.

Most of the miracles of Apollonius consist of nothing more remarkable than vision at a distance in time and space. This, according to Philostrate, was a power he claimed and had particularly studied. Even so, many modern people will find it more comfortable to disbelieve. If they do, it is not Apollonius who will reproach them. He was the model of religious and intellectual tolerance, and knew very well that 'if they believe not me, neither will they believe, though one came to them from the dead'.

It is related that when he was imprisoned by Domitian his faithful travelling-companion Damis showed such anxiety for his fate that Apollonius at last drew out his leg from the fetters and then put it back remarking: 'Now that I have given you proof of my freedom, cheer up!' This story is perhaps invented, but the question of the miracles of Apollonius is not so easily disposed of.

The best evidence in a man's favour is that of his enemies. Apollonius had almost no enemies, and he was in agreement with all religions except the intolerant, monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity. Even these he might have admitted to be right, though they would certainly have said that he was wrong. Christianity was bound to be hostile to him because he was in agreement with all the cults which it set out to destroy; but the early Christians did not attempt to call him an impostor. The

book *Questions and Answers for the Orthodox* may not have been written by its alleged author Justin Martyr nor as early as A.D. 150, but it was unquestionably written by a sincere Christian who had no interest in magnifying the miracles of the heathen; in fact he tries to explain them away. Yet in his twenty-fourth question he writes as follows:

'If God is the creator, and lord of created things, how is it that the talismans of Apollonius have power over parts of creation? For they restrain, as we see, the violence of the sea and the force of the winds and the attacks of vermin and wild beasts.' The little words 'as we see' are rather unexpected.

The 'talismans' of Apollonius were consecrated objects set up in certain places to produce a given effect, and so it is quite possible that the author of pseudo-Justin may have had of them the personal experience which he claims, even though he lived some time after Apollonius died.

Johannes Malalas of Antioch, writing about A.D. 550, describes how Apollonius drove away from Antioch all the scorpions and all the mosquitos. His method of removing the scorpions is related thus: 'He installed this talisman in the centre of the city by making a brazen scorpion and burying it and setting up a short column on top of it; and the scorpions disappeared from all the region of Antioch.'

Cedrenus, an eleventh-century historian, had this quotation from the great Anastasius, bishop of Antioch: 'To this day the talismans set up by Apollonius are effective in certain places, some in preventing damage from beasts and birds which may be harmful to men, others in restraining

the flooding of a river in spate; and others against other forces whereby men suffer damage. And not only in his lifetime were these and other such things done through him by the demons, but even after his end they continued at his monument to work wonders in his name for the deception of miserable men.'

It is not possible to identify this Anastasius, but Cedrenus cannot have invented him; for no Christian would go out of his way to invent testimony to miracles of the heathen. All ancient Christian writers used to maintain that miracles could only be performed by Christians, unless occasionally with the Devil's help and God's permission. But here are two Christian authorities, both natives of Antioch, bearing independent testimony to the existence and effectiveness of Apollonius's talismans in their native city. The same tradition is found in the *Paschal Chronicle*, written about 630. The church father Eusebius, about A.D. 300, roundly denies it, and it is not mentioned in Philostrate, but pseudo-Justin writing before 200 did not attempt to contradict it; there is therefore some evidence that Apollonius did prepare talismans at Antioch; and if he did so at Antioch he probably also did it, as is related, at Byzantium and elsewhere. The preparation of talismans is one of the branches of magic, and it is this that makes Apollonius not merely a religious teacher, but a white magician. The word 'talisman' is appropriate to describe his consecrated objects because it is derived through Arabic from the Greek word *telesma* which was used to denote them.

The *Life* by Philostrate can only be described as a historical novel, and we have no means of knowing how

much attention the author paid to facts. It is fair to suppose that he represents the tradition as it existed at Rome about A.D. 200, with the inclusion of every possible miracle. But commentators do not seem always to have realized that the most extravagant stories are merely alchemical parables.

The real character of Apollonius seems to have been as follows. He was a natural ascetic, a man of very superior intelligence and quick wit. He was interested above all things in the understanding of nature and man, in both of which he excelled. He was not to be deceived by facile and materialistic arguments into thinking a thing impossible because people could not do it; he expressly claimed to be clairvoyant, though not of course equally at all times and on all subjects. His conversation was clear and telling, and he was a man of imposing presence who was received with honour everywhere, except occasionally by individuals who were frightened of him. On his travels he almost always lived in temples and reformed the rites. At the end of his life he dismissed all his followers and disappeared, perhaps on a second journey to India. For travelling-companion in his other wanderings he deliberately chose a man too stupid to be an apostle, for fear that his teaching should be perverted. Nearest to his heart was the good government of the world, and to this end he gave advice to emperors and rulers, and encouraged people to perform their religious duties. When asked how he prayed he answered: 'I pray thus: "O Gods, grant me to have little and want nothing." And I pray that justice may prevail, that the laws may not be broken, that the wise may con-

tinue to be poor, but that the rest may be rich provided they are so without fraud.'

Except the beautiful youth Antinous, Apollonius was the only human being, emperors apart, to whom a pagan Roman emperor erected a temple.

CHAPTER V

Alexander the Oracle-Maker

Abonoteichos was an unimportant locality on the outh shore of the Black Sea, and it was here that Alexander the future prophet was born about A.D. 100 or 105. He left home young and did not return, it seems, until he was about thirty-six. But his return was dramatic, and his story, though surprising, is perfectly true.

In the ancient temple of Apollo at Chalcedon, which is the modern Scutari opposite Stamboul, some bronze tablets were discovered declaring that Aesculapius, the god of healing, would soon move to the province of Pontus and take up his residence at Abonoteichos. The people of that town accordingly began to build a temple for him; and they did not have long to wait. Alexander, who had left them twenty years before as a mere boy of humble parentage, now returned with a mysterious oracle declaring him to be the son of Apollo.

The godlike Alexander son of Phoebus here you see,
Derived from Podaleirius' blood and Perseus' family.

He was tall and in appearance absolutely magnificent. His skin was fair and his large eyes had a commanding glow; he wore a moderate beard and let his long hair fall in ringlets. His dress consisted of a white-and-purple parti-coloured tunic with a white cloak over it, and he carried a scimitar like Perseus in a picture. At times he would rave and foam at the mouth as if he were mad.

One morning he came running into the market-place wearing nothing but a gilded loin-cloth, waving his scimitar and tossing his hair in a frenzied way. He then climbed on a high altar and addressed the people, congratulating them on the imminent arrival of the god in their town, and concluding his speech with a recitation in some unknown language. The population was by now agog. As soon as his speech was finished Alexander leapt from the altar and ran to the foundations of the temple, where he plunged into an accidental pool of water and began to sing hymns to Apollo and Aesculapius at the top of his voice. After a time he asked for a saucer such as was used in making libations, and this he plunged into the pool, and brought it up containing some mud and water and an egg about the size of a goose-egg. This egg Alexander cracked, and out of it came a tiny snake, at which the people all shouted in welcome; for the serpent was the symbol of Aesculapius and tame snakes were always present in his temples.

The initial ceremony ended with the popular excitement at the birth of the god. A few days later, when the town was already full of new arrivals curious of the prodigy, Alexander announced that he was prepared to receive visitors. They found him in a rather dark little room with

a door on each side, one to come and one to go by. He was seated against the wall, dressed as a god and looking wonderfully handsome, and round his neck and over his lap lay the coils of a full-grown serpent which, to the astonishment of the spectators, had a human head. Many of the visitors wished to stroke the serpent and were allowed to do so, but they could not remain long, for they were pushed out of one door by the crowd that entered at the other.

When it was known that the serpent had grown to its full size in a few days and had a human head people from all the neighbouring provinces came pouring in to Abonoteichos to see it, and again and again Alexander showed it to them. Before the temple was even finished Abonoteichos had become a religious centre like Lourdes, crowded with pilgrims and full of sacred statues and paintings.

The normal business of a temple of Aesculapius was healing. Patients were made to sleep in the temple and the priests attempted to ensure that they should have dreams which would indicate the cause and cure of their disease. Since the causes of disease are often psychological this method was not as fantastic as it sounds; it suggests that the priests of Aesculapius were the first psychiatrists.

Alexander however did not limit himself to the usual activities of a temple of Aesculapius; that god and his father Apollo had both had the gift of prophecy, and following their example Alexander declared his temple to be an oracle. His replies were given in several ways. As a rule he asked for the request to be written upon a scroll, sealed, and handed in to the temple; some time later the scroll would be returned, still sealed, with the answer written on

the outside. Occasionally answers were given by the human-headed serpent itself, speaking as a rule in verse. These answers may have been more costly; the normal fee was a drachma and two obols.

Alexander knew a good deal about medicine, and had his private remedial ointment, called cytmis; but he did not limit himself to medical questions. Nevertheless an oracle which offers to answer any inquiry for a fee cannot afford to be without an organization to keep it informed of political possibilities and developments; and so, though the revenue of the temple was very large—for with so small a fee people would often ask ten or a dozen questions—its servants became more and more numerous and its agents travelled all over the Romen empire.

As it happens not a single true prediction of Alexander has come down to us. Yet there must have been many, not only by the law of averages, but because for thirty years his oracle continued in undiminished reputation and lasted after his death for at least a century.

Of his false oracles several have come down, thanks to the labour of his bitter enemy the satirist Lucian. That Alexander really existed is proved for certain by the fact that coins were struck in his honour under Antoninus Pius and other emperors; he is thus no creature of Lucian's imagination. And though the evidence of a man's enemies about him is unreliable except in praise, it is here the only evidence that we have. It must be accepted therefore, for what it is worth. Yet, even making all reservations, it would be hard to escape the conclusion that Alexander was either a pious or an impious fraud.

Lucian attempted several times to destroy the credit of the oracle, in the following manner. He wrote on two different scrolls the same question, 'Where was Homer born?' and gave them to two different servants. The one handed in his scroll to the temple remarking that he had come to ask a cure for a pain in the side, the other said that he wished to know whether he should go to Italy by sea or land. The latter was told to go by land, and the former to use cytmis mixed with the saliva of a horse. Of Homer there was no mention.

On another occasion Lucian wrote in the scroll: 'When will Alexander's trickery be found out?' and on the outside: 'Eight questions from so-and-so.' He sent it with the fee for eight questions and received eight answers, none of them to the point.

But Lucian himself does not come any too well out of the affair. When he was offered the prophet's hand to kiss he bit it as hard as he could. At this the crowd wanted to lynch him for sacrilege, but Alexander restrained them and declared that he would prove that his god had virtue to make friends even of bitter enemies. And this very quickly happened, since Lucian had put himself in an untenable position and was obliged for his own safety to accept the friendship which Alexander offered. Thus the man who had tried harder than anyone else to destroy the oracle's reputation ended by giving it an unwilling testimonial. He then left Abonoteichos, and declared that the crew of his ship had been paid by Alexander to throw him and his family into the sea, and were only restrained by the tears of the aged skipper. But this statement, coming from

one so full of animus as Lucian, may possibly contain a certain amount of exaggeration.

The story of how the oracle began may be told—if we accept the explanation of our only authority—as follows. Alexander had left home about the age of twelve as assistant to a travelling quack who sold love-philtres and dealt in magic and clairvoyance. It was most probably from him that Alexander learnt the first rudiments of medicine, which he may have studied after a fashion as assistant to a doctor; for there are a dozen or fifteen years in his life of which Lucian says nothing. At length however he struck up a partnership with a song-writer from Byzantium, named Cocconas, who was also a conjuror and quack, and not long afterwards they went off to Pella in Macedonia in the train of a rich woman who was no doubt as susceptible to the charms of Alexander as she was to her own credulity. By trading on this the tricksters made a good deal of money, and it was in Macedonia that the idea of the oracle took root. Inspired by the tame serpents which were quite common in the district, Alexander realized that in a country where snakes were not habitually tame he could make one pass for the incarnation of Aesculapius. A serpent was accordingly bought.

The next question was where to instal the oracle. Cocconas suggested Chalcedon, doubtless because he knew it and knew how to arrange the finding of the brazen tablets in the temple of Apollo. Alexander however proposed his native town Abonoteichos, declaring that the people in that remote and rustic region were so stupid that they would certainly be deceived. His judgment was entirely

right. And, be it noted, he chose a country not far from that which a century earlier had tried to attribute divine honours to the apostles Barnabas and Paul.

And yet it would be crude to condemn too easily the rustic population of Bithynia. A modern prophet might not fare very well in a country town of England, but he could hardly do better than to set himself up in London, where fortune-tellers abound and their clients go ingenuously from one to another seeking oracles. And yet even for them there is some excuse, since clairvoyance does occasionally occur, and has even been demonstrated under scientifically controlled conditions. It cannot however be practised as a routine, for that leaves out of account one of the most important elements in any psychic activity, which is the psychological one. A human being can never be justifiably treated as a machine.

Scepticism in the second century was almost limited to the Epicurean philosophers and a few other schools. These accordingly Alexander excluded from partaking in the mysteries of his god; he excluded also the Christians, who were his enemies for a different reason. On the credulity of the rest of the population he could rely. Accordingly he set out from Macedonia, left Cocconas at Chalcedon to advertise the oracle, and went on to Abonoteichos with his sacred serpent. Not long afterwards Cocconas died.

The egg containing the infant snake had of course been planted among the foundations of the temple the night before it was found. It was a blown goose-egg with the holes sealed up. The trick of the human-headed serpent was arranged, according to Lucian, by means of a canvas

head controlled with horse-hairs, which would open and close its mouth and shoot out a forked tongue; Alexander then sat with the serpent's head concealed behind him and the canvas head apparently coming over his shoulder and nestling on his cheek. This head could be made to speak by means of a tube of cranes' windpipes leading to an accomplice in an adjoining room. It is not difficult to open seals with red-hot needles or counterfeit them with marble-dust and glue.

The most remarkable of Alexander's followers was an eminent Roman named Rutilian who had held all the usual state offices of the highest grade. He must, however, have been exceedingly superstitious. His first question on arriving at Abonoteichos was what tutor his son should have; he was told to choose Pythagoras and Homer. When the boy died a few days later Rutilian declared that the oracle had been quite right to indicate for a doomed child tutors already dead. Not long afterwards he inquired if he should marry again, and Alexander offered him his own daughter, declaring that her mother was Selēnē the moon-goddess. In reality she must have been a child of his travels. Rutilian joyfully accepted, and thus obtained the position which enabled him after the death of Alexander to decide that the oracle should not have any longer a chief prophet.

One of Alexander's most successful tricks was to utter to fictitious people oracles of astoundingly detailed accuracy, such as 'thou shalt find it under thy bed near the head and close to the wall; thy servant Calypso hid it there'. Sometimes he gave replies in a fictitious language; and he also made money by blackmailing those who had given them-

selves away in their questions. In his earlier days he sought to curry favour with the older oracles by sending on to them some of his easier clients; later the questions he sent on were probably the most difficult ones.

His daughter's marriage to Rutilian opened to Alexander a channel of influence in the highest Roman society. His cult and that of his serpent Glycon spread with amazing rapidity; there were monuments to them both in a number of places. The reason doubtless was that in an age abounding in new religions Alexander produced one of the most sensational; for his speaking snake was new to Greece and Rome, and Abonoteichos was in the east whence had come the other popular cults of Christ and Isis and Mithras. So important was Alexander that, before fighting the Marcomanni, Marcus Aurelius (who tolerated all religions) asked the advice of his oracle. Alexander said that two lions should be thrown into the Danube and a great victory would follow. Not long afterwards he pointed out that he had not said by whom the victory would be gained; for the lions merely swam the river and were killed by the barbarians, and the Roman army was signally defeated.

It would perhaps be giving a false impression of Alexander to report any more of the oracles given on the authority of his bitterest enemy. For thirty years his practice was most successful. And there was at least one oracle for the failure of which he did not care—that, namely, in which he said that he would live to be a hundred and fifty and die by lightning. *Après moi le déluge.* Alexander was not yet seventy when he died of a gangrened leg.

Figure 5. The Serpent Glycon on a coin of the Emperor Verus
(From Waddington, Monnaies Grecques d'Asie Mineure)

CHAPTER VI

Merlin

A little knowledge may be a dangerous thing, but much learning is a weariness of the flesh. From the solution of this dilemma, that ignorance is bliss, the wise have always shrunk. On every subject conclusions are drawn, whether much be known about it or little. In history, when a great deal is known, facts and events are lost in a tedious labyrinth of causes and speculations; when little is known events are sometimes clear and sometimes cloudy, the historian is reduced to guessing and soon finds himself half converted into a novelist.

Of English history between the departure of the Romans and the accession of the Saxon king Egbert about A.D. 820 the average person is wholly uninformed; and the historian is not in a position to teach him much. In this spacious period of ignorance has grown like an exotic weed the enormous legend of Merlin and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table—a story so widespread and so improbable that grave attempts have been made to write it off as a mere myth, a tale translated into human

terms of the growth and decay of vegetation from spring to winter.

But that theory, which makes Merlin no more real than Hercules, is improbable, for two good reasons. There are two kinds of myths, and it is absurd to imagine that in the process of time they would never become confused. Some may have started as purely 'vegetation myths', anthropomorphic explanations of the cycle of seasons where spring and summer and winter were all transfigured into people; but any event in the life of a primitive tribe becomes a story, then a tradition, and finally is indistinguishable from a myth. As soon as any resemblance between two stories became striking they would begin to be confounded, and hence would grow a composite myth. It is idle to argue whether Osiris and Hercules and King Arthur were prehistoric kings or merely vegetation-spirits; they were probably both.

The second reason for assigning to Merlin a real existence is that his role in the story of King Arthur, if it is merely a vegetation-myth, is unessential. If Arthur is merely the spring, or the sun, he has no need of Merlin; there is no parallel to Merlin in the histories of Adonis, Attis, and Osiris. Merlin as an enchanter alone might be a typical character of mythology, for in mythology there are many enchanters; but Merlin is the enchanter-vizier of a great king who is not himself a magician, and this combination of roles is not one that can be paralleled by casual reference to the mythology of other countries. As a situation it is unusual and accordingly indicates that Merlin pushed his way into the story because he could not be

ignored—because, in fact, he was a real and striking character.

It was about A.D. 420 that the Romans in Britain were cut off from Rome because Gaul had been conquered and overrun by the Franks. Most of the legions had already left, recalled by emperors or pretenders, but there remained in England all the civilian Roman settlers and officials. Very soon, however, they were driven away westwards by the Saxon invaders, and Britain became, until the time of King Alfred, a land of petty kingdoms whose uncertain boundaries depended on the fighting ability of their men and whose rulers not infrequently owed homage to the most powerful monarch in the island, whoever he might happen to be. This is the state of affairs described in the Arthurian romances, where kings abound and the over-lord of them all is Arthur.

The activities of Merlin cover the reigns of Vortigern, Ambrosius, Uther Pendragon, and Arthur. Vortigern is said to have been the first king of the Britons after the rupture of the connection with Rome. It was in his reign, about A.D. 428, that Hengist and Horsa came over from the continent and were employed to defend him against the Anglo-Saxon invaders. Uther Pendragon and Arthur did so too, but they were more Celt than Roman; Arthur in fact seems to have been not uncommon as a Celtic name about that time. All four of these kings were engaged in trying to defend England against the Anglo-Saxons—it has even been said, against the English, but that is unfair, for the English are not all Teutonic by any means. However, it was as the defender of England that Arthur became

qualified to stand as a national hero; that he defended it in vain and against its future inhabitants was beside the point.

The suggestion that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were not written by Homer has been very suitably met by the reply that in that case they must have been written by someone else of the same name. The converse answer may be given to the suggestion that Arthur and Merlin were fictitious characters. Somebody must have led the Celts against the invading Angles, and whoever did so successfully discharged the role of Arthur; he was therefore the same character under a different name. To Merlin the same applies, for from the historical as from the mythological point of view his part in the drama is unessential; the story could just as well have been told without him. That it was not suggests that he forced his way in by strength of character.

Now that four successive kings should have had one and the same trusted adviser who attempted neither to lead their armies nor to usurp their power is, at a time when every mighty man was for himself, extremely remarkable, not to say improbable. It does call for an explanation.

The first appearance of Merlin is described as follows. Vortigern, commander of the Celts, had been driven away from eastern England by the increasing hordes of Saxons, with whom he could not make a permanent peace. Searching for a place to build a citadel he came at last to Mount Hereri, which is Snowdon. Here he began to build, but on three successive nights the half-made walls fell down, and his wise men informed him that the castle could never be

built until the ground had been sprinkled with the blood of a child who had not had a father. He accordingly sent out to search for one, and at last his emissaries heard some boys playing in a field, and one jeered at the other saying: 'No good will ever come to you, you never had a father!' They inquired accordingly, and the boy's mother told them that it was so; they therefore took off the boy to Vortigern.

When he stood before the king the boy, who was Merlin, asked why he had been brought; and on being told that he was to be a human sacrifice he asked the king's wise men what lay under the spot where Vortigern wished to build. They did not know, so he told them to dig, and they would find a pool. This they did. Then he asked what was in the pool, and as they again did not know he told them, two vases. Similarly in the vases was a folded tent and in the tent two dragons, one red and one white. The dragons on being brought to light start fighting, and at length the red one wins; Merlin interprets the fortunes of the battle to signify the fortunes in war of the Celts until they expel the Saxons. He adds that Vortigern must depart because it is he himself who is to live at Mount Hereri. Vortigern then asks him his name, and he replies that he is called Ambrosius. The chronicler is here guilty of a bad mistake; he makes Merlin add that his father was a Roman consul. Doubtless something of the kind was true of the chieftain Ambrosius Aurelianus, but not of Merlin!

How Merlin came to be born without a father is naturally a romantic story.

The devils, finding that Christianity made too good pro-

gress for their liking, decided to attempt the incarnation of an Antichrist. Accordingly one of them chose the family of a rich man and began to afflict it in every possible way in the hope of turning one of the daughters away from God. First the cattle were killed, then the horses, then the goodman and his wife and son, and then one of the daughters was condemned to be burnt for being with child and unmarried. The two daughters who remained held out for a time, consoled by their confessor Blaise, until finally the devil tempted one of them to run off and become a harlot. At this the last remaining daughter was so unhappy that she shut herself up in her room and cried herself to sleep, forgetting to pray and cross herself before sleeping as Blaise had instructed her. Immediately the devil appeared and begat Merlin upon her. As soon as she knew what had happened she confessed to Blaise, who could hardly believe it, but persuaded her judges not to have her burnt until the child was born and they could judge whether or not it was a devil.

The girl was accordingly imprisoned, and as soon as the child was born it was baptized. Satan thereby was foiled, for Merlin became a Christian, though still retaining his diabolical foreknowledge and other powers. At birth he was so fierce-looking and so hairy that everyone thought he must be a devil; but one day as his mother was lamenting over him in her cell he suddenly said: 'Mother, dismay thee not, for for me shalt thou never to death be brought.' His mother was so astonished that she dropped him. Presently all her friends came and tried to make him speak again, but he would say nothing useful until they were in court,

where he proved his diabolical origin by forcing the judge's mother to admit that the judge's father was not her husband but a priest. His own mother was accordingly acquitted, and he was brought up by Blaise until the age of about twelve, when he was taken to Vortigern. After that Blaise went to live in Northumberland and Merlin used often to visit him; and Blaise wrote down Merlin's predictions and all the adventures of King Arthur.

These adventures go back to a time, unfortunately, when the writing of fiction was nominally dead. Only the learned composed books, and always upon theology or history or some other serious subject which the church approved. Yet there always have been story-tellers in every country, and the consequence was that the born novelists of the earlier Middle Ages were forced to turn historian and pass off their tales as truthful narratives. This reduces the whole history of the period to guesswork. Whether Merlin was ever adviser to any king must certainly be questioned. His name is given as Ambrosius, and this may mean that he was confused with Ambrosius Aurelianus, the leader who succeeded Vortigern.

Now before the time of the Arthurian romances it is only Welsh writers who mention Merlin, and in the oldest poem that speaks of him he has a dialogue with the famous Welsh bard Taliesin in which they lament the slaughter of the battle of Arderydd. This battle was fought about 575. But the battle of Badon Hill, which was the last of Arthur's twelve great victories, was fought either in 473 or about 516. From this it appears that Merlin can never have had anything much to do with Arthur. But of course this

piece of evidence need not be taken any more seriously than any other; the poem which provides it was written centuries after the events to which it alludes, and if one historian can confuse Merlin with Ambrosius the general, it is quite possible that another might forget the century which intervened between the battles of Badon Hill and Arderydd—or indeed be entirely ignorant of the true chronology, which is extremely probable.

In the earliest sources for the life of Merlin he appears as a Welsh bard less famous than Taliesin, and so far as one can tell not gifted with magical powers. Whence then did the story of his magic arise? Strenuous efforts have been made to take away Merlin's reality by attributing all the events which happen through him to ancient Greek and oriental legends. This is occasionally justifiable, but not often; pushed too far it shows the state of mind of a critic who, being unable to write novels himself, forgets that others can. The story that Uther in order to beget Arthur was magically transformed by Merlin to resemble Gorlois the husband of Igraine is not necessarily borrowed from the Greek just because Jupiter disguised himself as Amphitryon in order to beget Hercules upon Alcmena; for if a story-teller could not imagine some such tale to render legitimate the birth of his hero he would indeed be bankrupt of imagination.

On the other hand when a story is presented as history it cannot afford to differ very widely from tradition, even in an uncritical age; and since Geoffrey of Monmouth presents Merlin as a magician and prophet it is reasonable to suppose that he had some popular authority behind him,

going back by degrees to the original. The actual probability therefore seems to be as follows: Merlin was a Welsh bard named Myrddin who flourished about A.D. 450 and was not only a poet but a far-seeing statesman who advised to their advantage the various leaders of the Celts in their struggle against the Saxons; he continually predicted the future outcome of the wars and seemed gifted with supernatural insight. This is sufficient to make him a very remarkable character, indeed along with Arthur one of the most striking personalities in English history between Boadicea and King Alfred.

In character Merlin is represented as essentially benevolent and, unlike some magicians, always willing to help his friends, especially in love affairs and battles. An old Welsh poem in the *Book of Taliesin* speaks of 'the placid gentleness of Merlin'. In manner he is always very quiet, being fond of solitude and often saying nothing for long periods. There are many stories of his silence being broken by a sudden and enigmatical burst of laughter, as when he laughed at the sight of a child's funeral procession. At first he was unwilling to explain himself but at last he answered:

See ye not the priest that goeth before
That so merrily now singeth there? . . .
For, by mine head, the child is his,
and nothing his that followeth, I wis;
and therefore the sorrow the priest should make
that the goodman doth for the childë's sake.

The story that Merlin was a king who as a consequence of his own misdeeds went mad and took to living in the

woods and prophesying was originally told of someone entirely different, as were some of the tales of Merlin's enigmatical laughter. In the stories of Arthur he is the king's invaluable counsellor and has the habit of turning up in other shapes than his own for the pleasure of trying people. Thus Malory says that Merlin came 'so disguised that King Arthur knew him not, for he was all befurred in black sheepskins, and a great pair of boots, and a bow and arrows, in a russet gown, and brought wild geese in his hand, and it was on the morn after Candlemas day; but King Arthur knew him not. Sir, said Merlin unto the King, will you give me a gift? Wherefore, said King Arthur, should I give thee a gift, churl? Sir, said Merlin, ye were better to give me a gift that is not in your hand than to lose great riches, for here in the same place where the great battle was, is great treasure hid in the earth. Who told thee so, churl? said Arthur. Merlin told me so, said he. Then Ulfius and Brastias knew him well enough, and smiled. Sir, said these two knights, it is Merlin that so speaketh unto you. Then Arthur was greatly abashed, and had marvel of Merlin, and so had King Ban and King Bors, and so they had great disport at him.'

One of Merlin's first achievements was to bring the stones called the Giants' Dance from Ireland to Salisbury Plain, where they are now known as Stonehenge; every one of them was said to have a different medicinal virtue. He also made for Arthur a table like the eucharistic table brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea. Not infrequently he facilitated the adulteries of the Knights with various ladies who took their fancy. It was he who made

possible the birth of Lancelot by casting such an enchantment on all the guests in the castle of Agravadain that he could lead off Agravadain's daughter under her father's nose and put her into bed with King Ban who was sleeping in the same room as King Bors. And 'when the king saw the girl and had heard Merlin's words he stretched out his hands and received her joyfully as one who had great desire of her; he had no power to resist the enchantment that was made, and if he had not been enchanted he had not done it for the kingdom of Logres, for much he feared Our Lord.'

It was often Merlin who enabled Arthur to win his battles. He made an oriflamme with a dragon on it, and the dragon had a twisting tale nine feet long, and as he carried it into battle it spat out fire on the King's enemies. He also ended a battle by sending a mighty wind which blew away all the tents, and made it impossible to fight.

Arthur's battles must have been fought in the marches between the Saxon and Celtic lands, somewhere near the division which ran up from east Dorset to the Welsh border and then east of Chester up to Scotland. His capital, Caerleon, was probably either at Chester or in Monmouthshire. The battle of Badon Hill was not fought near Bath but more probably further north, perhaps at Bouden Hill in Linlithgow.

Arthur's knights cannot really have worn much armour, if any. Their opponents carried as sole defence a large round convex wooden shield, bound and bossed with iron and covered with leather; their offensive weapon was usually a lozenge-headed spear, but sometimes a broad pointed two-edged sword or a whinger.

In fighting his battles Arthur suffered much from the loss of Merlin, who foresaw his own end and did not attempt to avert it. When Blaise asked him whether he could not do otherwise he replied: 'Not without going against God.' Merlin had always used his powers for the advancement of Christianity, except when he merely encouraged the delights of love; and yet as the son of a demon it was impossible that he should go to paradise. Nor could he go to hell, for he was baptized and a good Christian; hence, even more than any other magician, it became necessary for him to disappear in some mysterious way. Some said that he sailed away in a glass boat, but the most common story is that he was shut up by the wiles of a woman. This story obviously had nothing to do with the historic Merlin; similar tales have been told about Aristotle, Virgil, and Hippocrates, and all have a not unlikely origin in that petty jealousy of the great which poisons some of life's failures and has produced, as the most remarkable monument to the desire to ruin good reputations, the theory that Bacon could have written the works of Shakespeare.

The description of Merlin's end which Tennyson gives in 'Merlin and Vivien' is entirely insipid, and by departing from the authorities he has merely rendered it unconvincing. In the prose 'Roman de Merlin' it is related that Merlin was in love with a beautiful maid called Nimiane who loved him so well that she could not bear the thought of losing him. And he knew very well what she would do to him, but he did not love her any the less, nor could he resist, because it was his destiny. So he taught her his

spells, and one day she shut him up by magic in the forest of Broceliande so that he thought he was in a locked tower. And when he awoke he said to her: ' "Lady, you have deceived me if you remain not with me, for none but you has power to unmake this tower." And she said to him: "Beautiful sweet friend, I shall be here often and you shall hold me in your arms and I you. Henceforth all shall be done at your pleasure." And she held him company so much that there was then neither day nor night but she was with him. And never since did Merlin issue from that fortress where his friend had put him; but she issued and entered as she would.'

CHAPTER VII

Michael Scot

In popular imagination magicians and astrologers are supposed to dress themselves in a long flowing robe and a tall peaked cap both ornamented with signs of the zodiac. The tradition of this elegant and unusual attire seems to go back to the year 1220, when Michael Scot returned from Spain to Palermo to take up the post of imperial astrologer to the emperor Frederick II. In that gay and colourful court he appeared as a slight, dark man with a small brown beard, wearing a single long garment after the Moorish style with long tight sleeves and close-cut waist, and on his head, above trailing ringlets of dark hair, a tall red cap like a cone without a point. Eighty years later, when Dante's disapproval thrust him down to the eighth circle of the Inferno, he was as much rebuked for his Moorish clothes as for his magic.

Michael Scot may claim to be in the true succession of Merlin, for in some points they have even been confused. Each was the outstanding counsellor of a great warrior king; each was supposed to have a wonderful magic book;

sometimes the same stories were told of both of them; each predicted the manner of his own death, and each was said to have been lured to destruction by a faithless woman. But the story of this betrayal must be as false of Scot as it is of Merlin; for it conflicts with the other story of his death and has nothing whatever to recommend it.

The tale went that Scot could only be killed by drinking the broth of a wild sow; and that he did so die, having been given the broth by a woman who had wormed the secret out of him. But it is said also that he predicted his own death by the falling on his head of a stone, and for this reason he wore an iron skull-cap to protect him; but one day at the sacring of the mass, when his head was uncovered, the bell-rope shook a stone from the roof and this fell on his head and killed him.

The real manner of Scot's death is quite unknown; but he was not old, and most probably he died in the border country of Scotland, where he was born. His life, however, was spent in the south, and ten years of it at Toledo, which was supposed to be the city where men went to study magic. From Oxford he went to Paris, where he earned the title of Master for his accomplished learning, and next seems to have been chosen as tutor to the young emperor Frederick II, who was then King of Sicily. Scot therefore must have come to Palermo in the year 1200, when he was not yet thirty; and in the intervals of teaching a very intelligent and willing pupil he met many other brilliant men and wrote for Frederick two great books on astrology, which are still extant.

Nine years later, Frederick, aged fourteen, was married,

and Scot, who had written for the occasion a treatise on physiognomy, went off to Spain, where he lived largely in Toledo and translated from the Arabic the great works of the Persian physician Avicenna and later those of the Cordovan philosopher Averroës.

Frederick returned in 1220 to Palermo, now as Holy Roman Emperor, and called Scot to be his official astrologer. The philosophy of Averroës was so dangerous that Frederick, wishing at that moment to avoid a rupture with the Pope, requested Scot to keep it from publication. So this great book, which was later to be one of the chief means of introducing the teaching of Aristotle to the western world, was laid in a drawer for a dozen years and its author went back to the unexceptionable business of casting horoscopes, which was considered safer both for his reputation and for Frederick's.

Besides being an astrologer, Scot was in holy orders and was court physician. There has come down to us with extravagant commendations for efficacity the formula of Master Michael Scot's Pills, which are said to be particularly good for preserving youth and preventing the physical decadences that precede old age. It consists of three ounces of the best hepatic aloes, and one ounce each of bryony, of indian, belleric and emblic myrobalans, of lemons, mastic, scammony, hazel, roses, and rhubarb, to be mixed together in the juice of cabbages or absinth. 'The dose is vii or v.'

In 1223 the Pope wrote to Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, asking him to give Scot the first honourable position that became available. Langton took no notice, and when the archbishopric of Cashel in Ireland fell vacant

the Pope quickly desired the election of Scot to fill it. He expected probably that Scot would continue to live at Palermo and find a suffragan for the duties. But the reason why Scot had asked for a benefice in the north was probably that he was longing to see his own country again; he refused the see of Cashel on the ground that he did not know the Irish language, and as the years went by without another appointment he seems to have become of a more gloomy and foreboding turn of mind. He published prophetic verses about the fate of the Italian cities, which are still extant in the works of Salimbene, who declares that he saw most of them come true. At the same time he is said to have predicted that Frederick the emperor would die at the iron gates in a town named after Flora. For this reason Frederick avoided Florence because there was a church there called St. Stephen's at the Iron Gate, but he did actually die in 1250 at Fiorentino in Apulia in a room that had been made in what was previously the gateway, with the iron staples still in the wall.

By 1230 it was plain that Scot need hope no longer for a bishopric; but fortunately for him his patron Frederick was now on the worst of terms with the Pope, having been three times excommunicated, so it was agreed to publish the translation of Averroës, and the announcement was made to all Europe's universities by an imperial circular. After this triumph Scot returned to his native land and died there. As a last tribute to his memory the affectionate emperor published in 1232 his *Abbreviation of Avicenna*, a great work on medicine; and his tomb was shown in 1629 at Burgh-under-Bowness. It is there that in the 'Lay of the

Last Minstrel' Sir Walter Scott makes William of Deloraine open his tomb and take

> *From the cold hand the Mighty Book,*
> *With iron clasp'd, and with iron bound:*
> *He thought, as he took it, the dead man frowned.*

Scot lived of course at a time when the reality of magic was never even questioned, though it was very occasionally declared to be futile by the learned, and on all sides was denounced as difficult, dangerous, and damnable. Those therefore who have given accounts of Michael Scot—as indeed of any other magician—have almost always thought it necessary to whitewash him, to make out that he was not a magician at all, or not to any appreciable extent. Yet it is obvious that a man who is painted in his true colours does not need a coat of whitewash; indeed he can very well do without it, for it prevents his true colours from being seen. The biographer who attempts to whitewash a character, or to blacken him, is always suspect of misrepresentation.

It is impossible, however, to whitewash Michael Scot, or to blacken him either. The evidence for his life is uncertain, and for his magic even more so. There are some stories about him which it would be improper to omit, but the actual evidence of his magical dealings rests on only two documents, both ancient, but not conclusive.

Less than a century after his death Scot was already such a mythical figure that he becomes in Dante no more than a damned fraudulent magician. Great tales were soon in circulation about him. It was related that when the King

of Scotland sent him as ambassador to the King of France he made no preparations for the journey, but on the appointed morning conjured up a vast black horse and flew through the air to Paris. As they crossed the channel the horse asked him: 'What is it that the old women in Scotland mutter before they go to bed?' But Master Michael knew better than to say *Pater noster* to a devil; he retorted: 'What is that to thee? Higher, devil, and faster!' Thanks to this adroitness he arrived in safety.

Another devil of Scot's raising was so industrious that it was almost impossible to find him work. One day his master told him to divide Eildon Hill in three; the next morning it was done, and Eildon Hill has three peaks to this day. On the second evening Michael ordered his devil to put a stone curb on the course of the Tweed; next morning the basalt dyke that can still be seen near Ednam was newly in place. On the third day Michael relieved himself of his embarrassing servant; after much thought he bade him go and spin ropes of sand at Berwick bar.

From the witch of Falsehope Master Michael had a narrow escape. He went to see her one day to talk about magic, but she denied any knowledge of it, until he casually laid on the table his magic wand; she seized it instantly and turned him into a hare. He made a dash for the door, but his own gamekeeper was outside and put the hounds on him, and there was a hot chase until the wizard found refuge in his own drain-pipe, and breathing-space enough to turn himself back to his proper form. Not long afterwards he had his revenge. He sent his man to the witch's door to ask some bread for the hounds; the witch, who was

busy boiling porridge for the sheep-shearers, refused, as he had expected. The man then pinned to the door a notice containing some magical characters and the following rhyme:

Maister Michael Scot's man
Socht breid and gat nane.

Immediately the wife began to run crazily round the fire repeating the words of the spell, and all the shearers as they came in one by one were caught in the dance, and the dance went on until the poor witch was being dragged round half singed and quite exhausted. The farmer, suspecting that something was afoot because Master Michael stood there staring at the house, peeped in through the window, and seeing everyone within bewitched he went and asked the wizard to stop it. Michael obligingly told him that to break the spell he had only to enter the house backwards and take the scroll from the door.

Thus in the legends as in the life of Michael Scot there is never any suggestion of ill-nature; he was far indeed from being the vindictive dealer in devils which magicians at that time were represented to be. That he was never out of favour at court is a testimony to his well-balanced mind and his talent for friendship. It was doubtless for the good of humanity that he translated Averroës and Avicenna; and it may have been for the same purpose that he practised necromancy.

Two manuscripts have come down to us purporting to be from Michael Scot and giving his way of evoking spirits. The first may even be genuine. It is said to have been copied from a very ancient book and gives the method of the

necromantic experiment which he performed when he was ill at Cordova. Now if he had gone to Cordova, the home of Averroës, it is exceedingly likely that the spirit he wished to evoke was that of the great philosopher whose work he was translating. Being ill, he might have called up Avicenna, who was a famous doctor, but in the city of Cordova it was most likely the great Cordovan philosopher that he would wish to see.

The experiment has four pages of description in the original Latin, and though it begins with prayers to God and quotations from the Psalms it indicates at the end that the sign of the cross must not be made, otherwise there will be danger. There is needed for it a well-lit room in which no woman has ever stepped, and the magician must be chaste for a week, washed and shaven all over, and dressed in white. He sacrifices a white dove and evokes a teacher in any science that he wishes to learn, and afterwards by means of a cloth marked with the dove's blood the teacher can be made to return at any time when the magician is alone and sent away when the apprenticeship is finished. It is tolerably plain from this that Scot was attempting to evoke the spirit of Averroës.

The second spell is similar, but not quite so likely to be genuine. It is for conjuring up such spirits as Almuchabzar, Aghizikke, and Baltuzaraz. Their spells must not be imprudently read aloud, for fear that they arrive and destroy the unprepared and involuntary conjurer. These spells are similar to this, the spell for dismissing them:

'Bedarit labyratha Asonta barda Meles kalas hemastar Bemtsstaras Bedarit Eneit elmisistar Almiranthus.'

The true origin of this manuscript and its spells was perhaps given by its owner, the Reverend J. Wood Brown, who wrote a useful book on Michael Scot. He pointed out that the text contains a preface, an Arabic version, and a Latin translation of the Arabic. Now the Arabic is so corrupt as to be untranslatable, and the Latin contains, as spells, an abundance of Arabic words which were perhaps originally designed to help the reader to understand the Arabic handwriting of an earlier manuscript. The illustrations however are strangely reminiscent of the mathematical problems illustrated in Leonardo Pisano's great book *Liber Abbaci.* The title finally is *Almuchabola Absegalim Alkakib Albaon*, alleged to mean in Latin 'Compendium of Unnatural Black Magic'. As it happens however, Almuchabola is the Arabic for 'Algebra'; and Pisano's book was the work by which algebra was introduced to Europe, and the revised edition of which was dedicated to Michael Scot. As Roger Bacon says, 'there are many books commonly reputed to be magical, but have no other fault than discovering the dignity of wisdom'. It may well be, then, that this so-called book of spells was nothing else than a treatise on algebra.

But if Scot's magic mostly dissolves in sand, except for one experiment, so that he cannot with certainty be labelled a magician, yet there is little reason to doubt that he really was one; and had he not lived before the invention of printing we should have known more about his practice. For in later times there are a number of men who can quite certainly be proved to have been magicians.

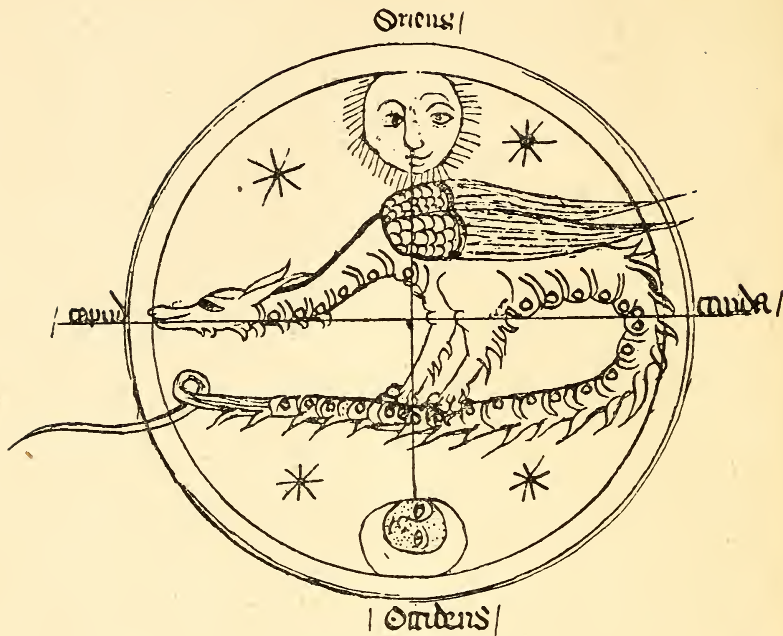


Figure 6. The Dragon

(*from a fourteenth-century manuscript of the Liber Introductorius of Michael Scot, now in the Bodleian Library*)

The Dragon, representing in astrology the Moon's nodes, is often strongly placed in the horoscopes of magicians, and was close to the horizon at the births of Agrippa, Paracelsus, Cardan, Nostradamus, Kelly, and Dee.

CHAPTER VIII

The Secret Arts

At the end of the Middle Ages a belief in magic and the secret arts was as inevitable as a belief in science nowadays. To be an alchemist then was the same thing as to be a physicist now. Supremacy in the intellectual world was then accorded to religion as it now is to science; but the former was notoriously more intolerant of heresy than the latter, and hence it was impossible to write about magic or any occult subject without alleging one's orthodoxy and submission to the official views of the church; and this renders suspect the sincerity of any book on magic written so long ago.

There are many equivocal names which ought to be mentioned in any survey of medieval magic, but it is impossible to tell the truth about them; modern writers who favour magic are inclined to declare them all to have been great magicians, while others prove that various extant magical books have been attributed to them falsely and imagine that they have thus cleared the names of these learned men from a disreputable connection. Of course

they have done nothing of the kind, for such scholars are just as likely as not to have been interested in magic; and there is nothing disreputable in studying part of the learning of one's time.

Petro de Abano, or Peter Apono, bears a great name in magic, and it is possible that he was not a magician at all. But the book *Heptameron* which goes under his name has probably been the means of introducing many young men to magical practices.

Arnald of Villanova cured Pope Boniface VIII of the stone partly by the aid of a leaden seal made in the form of a lion, which was supposed to confer anaesthesia during an operation.

Raymond Lully, known as the 'Illuminated Doctor' and by vocation a missionary to the Mohammedans, is often stated to have been an alchemist, but it is very far from proved.

Dr. Faustus is little more than a morality legend; there is no evidence for a reliable life of him, nor for thinking him a great magician.

The name of Nicholas Flamel is famous as that of an alchemist who was said to have discovered the elixir of life. So dangerous was his secret that he was forced to bribe a doctor and priest to bury wooden images of himself and his wife in a churchyard; and, thus protected by their pretended death, they slipped one after another over the frontier into Switzerland and continued their travels under an altered name. They are even said to be alive to-day.

The astrologer Cecco d'Ascoli denounces magic unequivocally, and yet he frequently quotes from magic

books. The same habit may be found in Albertus Magnus, who was almost a saint and whose example was cited by Trithemius to justify his own studies. Albertus held that the virtues of herbs and stones were due to the influence of the stars and, like Arnald of Villanova, approved the engraving of stones according to the aspect of the sky. He was a great upholder of astrology and probably wrote an important book about it; also at least six works on alchemy bear his name. He was considered to be easily the most learned man of his century, hence his title 'The Great'; but it is noticeable that only in his theological works does he make a distinction in magic between white and black. He is forced, of course, to point out that the Magi of the gospel were good and not bad magicians.

In those days it was the common fate of genius to be accused of magic; and writers have not been wanting who declared that no one would have been more indignant at his own reputation than Roger Bacon. He, they claim, was ahead of his time; he had written a book against magic; he strongly criticized the ignorance of the clergy; he maintained that even heretics and infidels might write the truth, for to discover it experiment was necessary, and the Bible was not the only criterion. For this he was rewarded with fifteen years in prison, a punishment which to most of his contemporaries must have seemed well deserved.

And yet for centuries Roger Bacon was one of the most popular figures in English fiction, his magical deeds being told in verse in innumerable editions of *The History of Frier Bacon* and *The Three Famous Conjurers, Fryer Bacon, Bongey, and Vandermast.* These poems tell us how Bacon and his

companion Friar Bongey wished to make a brazen wall round England to defend it, so they called up the devil and asked for his advice. The devil told them to make a brazen head and watch it day and night and fumigate it, and that it would speak 'one night within three score'. When the time was almost up they became so sleepy that they set Bacon's servant Miles Wagner to watch it; and while they were asleep the head pronounced: 'Time is'. At this Miles swore at the head and declared he would never wake his master for so feeble a remark. Presently the head added: 'Time was'; and Miles retorted that it was an ass if it could not think of anything better to say. At last the head said: 'Time's past' and fell down and was broken in pieces. So Miles was dismissed and became a magician on his own.

In the same books is the story how the emperor of Germany brought his magician Vandermast to England to compete against Bacon and Bongey, and when Vandermast had defeated Bongey, Bacon caused him to be carried away into Germany by the spirit he himself had raised.

Such was the reputation of a man who now passes for one of the fathers of experimental science, and either in self-defence or from conviction had written a book against magic. As an argument of the uselessness of magic Bacon quoted a number of marvels which may be produced by the scientific use of nature's forces—though it might be alleged that that is begging the question, since magic attempts to use those forces of nature of which science is ignorant. However, these marvels of science are as remarkable as 'magic' for a book written about 1270:

'It is possible,' says Bacon, 'to make engines of naviga-

tion which need no men to navigate them, so that very large sea-going ships may go along with one man to steer, and at a greater speed than if they were full of men working them.

'And cars could be made which would move at inestimable speed, without animals to draw them, as it is thought were the scythed chariots in which men fought of old.

'Flying machines can be built, so that a man sitting in the middle of the machine may turn an instrument by which wings artificially made will beat the air, like a bird flying.

'Again one can make an instrument small in size for lifting and lowering many weights, than which nothing is more useful on occasions; for by an instrument three fingers high, and as wide, but not so long, a man could rescue himself and his companions from all bodily peril and go up and go down.

'Instruments can be designed so that enormous things will appear very small, and contrariwise . . . and rays of light may be brought together by various refractions and reflections at any distance we please, until whatever is opposite them is set on fire.

'Sounds like thunder can be made in the air, but more terrifying than those which occur in nature; for an appropriate material in moderate quantity, as big as a man's thumb, makes a horrible noise and shows a violent flash; and this can be done in many ways by which a whole town or army may be destroyed.'

And yet it is impossible to acquit Bacon of the charge of magic. He sent his works to Pope Clement IV by a boy

named John, aged twenty or twenty-one, whom he had taught by his own special method. This method appears to have been the Ars Notoria, or Notory Art, a magical way of training the memory largely by means of prayer as an aid to practice in concentration. To succeed in this the pupil needs rather confidence than brains, and then, says Bacon, he himself will undertake to teach him by word of mouth—for it cannot by any means be done by writing—the Hebrew language in a fortnight so well that he can understand the whole of the scriptures. He can also teach him Greek in a fortnight, geometry in a week, and everything he knows in four years. The indispensable conditions are a diligent and confident pupil, oral instruction, and the preparation beforehand of certain notes by Bacon. What these notes are we are not told, but it seems that they were not merely a text-book; the prayers and the need for confidence accord with magical practice; and not merely magic, but hypnosis, is suggested when Bacon informs the Pope that John does not realize how much he knows because the knowledge has been rather instilled than learnt.

Of course Bacon was an alchemist; he wrote at least two books on the subject. But alchemy was more than the transmutation of metals, and had it been only that it would have been justified; for although scientists cannot now make gold from lead they have proved correct the theory on which the alchemists based their efforts. It was believed in those days—and quite rightly—that all matter was fundamentally one; but also that the differences between various substances were caused by the different proportions in their make-up of the primary qualities disguised

behind the names of Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt. This belief has been discarded, but that all matter is ultimately one has been sufficiently proved by the discovery of the radio-active elements and by man's success in splitting the atom. Though an atom must always be an atom of some particular element, the electrons which compose the atoms are not peculiar to the elements, and if an atom is deprived of one electron it becomes an atom of a different substance. Hence the transformation of one element into another is not contrary to nature, and the only error of the alchemists was in not knowing how it could be done. They had not at their disposal means of measuring radiation and discovering the composition of matter; chemical means were all they had and so by chemical means they attempted to solve the problem. There are even books which state in all good faith that they occasionally succeeded, and not always ancient ones.

The origin of alchemy is still disputed. It is a perfectly logical deduction from the doctrine of the unity of the universe, and a natural belief for an age when miracles and magic were regarded as possible to almost any extent within the skill of the practitioner. Yet it is also possible that the first alchemist, like many of his followers, wanted to grow rich; and having discovered that a coin immersed in a bath of blue vitriol becomes to all appearance a copper coin he may have wondered whether it were possible to change the coin not merely to copper, but to gold, and whether it might not be feasible to change not merely the outside of the coin to gold, but the whole of its substance. And from this impetus of petty crime would have grown

alchemy with all its profuse and intricate literature and its aspiring or obscurantist ideas.

Gold being very scarce in those days it was convenient to have a means of gilding without the expense of solid gold, and in such books as the *Mappae Clavicula*, of the tenth century, are found receipts 'for making gold' which only mean to make an alloy that in decoration will pass for gold. Some of these need a certain amount of gold in the composition, others do not; one for example consists of a hundred parts of copper to seventeen of zinc, with small proportions of quicklime, sal ammoniac, magnesia, and tartar.

But there were at least two classes of alchemists; those who merely wanted to make gold, and those who wanted something else. Concerning the former it is exceedingly rare to find any statement that they succeeded; concerning the latter one cannot tell. In their writings it is absolutely impossible to distinguish one from the other; for all alchemical writings are long and complicated and expressed in purely figurative terms. The union of the salts of copper and silver, for example, is spoken of as the marriage of the red man and the white woman; and there is nothing to show that this may not mean the combination of courage with gentleness, for it was said that no one could bring to perfection the 'great work' of alchemy in the tangible world unless he had perfected it also in his mind, and perfected his mind by means of it. And at that the whole mass of alchemical literature takes on the possibility of a psychological meaning, and becomes perhaps the repository of all that the medieval philosophers knew of the hidden science of psychology. Psychology then was not tolerated by

princes nor encouraged by the church, for it would have explained away people's sins and accounted for the actions of rulers. One must be something of an alchemist to understand what was meant by making the green lion, not only on the physical plane but even more certainly if the meaning is purely spiritual; of only one thing can we be certain, that it was not an apparent lion, though it may possibly have been green.

The same belief in the unity of the universe brought the application of alchemy to other things than gold. Gold was believed to be the most perfect metal, as fitted its correspondence to the Sun, and therefore whatever agent could turn other metals to gold must have a greater power than anything else to make things perfect. And just because gold was the supreme and perfect metal, it followed that the agent capable of perfecting gold must have a supreme and universal application because it was in itself perfect. This therefore was the *aurum potabile*, drinkable gold, which was the same thing as the elixir of life and would have on the human body too the effect of making it perfect, that is, of bestowing health and vitality and prolonging life.

The method of preparing this potable gold was one of the greatest secrets of alchemy. It was a secret for the same reason that any secret is a secret, because nobody knew about it. The alchemists all believed that it could be made, that there was somewhere perhaps a man or a book from whom the formula could be had. And, not knowing where, they spent years and fortunes experimenting. Somewhere the formula for making potable gold may still be found, or perhaps several formulas are hidden in old books; but it

would be a long experiment to describe and intricate to put into practice. For it must not be imagined that potable gold was something to be swallowed down as easily as a patent medicine, and equally certain to cure every disease from mumps to leprosy. The alchemist who drank it would not be suffering from any disease except perhaps old age and the various little imperfections of health that are incidental to a civilized and studious life; for a man who could not even maintain his body in health would not be capable of preserving his mental health to the high degree of exaltation and purity that would be needed for the discovery of so great a secret. Since the universe is one, he that would be perfect in body must be perfect also in mind; and therefore the true philosophic alchemist was very far in spirit from the mere searcher after gold; the philosophical alchemists were great idealists and profoundly religious men.

An interesting sidelight on the nature of alchemy is provided by the story of the alchemist Sehfeld when he was staying in Vienna. His host had often seen him making gold by means of a red powder and other ingredients, though the gold was never used for any selfish purpose; and so one day when Sehfeld was out the other decided to make some gold himself. He accordingly performed the operations, which were not difficult, but nothing happened —until suddenly the alchemist walked into the room, and immediately the experiment began to be successful. Whether all alchemists would have expected this result is open to question, but the story does reveal the magical nature of the experiment, as well as the need of a pure heart to bring it off.

Alchemy in fine was really the most reputable of the secret arts, despite the obscurity of its literature and the avarice—or else poverty—of some of its devotees. It was a natural avocation of magicians, as also was divination, which from time immemorial has been expected of the wise.

Divination is the art of foretelling the future by interpreting either the casual signs of nature or signs magically prepared. In the Roman republic there were special officers appointed to do this. One of them would go up to the top of a hill accompanied by a magistrate, consecrate that part of the ground and sky in which he proposed to observe his auguries, and wait for a sign. Signs in the heavens were thunder and lightning, the flight of birds, and falling stars; signs on the earth were observed in the behaviour of animals and of the sacred chickens.

There are endless varieties of divination, of which the most notorious in ancient times was necromancy and the most popular nowadays is fortune-telling in tea-cups or the hand. In any country the most popular form of divination is likely to be the easiest, and therefore tea-cup fortunes are more popular in England and coffee-cup fortunes in France. In any case there is no reason why either of these methods should correspond to anything. The essence of magic is the achievement of an effect by exciting the powers of imagination, and what may be seen at the bottom of a cup has not the power to impress the imagination very strongly.

The crystal is more plausible, for by continual staring the eyes may become unfocused, and the practitioner

may imagine that he sees things, especially if he happens to be astigmatic.

Another method of divination is coscinomancy, which is done by means of a sieve. A handful of small pebbles may be placed on a sieve and sifted through on to a smooth patch of earth. The resulting configuration will probably look as disconnected as a constellation in the sky, but it must be imagined to resemble something or other, and from that an answer to the question must be deduced. Suppose, for example, that someone about to set out on a journey were to practise coscinomancy and obtain a figure like a camel; the interpretation would obviously be that he would go a long way without having anything to drink. However, the classical method of practising coscinomancy is to balance the sieve on a pair of scissors and judge yes or no from the side on which it falls.

In the same way omens may be taken from anything which appeals to the fancy; but the disadvantage of this method is that it has hardly any exciting effect on the imagination, in fact often none; it is too cold-blooded to succeed. Genuine diviners merely interpret the signs of the times more cleverly than their fellows. The first man who noticed that swallows fly lower before rain passed for a diviner, and probably handed the information to his son as a family secret. Those who would like to be diviners have had to convince themselves that their divining may be true by one of two methods, either by interpreting natural happenings which they believed must have an importance, such as the planets, falling stars, storms, and the croaking of frogs and ravens, or else by creating an

atmosphere to stimulate their imagination and if possible to convince them that they were in communication with superior powers.

Thus the braying of donkeys is said to foretell rain and may be a sign of the weather as much as the signs which the witches quoted in *Macbeth*. But supposing that an ancient diviner had gone out to look for an augury, for some natural sign from heaven to answer his question; and that as soon as he had finished his prayer and pronounced his question a donkey brayed; that braying would be taken as a sign from God and an answer to the question; then, since the animal which spoke was a donkey, the diviner would probably conclude that the question was a stupid one.

When the belief in these signs is possible then the belief in omens is possible too. If a cuckoo flies across the path of a man who is walking to church to be married that is an obvious sign that his wife will deceive him, and some centuries ago it would have sufficed to postpone the wedding if not to cancel it altogether. There are very few people now who believe in omens; modern superstition consists almost entirely in the wearing of lucky charms, such as horse-shoes and white heather, and a few irrational practices such as not walking under ladders even when there is nobody standing on them with a paint-pot or a bucket of water. The fact that even nowadays hardly anyone who spills the salt can be induced to abstain from throwing it over his shoulder does prove that the human mind is still profoundly superstitious and fundamentally inclined to believe in magic and the supernatural. Any attempt to

excuse such acts is merely a way of apologizing for the victory of the subconscious over reason.

The climax of the observation of natural signs is found in those wise men who were said, like Solomon, to understand the language of birds and beasts. This does not mean that when Solomon met a duck he understood its quacking to mean 'Good morning' or 'I'm hungry'; it means that he understood its behaviour as a sign of the times. To understand the language of rooks is to know that when they build their nests very high the summer will be hot.

But if natural signs are unconvincing and do not answer particular questions the diviner must have recourse to unnatural signs, that is to say, his imagination must be focused on some object or means of producing images. A typical object is a piece of wedding-cake, which if put under the pillow is said to produce a dream of the future husband. If one wishes to keep the respect of one's friends it would seem necessary to denounce this tradition as an old wives' tale; but we can be more scientific than that, we can say that, not having tried it, we are not qualified to disprove it. Its origin is plain enough, and not so stupid as the scoffer could wish; for in the small village communities of older times, when a girl must know already all the probable bridegrooms living near, it was quite natural that she should dream of the one who was troubling her subconscious mind the most. Nowadays, when travel has made it easy for people living far apart to meet, such dreams would only indicate the sort of person one hoped or feared to marry. As a form of divination they are therefore entirely useless; they might be considered by the psychologist as a

warning, but the object of divination is to discover for certain things which cannot be known by normal means.

One of the favourite methods of divination is bibliomancy, where to find the answer to any question the Bible, or any great book, is opened blindly and the finger placed on a passage, which must then be interpreted either simply or allegorically. In theory this like all methods of divination should be accompanied by some rite or other, such as burning incense, praying, or exhorting the book to tell the truth in the name of whatever is most sacred. The function of these ceremonies is to shake the natural scepticism of the inquirer.

The most common way of imagining pictures is in the crystal. The easiest way of producing them is in smoke, which is then called capnomancy. But in order to affect the imagination a diviner would do well to have a room set apart, painted all in one colour, whatever colour he thought would suit him most, and before his sittings to burn sweet herbs and fill the room with scent, after which he could hypnotize himself into believing that he saw things in the crystal or in the smoke or in any other medium that he chose. Apart from accidents, his success would never be greater than his faith; and as perfect faith is almost impossible, so also is perfect success in divination.

The modern method of divination by means of letters arranged around a circle is not entirely new. The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus describes a similar method in the confession of one Hilarius who was accused of conspiring against the life of the emperor Valens. The alleged conspiracy was discovered because Valens insti-

tuted a persecution of magicians at Antioch in A.D. 373. The confession of Hilarius runs as follows:

'Most honourable judges, this wretched little table which you see we constructed of laurel twigs and under dreadful auspices to resemble the cauldron at Delphi; and after we had chanted over it secret charms and consecrated it by many long rites and recitations, at length we made it move; and for its movements, whenever we consulted it about secret matters, we arranged as follows; we purified a room with Arabian perfumes in every corner and placed the table in the middle, and on it we simply laid a circular charger made of various metallic substances, round the outer edge of which were the twenty-four letters of the alphabet finely engraved and separated by spaces exactly measured. Then one of us wearing linen garments and shod also in linen socks, with a lock of hair tied round his head and a wand of a fruitful tree in his hand, would propitiate with formulas and charms the deity who is the author of prescience, and with learned ceremony stand over the little tripod balancing a ring which was hung by the thinnest Carpathian thread and had been consecrated with mystic rites, and the ring by leaping towards the separate compartments indicated one letter at a time and so composed heroic verses which fitted our questions and were perfect in scansion, like those which are called Delphic or are given out at the oracle of Branchidae. Then when we asked who would next succeed to the empire, because it had been mentioned that he would be a man of great culture, the ring had swung and spelt out the two syllables—*Theo*—when with the addition of one more letter

at the end, D, one of those present exclaimed that it must of fatal necessity mean Theodorus. So we did not explore the matter any further; for we were satisfied that this was the man we were enquiring about.'

Hilarius alleged that he did not know the Theodorus in question, which is quite possible; the interesting thing is that the emperor who in 379 succeeded Valens was Theodosius.

Of all methods of divining the most impressive is that which combines a powerful effect on the imagination with a belief in the supernatural authority of the answer. This is necromancy. Necromancy meant originally the conjuring up the souls of the dead, and later included the conjuring of all sorts of inhuman spirits such as sylphs, giants, and djinn. To do this a very long and arduous ritual is necessary, for it is one of the hardest tasks of magic.

Having first purified himself, the necromancer must then purify and cense and consecrate to his object the place where the conjuration is to be performed. He will then admit, if he thinks proper, the person on whose behalf he is to conjure the spirit, and will assign to him a limited space in which to stand and perform the dictated orisons. Next he will draw for himself a circle on the floor like the one he has marked around his client and he will ornament it with magic words and symbols and the drawings of a bat and a cat and other nocturnal creatures. It is night, of course, and the only light is from a fire of herbs or from consecrated lamps. Then begins the invocation, which will last for several hours, consisting of endless prayers and reverberating names, and the name of the spirit to be

raised will be called upon perpetually. At last the spirit is supposed to appear and answer. It is easy to say that it would not. In point of fact there is no saying what hallucination might not happen to a man who believed that

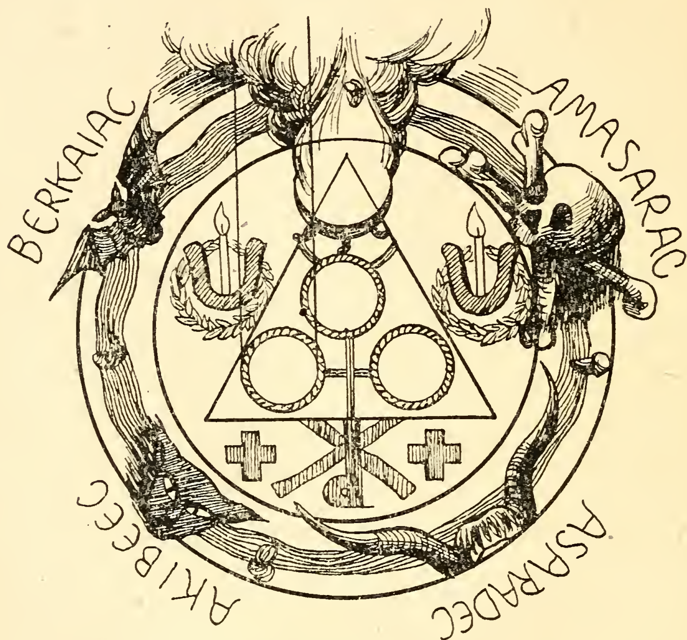


Figure 7. Pentacle used in Necromancy
(*From Eliphas Lévi, Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*)

the dead could return and was wrought up by days of purification and a whole night spent in a consecrated place in a paroxysm of prayer.

The most famous case of necromancy is that of the witch

of Endor, when she called up the spirit of Samuel to speak with Saul. But necromancy has always been a forbidden practice, partly because it was considered sinful to disturb the dead. The other practices of divination sometimes conferred respect, especially in Mohammedan countries, but necromancers, like witches, were always hated and distrusted.

CHAPTER IX

Witchcraft

Little is left of witchcraft nowadays except the simple magic of the countryside. In remote districts women may still be found who know the secret of preparing composts for diseases. Their remedies must be considered magical because they work not simply by the force of what is in them, but chiefly by moral effect; the ingredients are often just such things as the witch could find, and not merely herbs, but things designed to impress the patient by their repulsiveness or rarity. Among the uneducated a nasty medicine is always more respected.

Another widespread superstition was the belief in the evil eye, which is still to be found about the Mediterranean. Among the Egyptian peasants if a person who is reputed to have the evil eye is heard to say: 'What a beautiful camel!' the fellahin expect that the camel will promptly fall and break its leg. Among them, in fact, a witch is supposed to be able to put a curse on a thing by merely looking at it.

In Europe a common practice of witches was thought

to be the putting of blights on crops and cattle; and once the idea gained currency no doubt there were people who attempted to do so, and millions who believed that it could be done. This was always an interference with fertility, and some old woman was sure to be blamed if the crops were eaten by wireworm or the cows became dry and the ewes sterile.

These little practices were only the natural outlet of human spite and credulousness in small communities—the spite of one woman who wanted to make another pass for a witch, and the credulousness of the savage who attributed every happening to the act of some personality, human, divine, or diabolical.

The general tendency of beliefs in witchcraft can best be illustrated by documents of the time, as for example in the story of Madame Bourignon of Lille. About 1661 this woman had opened an orphanage for girls of ages from eight to twenty-two. The strange events which took place in her cloister are related by herself and were published in English by Lord Chief Justice Hale in 1693. 'A young Wench of the Village about Fifteen years of Age,' she says, 'having done some Offence, was to be corrected by being shut up by her self, which the House-keeper by my order did. And after having shut up the said Girl, she took the Key with her, and went out of Doors: but about an Hour after she was gone, the Girl came into the School where the others were at Work, who seeing her coming, turned all Pale; and being asked what made them change their Countenance? They told me that they saw before them at the School door the Girl that had been shut up, whose

Name was *Bellot*; and being bid to come in if she was at the Door, she came up and ask'd me Pardon for her Fault, promising to Amend. I asked her if she had not been shut up by the House-keeper? She said yes. How then came you forth, said I? She held her Tongue for some time; but being pressed to Answer, she said, that a Man had let her out. This I took for Raving, because I knew that no Man, or other Person, could be in the House. In a little time after, when the House-keeper returned from her business Abroad, and saw this Girl at her Work, she was *Astonished*, crying, Who is it that hath opened the door for this Child? I had shut three Doors upon her, and see here the Keys at my Girdle. I went out of the School to inform myself of the House-keeper, if she had really locked up the Doors? she answered me, she had, and going to the Doors, found them all three Lock'd, as she had left them. This thing troubled me, and after Dinner I called the said Girl into my own Chamber, to know of her how she got out of so fast a Place. She said that a Man opened the Door for her. I asked what Man this might be, and if she knew him. Yes, she said she knew him very well, and that he was the Devil. At which I was struck with Horror, saying, The Devil's a Spirit, he is not a Man. Though he be a Spirit, said she, he comes to me in the shape of a Man. I asked her how long she had known this Man-Devil (or Devil of a Man?). She said all the days of her Life: That her Mother had taken her with her when she was very Young, and had even carried her in her arms to the Witches Sabbaths or Assemblies, which were held in the Night; and that being a little Wench, this Man-Devil was then a little Boy too, and grew

up as she did, having been always her Love, and Caressed her Day and Night. I could not comprehend this Discourse, having never hear'd the like in my life.'

Madame Bourignon accordingly sent for three pastors, who interrogated the girl, and made her confess 'Particulars which she could not know unless she had been a Witch, or had studied Books of Magick, which could not be, she beginning then but to learn her Letters, having been but a little while in my House.' The pastors declared that the said Bellot was a witch. 'Not knowing however what sort of Creature a Witch must be, having often thought that Witches were ugly, deformed Creatures, or half Beasts, as they say of them, that they do transform themselves into Cats, Horses, and other Animals; so that I could not believe that this Girl was a Witch, though the three Pastors aforesaid, did assure me of it . . . a little time after a Man came and took her away, saying, that he had Married her Mother, and he would be her Father; and so I never heard more of the said *Bellot*. . . . But three months afterwards we discovered another, which said and did the same things.'

This second girl was one day to have been whipped for stealing, but escaped by declaring that it was the devil who had advised her to steal. She knew him very well, for 'he was a Boy a little bigger than her self; and that he was her Love, and lay with her every night. And that at Ten Years old she had given her Soul to the Devil, renounced God and her Baptism, and received a *Mark* from the Devil upon her Head; which we afterwards found to be true, for that she was insensible in the place where the said Mark

was made; for we stuck a Pin as long as one's little finger into her Head, and she felt no Pain.'

But the second girl's confession led to others until it very soon appeared that every single girl in the orphanage was a witch, and, says poor Madame Bourignon: 'I was mightily perplexed to find my self confined to a House with two and Thirty Creatures, who declared that they had all given their Souls to the Devil. The Maids I had for my assistance went all away, leaving me alone with these wicked Wretches, with whom I was forced to Eat and Drink, at least what they Dressed for me. I held divers Consults with the said three Pastors, what was fit to be done upon such an Occasion. I proposed to dismiss them by degrees; but then I feared I should be guilty of the mischief that they would do among Man-kind, when they were abroad; for they confessed to me, that they had Killed both People and Cattle, which I also afterwards found by Experience, they having killed all of a sudden thirty young Ducks, Cats, Chickens and other Animals about the House in less than two Hours time, which they have often Confessed. Wherefore I could not honestly turn them out, lest I should wrong my Neighbours by sending them Such Persons as these, without giving them Notice; and by advertising of them, none would receive them.'

Poor Madame Bourignon's embarrassment is really pathetic, and it is unfortunate that nothing is known of the later fate of her girls, except one, who went to prison and was no more heard of. It is obvious that they were a set of ragamuffins who knew how to behave in order to be taken for witches. The escape from imprisonment was per-

formed apparently with the aid of a man named St. Saulieu. And although the phenomena were all entirely fraudulent they illustrate perfectly what was expected of witches.

Thomas Vere and W. Gilbertson published in the first week of April 1658 a pamphlet entitled: 'A More Exact RELATION of the most lamentable and horrid Contract which *Lydia Rogers* living in Pump-Ally in *Wapping* made with the Divel, to whom he appeared in the form of a young man with curled black haire and of a Ruddy complexion on the 22 of March, which contract in dismall Characters was written with her own blood. Also how she should have bin carried away by the Divel on Thursday last April the first 1658, but as she herselfe confesseth is engaged for by one Shepheard for a Fortnight. Together with the great paines and prayers of many eminent Divines for her, to whom she hath made her Confession, and of the most desperate raving fits in which she still continueth, to the admiration and terror of all that behold her.'

It appears from the pamphlet that the actual bond had naturally been carried away by the devil, so that nobody saw it; but the woman showed them the prick on her arm from which the blood had been drawn. It was because he promised to find her some money she needed that she had sat up one night with the devil instead of going to bed with her husband. It seems strange that it did not occur to anyone then what a splendid practical joke it would be for a heartless dark young man to play, and what a thrilling adventure, to pass himself off as the devil and induce a woman to sign a contract with him in her own blood; even

if, as here, he does not seem to have lain with her, he would preserve the contract as a secret memento of his daring and adventurous youth.

Another frequent trick of witches, besides giving people nightmares and being seen in places where they were not, was the vomiting up of all sorts of objects which they could never have swallowed. Two excellent cases of this are related in another pamphlet of the same publishers and the same year, one of a girl at Luyck in Germany, who vomited forth wads of straw, iron nails, needles, points, and 'whatsoever she had seen in the basket of the witch who did bewitch her', even to 'four rowes of pins stuck in a blew paper whole and fresh, as if they had bin newly bought at the Haberdashers shop.' This girl allowed the narrator to 'put my right hand into her mouth, and with my fingers in her throat I did take out a needle with thread, points and straw and other things, which I still preserve to satisfy the curious. Being sent afterwards to severall places but to no effect, she was returned to me again in a sad condition, not only loathing wine and beere, but bread and all manner of meat; for forty dayes together she lived onely on Grapes, Almonds, and Apples, and the cold fruits of Autumn; neither did the rose fall from her cheek nor the Lilly wither from her brow.

'At the last for fifteene dayes together she would take no sustenance at all, how she could live so long without any food I must confesse I cannot tell, but that she did doe it, both I and my servants are ready to take the greatest and most obliging Oath that can be propounded to us.'

This girl ran no risk, for she was supposed to be be-

witched and was accordingly only pitied, until she was finally cured by an ointment made of the fat of a young dog, a bear, and a capon, and 'three stems of the green and correll Tree'.

Much more dangerous to the victims was the performance which actually took place in court at the York assizes in 1658. 'At the Assizes this last Lent at the City of *York*, there were some old women Arraigned for witches. The chiefest Evidences that came against them, were two young women, who being brought before ye Judges, did both of them fall into wonderfull fits; at the first time they were troubled with this strange visitation, it seemed to be convulsion fits, but the possessing disease growing by degrees upon them they began at last with great violence to cry out upon the gripings which tormented them, and swounding away they did vomit wooll, and crooked pins, and hafts of knives, one whereof being of Marble made a great noyse by reason of ye weight of it; as it fell upon the floore. The Judges desired to see it, and it was brought unto them amongst many other things which these young women vomited.

'The Jury being satisfied with the evidence and some other Indictments, did cast the Witches who made these women to cast so lamentably. But the Judges were not throughly satisfied, and therefore they thought it requisite to give some respite of time for a more deliberate determination, being uncertain whether this wonderfull Vomite proceeded from the Divel, or whether it were some artificiall combinnation of the two women to impose upon the Judges, and the Court.'

The danger to magicians from the hatred of their neighbours was often cancelled because they were despised as frauds. Witches never had this advantage; no witch was ever regarded as a fraud. In fact so seriously did men take the scriptural injunction 'ye shall not suffer a witch to live' that it was very much safer to be an old man than an old woman. Year after year thousands of women were burnt to death, and there cannot be the least doubt that most of them were entirely innocent. Yet those who dared to suggest in print that witchcraft was mostly imagination and not a menace to the community were very few and quickly unpopular.

The central fact and problem of the belief in witches is the tradition of the Sabbat. It used to be said that the witches met together at night, not usually Saturday or Sunday, but often Friday, and more especially on the great feasts of the Church, except Christmas and Pentecost. Their meeting-place would be a house, a church, some uninhabited dwelling, or a large meadow or open space, often quite near the village, and if possible provided with water. To get there they were said to fly through the air, sometimes on broomsticks or on a goat, and sometimes without that assistance, or perhaps a black man would come and fetch them; and before going they would anoint themselves all over with a special unguent, which either had the effect of helping them to fly, especially the young and inexperienced, or else was supposed to toughen their skin for the embraces of the devil.

Once at the meeting-place they had an enormous banquet which could last all night, for the devil made sure

that, to increase their pleasure, their hunger was never satisfied. There would be dances, in which they danced backwards or back to back with each other and with the devil, and everything would be done to blaspheme the Christian sacraments. For this purpose the eucharist was stolen from churches, the black mass was said as a ritual parody, and the devil was invoked as being better than God. Very frequently an unbaptized infant was sacrificed. After this there were unbridled sexual orgies of every possible kind until cockcrow. The whole thing was alleged to be as blasphemous and revolting as possible.

Descriptions of the witches' sabbat and the black mass may be found in every detail from the still extant confessions of executed witches. There is not the least doubt that three hundred years ago and more belief in the witches' sabbat was universal; and it is even said that the black mass is celebrated to this day. If it is, it is not a thing that any normal person need pay any attention to; it cannot be dangerous except to those who believe in it. What is interesting is how such an extraordinary story came into existence, to be believed in, and finally to be practised by such notorious persons as Madame de Montespan, the mistress of Louis XIV.

The sabbat plainly consists of two elements, sexual indulgence and blasphemy. As regards the former, in the days when people could not even read to distract their minds, it was inevitable that those whose sexual desires were very strong should spend a good deal of time in dreaming of satisfaction. In the night, when all phantasmagoria seem possible, a few of the most imaginative

women, especially the hysterical and the half-witted, stirred up by a sermon about the fires of hell, might easily work themselves up to a state of excitement which made them think that they were being tormented by the devil; and at last they might pray to the devil to give them that sexual satisfaction which God had despite their incessant prayers withheld. And then one night, not able to bear her virginity any longer, a woman would slip out, and if she found a man she would certainly believe that the devil had answered her prayers. For in those days, when the men were often away on crusades or killed in battle or set apart in monasteries, God and the devil were quite real persons to everybody and people believed that the devil might appear at any time anywhere, even from under their pillow. And so a woman who had found that the devil answered her prayer would become a grateful worshipper of the devil and call on him instead of God. Thus what might have been in a less benighted age no more than a secret love-affair was magnified and distorted by the imagination of the authorities who attempted to suppress it, until it became a case of devil-worship and the victim was liable to be burnt at the stake.

The blasphemies which accompanied the sabbat are perhaps explained in origin by the suggestive fact that the orgy was always held at night and that the celebrants had to be home before early mass. The fact that the sabbat ended at cockcrow suggests a psychological explanation. To an uneducated imaginative person who lived in a world where devils and spirits were everywhere it was no pleasant thing to lie awake in the dark. Cockcrow meant deliver-

ance from nightmare and the fear of the devil because the day was at hand, or alternatively the end of those tossing restless dreams of a tall dark man whom the priest declared to be the devil but who was really a most desirable lover.

When Christianity installed itself in Europe it suppressed as far as it could the previous religions, often ruthlessly. If people went to a nocturnal ceremony and had to be back before early mass it suggests that they were expected to attend that mass, the very mass which in the night they had blasphemed and parodied. It seems possible therefore that what they had really been attending was a clandestine celebration of the rites of the old religion which Christianity had superseded. It is notorious as a matter of history that when a new religion is imposed instead of the old, the gods of the old will be either accepted by the new religion or else degraded to the rank of demons and worshipped in secret. This then might be the origin of the black mass, in which the people expressed their pagan feelings by mocking at the religion which their political rulers had forced them to accept.

The question was often mooted in the Middle Ages whether the witches actually went to the sabbat in the flesh or only in their imagination. There are cases on record where on waking from cataleptic trances they declared very circumstantially that they had been at the sabbat. But it is probable that some of them went on foot or on horseback to a place where they could hold secret orgies with men, and that there was nothing blasphemous intended until by the persecution of the church the wo-

men's hatred was aroused. The genuine black mass both was and is exceedingly rare, and would never have grown to be so notorious if the Church had not spent so vast a deal of time and energy in instigating and practising the persecution as witches of people who as a rule were entirely harmless. For the black mass is only an abuse of the doctrines of the Church of Rome; the celebrant must be a convinced and sincere believer in the Roman dogma of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist, otherwise the central blasphemy of trampling upon the consecrated wafer becomes no blasphemy but merely a piece of silly rudeness.

But the mass, the casting of spells and the witches' sabbat were not the only manifestations of witchcraft. Witches were supposed to be capable of all sorts of marvellous doings, such as flying instantly from place to place, opening doors without keys, and putting people under enchantments, so that they became ill or their prosperity was lost. Whatever witches are supposed to have done, they can invariably be found to have confessed on many occasions; and consequently it has been often discussed whether the stories told in these confessions are ever true, and if not why they were told.

The answer probably is that a great deal must be attributed to the imagination of hysterical or half-witted women overwrought by a judicial procedure of which they were terrified. Those things which physically could be done undoubtedly have been done at times, such as nocturnal orgies and the celebration of the black mass. Things such as blighting of cattle were universally credited and so must have been attempted; but not once in a hundred of

all the times that they were alleged. The supposition that every witch had a mark which the devil put upon her was either invented by the Church, or else was a natural superstition; for it was hard to believe that people who worshipped the devil could be just like everyone else.

What is most difficult for the modern mind to swallow is the established fact that women accused themselves of witchcraft and thereby incurred the penalty of being burnt to death. Violent death, of course, was much more common in the Middle Ages, and in consequence people did not value their lives as they do to-day. But the only rational explanation seems to be that they were browbeaten and tortured and terrified until they were ready to confess to anything; but the torture which preceded the evidence, being the normal procedure when dealing with witches, would not always be mentioned in the report.

The attitude of authority to witches may be gathered from the famous, or infamous, book *Malleus Maleficarum*, originally produced by a couple of inquisitors about 1483 as a guide for dealing with witches and other heretics. Under Part III, Question IV, we read: 'Note that excommunicate persons, also participants and associates in the crime, also persons of ill repute, or criminals, and servants testifying against their masters, are admitted to the action to give evidence in any cause concerning the faith. Also as a heretic is allowed to testify against a heretic, so may a witch against a witch, but only in default of other proofs, and always for the prosecution, never for the defence. So great is the plague of heresy that in such a case even servants are admitted to testify against their masters

and any criminal or notorious evildoer is allowed to give evidence against any person whatsoever.'

It would be unfair to expect the church to be reasonable about witches, for witchcraft was inextricably mixed up with heresy, and heresy strikes at the very life of the Church. This explains why any evidence whatsoever was eagerly accepted against a witch (except that of a person who had already attempted to murder her), and why, as Reginald Scot quoted from Bodin: 'there must be great persuasions used to all men, women, and children, to accuse old women of witchcraft'; why in fact any method of conviction was good enough for the ecclesiastical authorities.

In its fanatical hatred of witches the inquisition would have been quite capable of using the argument advanced by one 'F.G. a Member of the Royal Society' (actually the Reverend Glanvill, a minister of Bath) in a letter on witches written in 1667: 'But to this *Objection* I return (1) in the general. The more *absurd* and *unaccountable* these actions *seem*, the greater *confirmations* are they to me of the *truth* of those *Relations*, and the *reality* of what the *Objectors* would destroy. For these circumstances being exceedingly *unlikely*, judging by the measures of common belief, 'tis the greater probability they are not *fictitious*. For the *contrivers* of *Fictions* use to form them as near as they can conformably to the most *unsuspected realities*, endeavouring to make them look as *like truth* as is possible in the main *supposals*, though withal they make them Strange in the circumstance.'

As an argument it must be admitted this is a *tour de force*.

To sum up, it is a matter of history that the black mass

was celebrated by Mme. de Montespan as a magical means to obtain the favour of the king. On that occasion an unchristened infant was sacrificed. There have been similar performances, but whether they had their origin in the imagination of heresy-hunters or in a secret pagan revolt against Christianity will probably never be known.

That the sabbat was practised too there can be little doubt, though as a rule it was probably not a blasphemous but a sexual orgy. Contrary to what the witch-hunters would have us believe, it was neither common nor anything supernatural. The belief that witches rode through the air on broomsticks probably arose because someone had seen them at the sabbat dancing and making great leaps with broomsticks between their legs.

The real function of the ointment which they used is not very far to seek. Professor A. J. Clark conjectured that it might produce a kind of delirium, but the best explanation is that of a certain magician named Abraham the Jew, writing in 1458. The translation is by S. L. M. Mathers. 'At Linz,' Abraham declares, 'I worked with a young woman, who one evening invited me to go with her, assuring me that without any risk she would conduct me to a place where I greatly desired to find myself. I allowed myself to be persuaded by her promises. She then gave unto me an ointment, with which I rubbed the principal pulses of my feet and hands; the which she did also; and at first it appeared to me that I was flying in the air in the place which I wished, and which I had in no way mentioned to her.

'I pass over in silence and out of respect, that which I

saw, which was admirable, and appearing to myself to have remained there a long while, I felt as if I were just awakening from a profound sleep, and I had great pain in my head and deep melancholy. I turned round and saw that she was seated at my side. She began to recount to me what she had seen, but that which I had seen was entirely different. I was, however, much astonished, because it appeared to me as if I had been really and corporeally in the place, and there in reality to have seen that which had happened. However, I asked her one day to go alone to that same place, and to bring me back news of a friend whom (*sic*) I knew for certain was distant 200 leagues. She promised to do so in the space of an hour. She rubbed herself with the same unguent, and I was very expectant to see her fly away; but she fell to the ground and remained there about three hours as if she were dead, so that I began to think that she was really dead. At last she began to stir like a person who is waking, then she rose to an upright position, and with much pleasure began to give me the account of her expedition, saying that she had been in the place where my friend was, and all that he was doing; the which was entirely contrary to his profession. Whence I concluded that what she had just told me was a simple dream, and that this unguent was a causer of a phantastic sleep; whereon she confessed to me that this unguent had been given to her by the Devil.'

CHAPTER X

Cornelius Agrippa

If Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim had been told at the age of twenty-three that he would go down to history as a magician he would most likely have been delighted; if he had been told so at forty-five he would have been perhaps content; but if he had been told so at the end of his life he would almost certainly have regretted it. For it was at the age of twenty-three that he wrote his famous book on magic; not till the age of forty-five did he publish it, with an apologetic preface; and he lived long enough to discover that, whatever the advantages of practising magic, the reputation of a magician is an exceedingly inconvenient one.

The story of his life is the story of a temperament which was always getting its owner into scrapes; and the mere fact that he was a magician has sufficed to surround his adventures with such an atmosphere of mystery that most of his doings are uncertain and problematic. Even his name is a matter of dispute. Some biographers say that he came of the ancient and illustrious family von Nettesheim,

while others declare that he was born mere Henry Cornelis, that he later took the name von Nettesheim in order to provide himself with an appearance of noble birth, and that Agrippa was a nickname he obtained as an undergraduate at the university of Paris, bestowed because he came from the city of Colonia Agrippina or Cologne.

In this confusion it is a little surprising that his birth date should be known; he was born at Nettesheim, near Cologne, on 14th September (Old Style) 1486 at 15.24 p.m. local apparent time, which according to the more modern style of reckoning corresponds to 3.16 a.m. local mean time on the following day. His nativity shows the Dragon's Tail exactly rising in the beginning of Virgo, the Sun on the threshold of Libra, and both Sun and Ascendant closely in aspect to a conjunction of Uranus and Jupiter. His nature was accordingly quick, self-willed, and changeable, irresistibly attracted to everything new and strange, bound to follow his own path regardless of any resistance or any consequence. He was sometimes abrupt, often satirical, and almost invariably imprudent. At the same time he was genuinely affectionate and blessed with a sense of humour, not a mere adventurer but an intelligent man who could not avoid adventures. Even his enemies have never attempted to deny either his learning or his brilliance.

Like many Virgo people he does not seem to have been striking in appearance. He was very short, with a squarish face, an angular forehead, a straight and rather projecting nose, and thoughtful intellectual eyes. His manner, however, must have drawn attention to him in any assembly;

for he was somewhat vain and undoubtedly unconventional. Yet his personality was not without charm, for he succeeded in obtaining official appointments without any particular qualification or connections to help him; and he married three wives and was happy with two of them. This accords with the Moon in Aries exactly trine to Venus, bestowing charm but lack of forethought, and also in aspect of Mars, Mercury, Pluto, and Neptune, giving the tendency to wit and satire.

It is improbable that he ever intended to make magic his vocation; it is improbable in fact that he ever was very certain what his vocation ought to be. He pursued whatever intrigued him, and if he had only had the prudence to keep to himself his magical writings he might have ended his life more happily and at a later age than forty-nine. The beginning of magic he may have imbibed at his father's house, where he certainly learnt astrology; and after becoming a master of arts at Cologne he went on to Paris, and there, at the very suitable age of twenty-one, fell in with a group of students who were pursuing the occult sciences. He is supposed to have taken here the degrees of doctor of Civil and also of Canon law, and doctor of medicine; but this triple doctorate has been a little too much for the credulity of some of his biographers, who have asserted that these degrees, like his membership of an order of knighthood and his escape from a beleaguered tower in Spain, were merely the offspring of vanity and imagination.

But it is always a mistake to let incredulity run too far. Incredulity is merely the obverse of credulity, and both

extremes show an equal absence of judgement. The Spanish adventure is vouched for by Agrippa's letters to his personal friend Landulph, and it is a little difficult to see why, or even how, he should expect to deceive with an invented story one of his own companions and colleagues in the journey to Catalonia.

The object of the expedition nobody knows; but, once committed to it, Agrippa seems to have felt himself as uneasy as the inventor of a bullet-proof jacket when asked to stand up to a firing squad. However, it was too late to withdraw, so reluctantly he joined his friends in Spain and it seems that by some stratagem they did succeed in capturing the citadel of some peasants who had revolted against their feudal lord. So far, then, what had begun as a mere students' lark was entirely successful; but it did not bring any reward, in fact the reverse. Agrippa, who had no confidence in the favour of King Ferdinand and asked no more than to be allowed to go home in peace, was separated from Landulph and left at the castle of his friend Juanetin at Villarodona, surrounded by peasants furious at the fall of their citadel and knowing quite well that he was to blame for it.

After some days Juanetin set out for Barcelona, hoping to meet Landulph, who had been to France and was now returning. He was to be back at Villarodona on St. John the Baptist's day, and a feast had been arranged to greet his return. But in the middle of the night before he was due a message arrived with the news that he had never reached Barcelona, but had been bound hand and foot and carried off into the mountains by the infuriated peas-

antry. At this Agrippa and his companions were alarmed, and since their own castle was too ruined to be defensible they slipped away before dawn to an old tower three miles distant. They were none too soon. In the early morning the peasants assembled with scaling ladders and axes and the home of Juanetin was entirely sacked. But the insurgents were not long in discovering the hiding-place of their enemy, and when they found the tower impregnable, settled down to besiege it. The abbot of the nearby monastery of St. George attempted to plead with the besiegers, but they would not listen, and so Agrippa and his friends remained shut up for a month and a half. At last, however, one of the party named Perotti, a Franciscan monk, succeeded in climbing over the mountain behind the tower by an abandoned path between the rocks, and found a lake about four miles long which extended to the walls of the abbey. The next day accordingly Agrippa took the son of the peasant who lived in the tower, darkened his face and hands and disguised him as a leprous beggar with a bell and a letter contained in a hollow stick, and sent him to arrange with the abbot for a boat to meet them across the lake. This stratagem succeeded; the boy returned safely, and when Perotti led Agrippa and the others over the secret mountain path they were met by two of the abbot's boats, each flying a red bonnet from the masthead as a signal for recognition. This escape was so unexpected that it seemed almost marvellous.

In the monastery Agrippa remained a month, and then set out for Barcelona with his faithful servant Stephen and an old man who had been an interpreter in the Turkish

galleys. They came safely by Majorca, Sardinia, Naples and Leghorn to Avignon, where Agrippa heard more of his confederates. What became of Juanetin is not known; if the peasants killed him it was probably no more than he deserved, for he appears to have behaved towards them in a very tyrannical and disloyal way; the others grew more respectable with age and became, perhaps, well known as canons or professors. Only Agrippa was always unable to settle down.

His learning was already famous at the age of twenty-three, and some friends persuaded him to come to Dole, a chief town of Burgundy, in the summer of 1509 and deliver a series of lectures. He accepted, and chose for his subject a famous theological book entitled *The Mirific Word*, by Johannes Reuchlin. It was a work which certainly needed explanation; for, in the form of a dialogue, it was an adaptation to Christian theology of the occult and theosophical side of Hebrew literature. There were many chapters devoted to the interpretation of the names of God, particularly the 'Tetragrammaton', יהוה, and to the cabalistic interpretation of other names by which each letter is made to stand for a numeral or else is considered to be the initial of some other word—in much the same way that IHS, which is a form of the Greek abbreviated spelling of 'Jesus', was made to stand for Iesus Hominum Salvator, Jesus Saviour of Mankind.

Agrippa's lectures were so learned and so successful that the university of Dole made him an honorary doctor of divinity. The subject however did not redound to his advantage. Reuchlin was neither a magician nor a heretic,

but cabalistic theology being based on the Hebrew alphabet went back to Hebrew and therefore unchristian sources; and so, even apart from the fact that the Tetragrammaton is a word of great importance in magic, here was a handle for Agrippa's enemies, who later spoke of his lectures on the *Mirific Word* as if they had been a discourse on black magic.

For a time Agrippa was very popular at Dole, and tried to obtain the favour of the ruling Princess Margaret of Austria by writing a treatise entitled *Oration upon the Nobility and Pre-eminence of the Feminine Sex.* It was at the same age of twenty-three that he wrote his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* and sent them to his friend the abbot Trithemius. Trithemius admired their learning but warned Agrippa not to publish them; and for twenty-two years the warning was heeded.

But it did not need the accusation of magic to remove Agrippa from Dole. At Easter 1510 he was denounced in Ghent for a hebraising heretic, and before no less a person than Margaret Duchess of Burgundy and patroness of Dole. Instantly he lost all favour there, left, and is next heard of in London, where he studied St. Paul's epistles under Dean Colet and wrote a very biting reply to Catilinet, the odious friar whose uncharitable sermons had driven him away from Dole. He did not stay long in London however, and though he went there, as he says, on very secret business, it may have been something to do with magic and not after all a confidential mission to Henry VIII from the emperor Maximilian. Before the year was out he was back in Cologne delivering lectures

on divinity, and in 1511 he went to north Italy with the emperor's army and stayed there seven years. He was occupied, however, with writing and study much more than with arms, and was delivering lectures in Pavia until the French victory at Marignano deprived him of his audiences.

The university of Pavia being dispersed, Agrippa went about seeking employment from various noble patrons, and sometimes finding it; but it was not until February 1518 that he obtained a permanent post as public orator and advocate to the free city of Metz. This did not entirely qualify him to take part in theological disputes or to practice medicine; but he did both, and in doing so had a couple of adventures which gravely damaged his popularity.

There was a current legend that St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, had had three daughters, each called Mary, by three different husbands. Agrippa thought this legend unfounded and unpleasant, and when he said so was called upon to defend his opinion in public controversy. Defend it he did in the most eloquent of diatribes, but not without being condemned in the pulpit by three of the most ferocious Dominican preachers in the city, or without finding himself accused of a dangerous sympathy for the ideas of Luther.

At the same time he had a clash with the inquisitor Nicolas Savin, a man as full of vice as he was empty of knowledge, and one whose love of cruelty would have made him the ideal inquisitor had he only been clever.

Some drunken countrymen one night arrested a girl because her mother had been burnt as a witch, and threw

her into a prison of their own devising. The authorities carried her off to Metz and began to prosecute her by both civil law and the inquisition at one and the same time. Agrippa took up her defence with electrifying energy, denounced the inquisitor's presence on the bench, refuted the theological arguments, and demonstrated the total absence of evidence. Four of the eight accusers had been ruled out of court already as notorious blackguards, but both judge and inquisitor had been bribed, and against bribery arguments are vain. The poor woman was put to the torture until the sight of her agony drove the judge from the chamber.

Then, fortunately, the judge fell ill, and, the sight of the unjustly tortured woman very naturally haunting him on his deathbed, he declared his belief in her innocence. This admission became known, and Agrippa wrote to the succeeding judge a letter which demonstrated irrefutably that the inquisitor's position was both unchristian and untenable; and in the end the chapter ordered the release of the victim, while the inquisitor became an object of public aversion. In this affair Agrippa was certainly pleased at his skill in manipulating the law, but even those who are most ready to accuse him of exaggeration and charlatanism and vanity have never been able to deny that he acted with great skill and complete fearlessness and that he sacrificed his career for the sake of this peasant woman whom he did not know. For as soon as she was released he resigned his offices and departed from Metz, pursued by the curses of more than half the clergy and denounced as a Lutheran.

There happens to have come down to us a contemporary description of Agrippa by an inhabitant of Metz, one Philippe de Vigneulles. Under the date of 1521 he says: 'About this time one named master Martin Luther, German, doctor and heretic, monk of the order of the Augustine brothers, made and composed several great and marvellous writings, printed and published by Christian people, touching certain articles of our faith and the holy sacraments, and also the governors and supporters of Holy Church; whom many great clerks and doctors followed, and others not. Among whom, of those who followed him, was a young man of Cologne, marvellously learned and little of stature, named Master Agrippa, who in his time had been about the world, and spoke every language, and had studied in every science; and this Master Agrippa had been in the year 1519 in the pay of the city of Metz; and had a wife native of Pavia in Lombardy, the most charming and the most varied in dress that ever was seen in this country. And this Master Agrippa was frequently in the company of Master Jehan, vicar of Holy Cross, who was a great clerk, and one would say he was somewhat of his opinion. For these reasons the Preaching brothers of the aforesaid city made disputes and held several arguments in public and in the middle of their church, thinking to catch the said Master Agrippa. But he took leave of the city and departed the same day that these discussions were held.'

In point of fact Agrippa never professed to follow the Reformation, and if he left Metz on the day of a public debate it may well have been the debate on the three

husbands of Saint Anne, which took place at the very time when his father's death made it necessary for him to go to Cologne. However that may be, it is certain that he found himself with his way to make all over again at the age of thirty-four. He went to Cologne, but after a year in that intolerant town his wife died and he withdrew to Geneva, where he practised medicine, became known as a friend of the Reformation, and married again. After three years of uncertain living the Swiss town of Fribourg appointed him to be its official physician, and here he was very well off apart from the fact that the town was as implacably opposed to the Reformation as was Metz; but since his reputation was stronger than the enmity of monks, he accepted in 1524 the office of physician to the dowager queen of France—unfortunately as it turned out, for he was consulted as an astrologer, which he did not like, his salary was not paid him, and in the end he went off disgusted by the infidelity of women and queens.

To console himself he wrote a volume entitled *An Oration on the Uncertainty and Vanity of Sciences and Arts and on the Excellence of the Word of God.* At the same time he said in a letter: 'I am writing now on Pyromachy, and not so much writing as experimenting, and I have now at my house buildings and models of machines of war, invented by me, and constructed at no little cost; they are both useful and deadly, such as this age has not yet seen.'

The *Oration on the Vanity of Sciences* was a satirical work, and therefore naturally did not make for its author any new friends. But Agrippa was too intelligent a man seriously to attack the sciences as such; he attacked scholas-

ticism and bigotry, the spirit which judged all culture by its relevance to the Bible and had condemned his lectures on the Cabbala because Hebrew learning was not Christian. He complains for example that those who have studied the art of reasoning never argue or convince each other, that historians write to expound their prejudices and grammarians cannot even decide how many parts of speech there are; and later on he rather tactlessly denounces the worship of images as idolatry, and declares that the art of domestic economy in royal courts is that of assisting the adulteries of the courtiers. In his peroration, however, he makes it plain that what he had at heart was the cleansing of the church from the tyranny of bigoted men and the return to a more simple and honest attitude in life and religion.

On leaving Lyons he tried to go to the Low Countries, but was forced to remain six months in an inn because the Duke of Vendôme withheld his passport. Finally he crossed the frontier alone without a passport and left his family to be brought after him. When they arrived he settled down in comfort, but not for long; first his wife was carried off by the plague, then he was prevented from practising medicine by the jealousy of the local doctors, who refused to recognize his somewhat irregular qualifications. He obtained, changing his profession once more, the post of historiographer to Margaret of Austria, but in the following year published his treatise on the vanity of arts and sciences, which very naturally offended both the clergy and the emperor. Agrippa's incurable fault was always imprudence, and a few months later, in 1531, he made the

mistake of publishing the first book of his *Occult Philosophy* —in other words, a book on magic. Magic has always been condemned by the churches because of its alleged connection with evil spirits and because it trespassed upon the ground of miracles and the supernatural which they considered reserved to themselves; and in consequence Agrippa very soon was not only attacked by the clergy, but thrown into jail for debt—which was the fault of the emperor, who did not pay him his salary.

Agrippa does not really write as a practising magician but as a student and collector of occult lore, and he professes, with a sincerity which did not convince his enemies, to be a faithful follower of the church. The first chapter of the third book is entitled 'Of the Necessity of Virtue and the Utility of Religion'. He explains the workings of magic in these words: 'The spirit of man has the power to change, to attract, to prohibit and to bind things and men at his will. All things obey him when he is carried to a great excess of dynamic passion, and the source of this power is a strong and determined will put into harmony with the celestial order.' He adds very wisely: 'I confess that there are many very vain things and curious prodigies taught for the sake of ostentation in books of magic; cast them aside as emptiness, but do not refuse to know their causes.'

He often tells what has been done in the past, but does not profess to believe it, or give the appropriate formula for learning to do it in the future. Of amulets, for example, he says: 'Of these things very large volumes have been written by the ancient wise men, so that there is no need to declare them here, notwithstanding I will recite a few

of them; for they made, for the operations of Saturn, Saturn ascending in a stone which is called the loadstone, the image of a man having the countenance of an hart, and camel's feet, and sitting upon a chair or a dragon, holding in his right hand a scythe, in his left hand a dart: which image they did hope would be profitable for prolongation of life; for Albumasar in his book *Sadar* proveth that Saturn conduceth to the prolongation of life.' It was absolutely essential, of course, that this amulet should be constructed and first worn when Saturn was well configurated in the sky; for to wear an image of Saturn made when Saturn in the sky was ill conditioned would bring on the wearer all the curses of Saturn instead of the blessings, in fact poverty and disgrace instead of prudence and long life. So necessary is astrology to magic; though magic is not by any means a part of astrology.

Agrippa's explanation of the working of amulets and other magical devices is as follows: 'When the soul of the world by its virtue impregnates all things that are generated naturally or made artificially, by infusing into them celestial properties to certain wonderful effects which they produce, then the things themselves not only when they are applied by means of suffumigations or tinctures or unguents or potions, or in any such way, but also when they are conveniently rolled up and tied on, or hung from the neck or in some other way attached or brought near with the lightest contact, they impress their virtue on us; and so by these tyings-on, suspensions, rollings-up and contacts, the accidents affecting body and soul are changed to sickness, to health, to courage, to timidity, to sadness, to

gaiety, and so on; and they render those that wear them amiable or disagreeable, popular or disliked, honoured and loved or hated and abominable.'

The principle of this is that an incantation cannot work unless physical contact be established between the person to be affected and the object over which the charm has been recited; and obviously if the victim is unwilling to be treated with any potion or unguent or amulet it may still be possible to reach him by saying the spell over a composition specially made and then burning it at such a time and place that he cannot prevent the smoke of it from going into his nostrils. This is the method of binding or ensorcelling a man by fumigation, and since all magical operations must take place under the dominance of appropriate planets, Agrippa gives seven compositions for fumigation, one for each of the known planets. The fumigation of the Moon, which should of course be performed on a Monday or at least in the planetary hour of the Moon, and which would be designed to affect a man's popularity or his domestic life, is to be made with 'the dried head of a frog, the eyes of a bull, the seed of a white poppy with incense and camphor, which shall be incorporated with the blood of a goose'. Among all the seven composts this is quite the easiest set of ingredients to obtain.

One of the most useful performances of magic, if it could really be brought off, would be in the department of 'bindings'. This consists of 'binding men into love or hatred, sickness or health, and such like. Also the binding of thieves and robbers, that they cannot steal in any place; the binding of Merchants, that they cannot buy or sell in

any place; the binding of an army, that they cannot pass over any bound; the binding of ships, that no winds, though never so strong, shall be able to carry them out of the Haven. Also the binding of a mill, that it can by no force whatsoever be turned round; the binding of the earth, that it cannot bring forth fruit'; the binding of fire that it cannot burn, of dogs, that they cannot bark, of birds and beasts that they cannot run away and of lightning that it can do no harm. These bindings can be performed by potions, unguents, fumigations, by numbers, words, names and imprecation, by hanging up of things, by charms, 'by strong imaginations and passions' and 'by divers superstitions and observances'.

The origin of these practices is simply the very natural belief that almost anything can be done if only you know how to do it. The binding of lightning, for example, may be achieved quite easily by means of a lightning-conductor, which before it became habitual was sheer magic.

Fascination Agrippa explains as due to the emission of rays from the eyes; and certainly there is and always will be in looks a certain power which no amount of explanation can take away and which accordingly, like everything else inexplicable, was associated with magic.

Agrippa also explains the effects of magic by the power of the passions of the mind, much as we try to do to-day when we are confronted with apparent miracles and do not feel able, however willing, to contradict the evidence. For the passions of the mind affect the body, as fear induces cold, anger heat, and anxiety dryness; great love stirs up the liver and exasperation the bile. By imitation other

people may be affected. 'He who sees another yawn, yawns also'; the teeth may be set on edge because we see a friend eat something acid, and 'many at the sight of man's blood fall into a swoon'. 'To this,' says Agrippa, 'may be referred the stigmata of St. Francis, which he received whilst he did wonderfully meditate upon the wounds of Christ.' This in fact is where magic and miracles meet; both can be effective only through the power of the mind, but the difference is that miracles are attributed to a passionate conviction and belief in God but magic to an equally passionate belief in something else.

Agrippa's work *On Occult Philosophy* is not by any means a handbook of practical magic, for he never gives the text of any spells; on the other hand his favourite pupil Johann Wier, who did his best to rehabilitate Agrippa's memory, wrote a book, *Of the Ensorcellments of Demons*, which condemns magic in no uncertain terms, but at the same time not only describes many cases of possession by devils, chiefly of girls at adolescence, but also gives in detail a good number of magical procedures. He points out that 'bindings' had been used by many physicians of the highest repute, and describes possessed women as vomiting in their seizures all sorts of objects which could never have passed down their throats, such as enormous keys and long sharp needles; but he says of these keys and needles and long curved nails, 'if you preserve these substances two or three days, or five days, as I have studiously had certain others preserved, you will see that they become entirely liquid and their shapes are totally lost'. This account does not agree at all with that mentioned in the previous chapter.

The miracles which to this day are reported from Arabia and the East we attribute to hypnotism, and that is precisely the explanation given by Wier, more than two centuries before Mesmer. He says of one of his witches: 'And when she had done the same thing several times in my presence, I concluded that she was possessed by an evil spirit which during the performance held bound the eyes of the spectators.' Of a medium he says: 'If Anna spoke during her paroxysm she did it as if another inspired her; she understood what she was saying at the time, but as soon as she had finished speaking, the words she had said fell right out of her memory; but if they were repeated to her by others then she did remember to have spoken them, but blushed and would have preferred that they had not been said.'

Divination being perhaps the most useful part of magic, was often used to discover things which had been lost. This following procedure for the discovery of a thief is given by Agrippa's pupil, but it may be found in other books besides. 'Turn to the east and make a cross on top of the crystal with olive oil, and under the cross write "Sancta Helena". Then let a chaste boy of legitimate birth, ten years old or thereabouts, take the crystal in his right hand. Behind his back thou shalt kneel on thy bended knees and thrice with the utmost reverence recite this oration: "I pray thee, holy lady Helen, mother of King Constantine, who didst discover the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by that most sacred devotion and finding of the holy cross and by that most holy cross, and by the joy which thou hadst when thou didst find that most holy

cross, and by the love which thou hadst for thy son King Constantine, and by all the blessings which thou enjoyest perpetually, that thou show me in this crystal whatever I seek and desire to know. Amen." And when the boy shall see an angel in the crystal thou shalt ask whatever thou wilt and the angel will answer. But this thou shalt do at sunrise, when the sun has just appeared and the air is clear and serene.'

It sometimes happens, however, that the boy chosen for the experiment has been accustomed to low society, and then he will not be able to see truly; and Wier adds that on one occasion when a bottle of water was being used as a crystal a bald man in a cloak could be seen going up and down in the neck of the bottle like a mote in a sunbeam, and this spectacle lasted for three hours—but the thief was not discovered.

'Further this is how these magicians seek for treasure. A wand of a filbert tree is marked with three crosses, and they conjure with it not only superstitiously, but impiously and blasphemously by adding the letters of heathen names, and as they dig they read the psalms, De Profundis, the mass, Misereatur nostri, the Requiem, the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, and "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, Amen", From the Gates of Hell, Credo Videre, etc., Wait for the Lord, Requiem Aeternam, together with a certain prayer. And if thou hast not misjudged (i.e. astrologically) the time to dig, the treasure will be brought up by the devil.'

In the introduction to the *Occult Philosophy* Agrippa declares that he had written 'rather narratively than affirma-

tively', and confesses that he had retracted much of the substance in his *Oration on the Vanity of Arts and Sciences*. He excuses his publication by saying that spurious and defective copies were in circulation, and 'I thought it no crime if I should not suffer the testimony of my youth to perish'. The book had been revised and certain chapters added, but it was not rewritten, and of course its professions of catholicism were not enough to conciliate the hostile monks.

Agrippa was nevertheless released from prison by the influence of his patrons, of whom the most powerful was Cardinal Campeggio, and was promised a small salary from the imperial court. At the same time his writings won the approval of Erasmus, who in a letter warned him that the monks were powerful enough to ruin anyone. It was quite natural that he should leave Brussels, so he removed to Mechlin, where he married a third wife, but soon after had to divorce her for adultery. He was evidently an affectionate and sincere man who needed the company of a woman. From Mechlin he went to Cologne, where his friend the archbishop helped him to get his work printed, though not before one book had been denounced by the inquisition and another banned in Belgium. To be under the patronage of the archbishop he lived at Bonn, and much of his time was spent in defending his works and disputing with the intolerant theologians of Louvain and other hostile churches. His salary from the emperor, of course, was unpaid as usual, his career had led nowhere, and he was forty-eight years old.

And now, for no known reason, he left Bonn, where he

should have been safe despite religious enmities, and, going to France, was promptly imprisoned on a charge of having written against his former patroness the queen-mother. Before long he was released, but it seems that he could not safely return to Germany, nor remain in France; accordingly he set out for Italy, which in his experience was the one truly civilized country. He never reached it, for at Grenoble he died. His life had shown that a knowledge of magic is not the high road to fortune, but after his death his reputation began to be blasted with the unscrupulous thoroughness that only religion, or its equivalent, can provoke. This is how the end of his life was described by André Thevet, cosmographer to King Henri III of France, in 1584.

'Agrippa was forced to leave Flanders, where he could not be suffered because he made profession of magic, so he took the road to Italy, where he stayed the space of three years more or less, and there spread abroad more of the poison of magic than was fit, in such abundance that several persons of worth, perceiving that he had in so short a time corrupted the air of Italy, drove him away so hastily that he could do nothing but retire to Dole, where he publicly read the book *On the Mirific Word*. So much did he darken Burgundy with the smokes and fogs of the Black Arts that if he had not made a hole in the cloud it is much to be feared that he would have been lit up with fire more closely than he could have wished. This made him fly the country. At last coming to Lyons in a pitiable state and without resource, he sought any means to live, wagging the end of his wand as cleverly as he could, and making so

little that he died in a wretched inn, mocked and abhorred of everyone, hated as an accursed and execrable magician because he always took about with him a devil in the form of a dog; and when he felt death approaching him he tore off its collar which was all inscribed with magical characters, and then half-distractedly drove it away, saying these words: "Go, miserable beast, thou hast utterly ruined me." And thereafter this dog which was so familiar with him and so assiduously kept him company in his travels, was never seen, for at the order which Agrippa gave him he began to run towards the river Saone and cast himself in and never came out, so that it is thought he was engulfed there.'

In Thevet's account every fact is incorrect, except two, first that Agrippa went in the direction of Italy, secondly that Lyons is on the Saone—whereas Agrippa died at Grenoble, which is on the Isère. Yet this account was the popularly accepted one for many years.

It was a trait of Agrippa's character that he was fond of dogs, and this of course made it all the more inevitable that he should be accused of having one as a familiar. The same accusation was hurled at many reputed magicians, and later even at such a man as Prince Rupert, simply on account of his success as a general; by most of the populace it must have been believed.

As a crowning insult Agrippa was buried in a monastery of the Dominicans, the inquisitorial sect he had fought so vigorously at Metz, and on his tomb was inscribed a ten-line epitaph in Latin verse in which the monks at last could vent their spleen without being answered. The last couplet ran:

O wretched arts, which this sole guerdon lend,
To reach Hell's waters known and as a friend.

If the monks had had more respect for the principles of magic they would not have condemned themselves by that spiteful epitaph; for it is a great principle of magic that, as we read in the Psalms, 'my word shall not return to me void'; if therefore it does return it will return with all the poison which its author gave it.

Yet the stories which grew up about Agrippa were not all spiteful. Sir Walter Scott in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' records that he gave the Earl of Surrey an interview with his dead wife. A most typical tale is that recounted and believed by the Jesuit superior Delrio in 1599:

'This was done by Cornelius Agrippa at Louvain. He had a boarder who was too curious. Now Agrippa once having gone somewhere had given the keys of his study to the wife whom he afterwards divorced, forbidding her to allow anyone to enter. But, in season or out of season, the thoughtless youth did not cease entreating the woman to give him the means of entry until he had gained his wish. He steps into the study, lights on a book of spells, and reads it. Hark! there is a knocking on the door. He is disturbed, but continues reading. Again someone knocks, and when the ill-mannered young man makes no answer, a demon enters and asks, why is he called, what is he ordered to do? Fear strangles the young man's voice and the demon his throat. Thus the wretch pays the penalty of his wicked curiosity. Meanwhile the arch-magician returns to his house and sees the demons leaping about all over it. He

uses his accustomed arts, they come at his call and explain how the thing happened. He orders one of them to enter the corpse of the victim and to walk to and fro several times on the market-place (where the rest of the students used frequently to meet) and then to leave the body. So he walked three or four times and then the body fell down because he that controlled it had fled. For some time it was thought that the young man had been carried off by sudden death, but signs of suffocation first brought the matter into suspicion, afterwards time revealed all, and Agrippa fled to Lorraine and began to vomit up the heresies he had concealed in his breast.'

All through his life there is little to show whether Agrippa practised magic seriously to any extent. His reputation was founded upon a book which he had largely retracted. By that time he had also ceased to value astrology, though he had declared that astrology was necessary to magic. As a matter of fact he had always pursued whatever interested him, and magic, like astrology, cannot be investigated and proven false in a few months. It is probable therefore that Agrippa did practise both magic and alchemy from time to time, and equally probable that he had given up both of them before he made his reputation as a magician. Unlike Paracelsus and Cagliostro he never seems to have gained any advantage by the study of magic. That his alchemy was unsuccessful we have the testimony of the first book of the *Occult Philosophy*, where he admits in Chapter XIV that he never succeeded in making more than an ounce of gold out of an ounce of gold. But that he had hopes of such experiments we have at least the

evidence of one letter written from Lyons in 1526, when he was forty, which shows at the same time his sense of humour, and proves that he was not as gullible as the alchemists are often supposed to be.

'My dearest Chapelain,' he writes, 'Blessed be the Lord, I am a rich man, if there be truth in fable. A man of consideration, long my friend, has brought me seeds of gold, and planted them over my furnace, within long-necked flasks, putting underneath a little fire, as of the sun's heat; and as hens brood over eggs, we keep the warmth up night and day, expecting forthwith to produce enormous golden chicks. If all be hatched we shall exceed Midas in wealth, or at least in length of ears, and I shall say a long farewell to these great Ninuses and Semiramises. A rich and prosperous farewell to you. From Lyons, from your soon to be long-pursed or long-eared Agrippa. Oct. 21, 1526.'

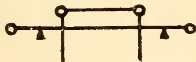


Figure 8. Seals of the Fixed Stars

CHAPTER XI

The Golden Doctor

The word 'bombastic' holds its place in the English language because the sound of it so perfectly fits the sense. It was long supposed to be derived from the name of Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, commonly known as Paracelsus. But bombast meant originally the cotton-wool or other padding which is put in the lining of clothes to give them shape; and as a description of the writings of Paracelsus that would be quite unfair, since he always had something to say. But if bombast means only extravagant claims and a defiant, thunderous style of writing, then it is occasionally appropriate.

'Ye are of the generation of vipers,' he wrote to his detractors, 'so from you nothing but poison is what I should expect. How abusively you have cast in my teeth that I am the Luther of medicine—adding the explanation, that I am an arch-heretic! I am Theophrastus, and somewhat better and more powerful than those to whom you compare me. That is what I am, and besides that I am the

monarch of physicians, who can demonstrate to you such things as you can never show. For me Luther can look after his own affairs, and I shall make plain mine, and will outshine all those to whom you compare me; to that my arcana will carry me on. Who is it that hates Luther? Just such a crew as torment me also. And the misfortunes you prophesy for him you are preparing for me likewise, that is, to the flames, to the flames!

'It is not the heavens that made me a physician. God created me so. The heavens have no power capable of creating a physician. That art is God's, and not of the heavens. And I congratulate myself on this, that scoundrels hate me. For truth has none that hate her, except liars. Most deservedly do I dare to call you impostors; it is your hospitals which tell me that. Are you going, may I ask, to have the impudence to return that piece of mockery to me as truth? What need have I to put on armour and corslets against you? You have not even the little knowledge and learning that would enable you to contradict my least letter. But if I could protect my bald head from the flies as easily as I can defend my monarchy—why, if Milan were as secure from its enemies as I am from you, neither the Swiss nor any other army could be brought into it.'

There must have been a reason for this ferocious and telling denunciation, and in fact there was more than one, not only in the jealousy of the enemies of Paracelsus, but also in his own psychology. Having a perfectly independent mind he was afraid of no one and quite conscious of his outstanding intellectual power. In one book he does excuse the roughness of his manner, saying: 'Nature did

not spin me of a delicate thread; nor is it the custom of my homeland to make great profits by weaving silk. We are not fed on figs or mead or suchlike; our food is cheese, milk, and oaten bread. How can such things build fine-grained men?'

It is of course a matter of temperament whether a man ignores his enemies, fears them, regrets them, or denounces them; and when violent denunciation is the chosen method there is likely to be a psychological need to compensate for some feeling of inferiority. These inferiority-feelings are instilled in childhood and adolescence in inconspicuous ways, and it is they which produce in later life dictators and other unscrupulous lusters after power. In the case of Paracelsus a different reason has been suggested for his assertion of his own superiority. He never showed the least interest in women, and it has been believed that he was sexually abnormal, perhaps for physical reasons.

Paracelsus did not set out merely to practise magic. He set out to be, and was, a very great physician. He was the father of modern surgery and the grandfather of homoeopathy. But he was different from others because he possessed the extremely rare and exceedingly desirable quality of not believing everything he was told. Phrenologists place on the middle of the top of the head the 'bump' of reverence; and according to them therefore the more beautifully rounded a bald head is, the more certain is its possessor to be a conservative. The pictures of Paracelsus at the end of his life show on the top of a very knobbly bald head a very flat patch: and Paracelsus certainly has what all innovators and all discoverers are bound to have—a

lack of reverence for claims not proved by his own experience.

The doctors of his time were all followers of Galen and dealt in complicated herbal and animal remedies. Paracelsus founded the 'spagyric' or chemical school of medicine, and when he was appointed professor of medicine at Basle (thanks to the intervention of Erasmus and others) he created scandals first by announcing that he proposed to teach from his own books and experience and not from the curriculum, secondly by lecturing in German instead of Latin, and thirdly by throwing the works of Avicenna on a students' bonfire.

But he had reason for his superior confidence and his defiance. He did cure all sorts of diseases by all sorts of unheard-of means. Whereas the Galenic doctors would come and name a disease and prescribe a treatment, Paracelsus would consider the patient and prescribe nothing until he had decided what was suitable for this particular case. He treated in fact the man and not the disease. And not only his remedies, but his theories, were unorthodox. He declared that every wound will heal itself if it is only kept clean; and accordingly he advised cleanliness three hundred years before Lister introduced antiseptics, and demanded the regulation of diet four hundred years before it became a matter of public notoriety and importance. He insisted also that practice should dominate theory and not the other way round, and that any disease may be cured if it is not fatal. In all these things he was alone, as he was alone in attempting to cure syphilis. And his success in several cases is recorded in a still extant book purporting

to give a hundred and fourteen of the cures of Paracelsus from a German manuscript found among his papers by his servant Conrad Steinberg. The treatments are mainly chemical, but by no means always so, as may be seen.

'14. A boy having his finger eaten unto the bone with a disease called impetigo or lichen, I cured in short time with the oil of lead.

'15. In a place where the bones were cankered and consumed, with good success I used quintessence of serpents.

'66. Pains of the teeth I cured with the juice of nightshade and persicaria made warm in a gargle, burying the herbs afterwards in a dunghill.

'67. I prepared a powder of the ashes of rosemary, the which maketh yellow teeth white and healeth tumors in the gums very quickly without blood.

'68. In tumors of the uvula, gums and jaws, I have used oil of vitriol in water of persicaria.'

Many of the treatments would be more difficult to test as they contain alchemical preparations called by such names as 'consolida major' and 'emplastrum stipticum'. Essence of Mercury was frequently used and Paracelsus was also fond of treating people with antimony. In the list above the burying of the herbs in a dunghill is an obvious piece of suggestive magic; and the quintessence of serpents is not unique, since such a decoction is carefully described in a book called *Secrets of Secrets* which may have been written by Roger Bacon.

Among other things it was Paracelsus who discovered zinc, and it was he who introduced laudanum to medical practice as well as many other remedies which are still in use.

But it was not only in medicine that Paracelsus was iconoclastic. He was profoundly religious and a free-thinker, and he did not, even in the time of the Reformation, make himself any friends by writing such things as: 'He who depends on the Pope rests on the sand, he who depends on Zwingli rests on hollow ground, he who depends on Luther depends on a reed. They all deem themselves each above the other, and denounce one another as Antichrists, heathens and heretics, and they are but three pairs of breeches from one cloth.'

Paracelsus had never been accepted by the medical faculty of Basle. He had been introduced and supported by the city council. When he left—because he was treated like the pied piper of Hamelin—it was to become a roamer for the rest of his days.

Canon Lichtenfels, one of the most prominent citizens of Basle, was suffering from a disease which nobody could cure. So painful was it that he offered a hundred gulden to whoever would cure him. Paracelsus earned the money, but was put off with no more than six gulden and a letter of thanks. He brought a lawsuit, lost it, and left Basle for ever.

In point of fact he had already travelled a great deal. He was born at Maria-Einsiedeln in German Switzerland on 17th December 1473—and not on 26th November, as the planetary positions show. He was brought up, mainly in Carinthia, by his father, for whom he had the deepest respect and love, and it was probably from him that he obtained the nickname Aureolus, meaning 'golden boy', as a reward for his precocious intelligence. In early man-

hood he had seen Germany, England, Belgium, France, and Italy before he settled down in Strasbourg and was called from there to Basle. He is even said to have been an army doctor in Sweden. On leaving Basle he went to Colmar, Württemberg, Tyrol, Vienna, Carinthia, Bavaria, and in fact wandered to and fro and was never far from the Danube valley until he finally died in Salzburg at the age of forty-eight and left his belongings to the poor. In defence of his perpetual travelling he writes: 'The wanderings that I have thus far accomplished have proved of advantage to me, for the reason that no one's master grows in his own house, nor his teacher behind the stove. Also all kinds of knowledge are not confined to one's fatherland but scattered throughout the whole world. . . . Is it not true that knowledge pursues no one but that it must be sought? Therefore I have right and reason, that I should go to seek it, and not it me.'

In all his portraits except one Paracelsus is given a broad and heavy face, and he is consistently represented with a long sword—though for what reason cannot be told, since the story that he said his familiar lived in the pommel of it is a little difficult to credit. Others allege that he kept his laudanum in the pommel.

His eyes were large and luminous, with very arched eyebrows; his jaw was firm, but his mouth gentle and not tight-drawn. His pictures are usually accompanied by his favourite mottoes, of which one is: 'He may not be another's who knows how to belong to himself,' and the other: 'Every perfect gift is of God, but the imperfect of the devil.'

In his youth he had suffered from rickets, and this seems to have been the reason why he aged so quickly and died so young. For one who had written a book on length of life this is ironic; but for one who maintained that the benefits of magic were real but spiritual it is entirely irrelevant. As a matter of fact he had worn himself out with overwork.

In character he was not by any means bombastic or spiteful. The angry sentences quoted above were written in the heat of his fury at being driven from Basle by persecution. He knew he was a remarkable doctor and was not going to hide the fact; but none of his portraits show any of the marks of a conceited or arrogant nature. At the end of his life he looked very worn and tired, but alike the younger and older portraits show the eyes of a deep thinker and the gentle expression of one who really wanted to do good. He was a man tremendously in earnest, never to be turned aside, with a burning belief in the divinity of nature, and on his own evidence he amused himself in inns and talked of his ideas to the people that he met there.

His mental abilities in fact were of the first order, though his writings sometimes seem confused to moderns who are accustomed to a much more deductive and logical way of thinking than was prevalent in the sixteenth century. Another reason is that his books were almost all dictated at high speed and never officially revised. Of all the writers on alchemy and magic he is the one who shows the greatest understanding of those subjects, and he applied them very extensively to his medicine.

At first sight there might seem to be some contradiction in his statements, for he declares in one place that the

transmutation of metals into gold is all nonsense, and in another writes: 'The third foundation on which medicine stands is alchemy. When the physician is not skilled and experienced to the highest degree in this, all that depends on his art will be vain and fruitless.' Paracelsus maintains also that the usual practices of ritual magic are absurd, and yet insists that: 'Magic is the greatest wisdom.' He does not fail, however, to give us the explanation.

By alchemy he means chemistry, and in the history of the development of chemistry he is undoubtedly one of the most important figures. But he does not mean only chemistry. For him 'Nature brings forth to the light nothing which is straightway perfect in itself, but she leaves it to man to be perfected. This act of perfecting is called Alchemy. For the baker is an alchemist in that he cooks the loaves; the vintner in that he prepares the wine; the weaver in that he makes tissues. Thus whatever is poured forth from the womb of nature for man's use, he that prepares it for that to which it is destined is an alchemist.'

Paracelsus gave to chemistry not only the knowledge of his discoveries, but the impetus to experiment. 'That which you say to be true you cannot prove,' he cries, and only too often they could not, for they merely took the old books and remedies on trust.

As regards the stars too there is at first sight a contradiction. 'Since we have set out', says Paracelsus, 'to teach how the Astral Being can harm us, it must first be explained and known to you, that the stars, whether they be planets or any other stars of the firmament, do not make our body by any means, nor have they any effect on our colouring,

beauty, habits, virtues and properties. And you must remove from your minds this opinion which you have held so long, giving judgements on men from the nature and position of the stars.'

On the next page, however, we find: 'You must however believe that the firmament itself and the stars are entirely so constituted that men and animal creatures cannot live without them.' And a little further on comes this: 'It does not matter to me in what sense you understand the proverb "The wise man rules the stars". Notwithstanding, the sense in which it is accepted by me is explained thus: The stars compel nothing in us, they make and form nothing, they cause no resemblance, and no inclination. They of themselves are perfectly free; so also are we. And yet notice, that without the stars we cannot live. For cold and heat and the digestion of the things we eat, proceed from them. Man by himself does not; and yet they help us, or they are necessary to us, as much as cold and heat, food and drink and air. But beyond that they are not in us, nor we in them.'

On this supposition it is quite obvious that, as Paracelsus says, the stars can harm us, though our nature and creation is attributed to God and to heredity. For if the digestion of our foods depends on the stars, then on the days when we have indigestion we shall be disagreeable, however equable a temperament we have received from God and nature; and if the stars provoke our digestion to be chronically inefficient then we may end with a gastric ulcer and a morose attitude to life; for over a period of years a man's temperament can be affected by his digestion.

It was perhaps his great love of freedom which induced

Paracelsus to decide that 'even if no star nor any planet had ever existed nor did exist, nevertheless children would have been equally well born and complexioned by the generation of the parents. One of course would have been a melancholic, another a choleric; this one would have been born trustworthy and that untrustworthy.' Yet it is precisely on the psychological side that Paracelsus was least concerned with astrology, and if the stars affect our bodies, as he declares they do, then it is fairly obvious that they will by that means affect our minds. From this we may draw conclusions which do not entirely agree with those of Paracelsus. If, for example, the sun has given a man a very strong heart, he will be capable of great physical efforts and liable to expect others to be as strong as himself. If the sun has only given him a weak heart he will not have so much endurance and so he will not expect such great efforts from others; in other words, he will think before exerting himself and so by taking thought will become thoughtful and more imaginative than the man who is merely strong.

But Paracelsus was convinced that we can help ourselves despite the stars; he evidently believed that though they may affect the body, the spirit has power to free itself if it chooses. He says in the book of *Signatures*: 'Let a man be the child of Saturn, and Saturn his Ascendant; yet he can subdue himself to him, and so conquer him, that he can become a child of the Sun; and thus he can subject himself to the other planets, and make himself their child.' He says too that it is the primitive and crude people who are dragged along by the stars like a thief to the gallows, and

it has been suggested in modern times that the more a man develops his character towards the ideal, the less will he show the individual and disruptive influences of his Ascendant. And this seems probable.

In another book, though Paracelsus admits that the stars are not the causes of our temperaments, he is very positive about their importance. 'This also you must know,' he says, 'that the heavens do work in us. But who will be able to understand their method of working if he does not know the heavens in their essence and nature? What else is science but the stars? If therefore the stars are the celestial foundation of wisdom, the physician must have knowledge of them. If he has, he is already a disciple of medicine, and has the knowledge to recognize and judge the influence of the heavens in man. When once he judges the heavens from the inside, then he is a physician, but otherwise certainly not; for if he only understands the heavens from the outside, he acts as a mere astronomer or astrologer. . . . For a doctor it is necessary that he should know in man what are the dragon's tail, and Aries and the polar axis, and the meridian line, and the rising and setting. If he does not know this, away with him!'

There could not be a much more emphatic insistence on the importance of astrology for the study of medicine. Modern critics will raise their eyebrows and regret in their superior way that a man who did so much for chemistry and medicine should have been so deluded as to believe in astrology and magic. But he after all knew a good deal more about those two subjects than his detractors do, and from our knowledge of his character we cannot imagine

him being seriously impressed by their opinions. And as far as magic is concerned we shall see that to him it was not a matter of superstitious ritual, but a religious scheme of life, and one whose validity cannot be impugned by either the prejudiced gibes of the ignorant or the pained silence of admirers.

To Paracelsus magic was simply the power of faith. He begins as usual by denying unfounded and superstitious beliefs, but then turns round to admit that many things can happen which we do not normally expect. His attitude is well paraphrased by Hartmann in the words: 'the exercise of true magic does not require any ceremonies or conjurations, or the making of circles or signs; it requires neither benedictions nor maledictions in words, neither verbal blessings nor curses; it only requires a strong faith in the omnipotent power of all good, which can accomplish everything if it acts through a human mind which is in harmony with it, and without which nothing useful can be accomplished. True magic power consists in true faith, but true faith rests on knowledge, and without knowledge there can be no faith. If I know that divine wisdom can accomplish a certain thing, I have the true faith; but if I merely believe that a thing might be possible, or if I attempt to persuade myself that I believe in its possibility, such a belief is no knowledge, and confers no faith. No one can have a true faith in a thing which is not true, because such a "faith" would be merely a belief or opinion based upon ignorance of the truth. But even such a belief or perverted faith, if strong enough, can give rise to a powerful imagination.'

How was it that Paracelsus performed so many remarkable cures? Actually he did it by magic. But he did not do it by what is commonly understood as magic. There were no miracles, there was no consecration of implements or laying on of hands, no recitation of spells. The question was how to cure a disease whose cause was unknown, and that was a question which the science of the day was unable to answer. And even to know the cause of a disease will not necessarily enable a practitioner to cure it. It is tolerably plain that if a child's teeth are always in need of stopping there must be a lack of calcium in his system. But this lack of calcium is not an explanation, since it too must have a cause. Modern doctors would say that it was due to errors of diet, but their correction might not cure it. At any rate when one child in a family suffers from bad teeth when the diet is the same for all, there is something which a doctor might be unable to explain, and Paracelsus would no doubt have attributed it to the stars. Now if in any particular case logic fails to indicate any treatment because of lack of knowledge to use it on, and if experience fails, what is a doctor to do? In such a case Paracelsus would invent some new remedy peculiar to the patient, and one which worked. He was guessing, of course, but he was not trusting to blind intuition; he was guessing according to the principles of magic and using the deliberately cultivated intuition which his magical studies had brought him. Magic therefore to Paracelsus was something which enabled him to understand the world and to govern his life accordingly.

It must be admitted that there are in the works of Paracelsus traces of the more primitive forms of magic and

alchemy; but then he cannot have leapt at once to his final understanding of those two arts, and there must have been a time when he was investigating their more sensational side. It is quite likely too that some of his books were partly compilations of information he had not tested, in particular the book on Signatures in which he declares that large ears indicate good hearing, good memory, attentiveness, diligence and a well-balanced mind, that a snub nose shows a man to be malignant, unreliable, lustful, mendacious and unfaithful, and a long nose a man who is always behindhand in his affairs, but has a good sense of smell.

Paracelsus had been a pupil of Trithemius, the learned abbot to whom Agrippa sent his book on magic for approval, and that and his wonderful cures would have sufficed to make him pass for a magician without any further evidence. Actually his writings do contain magical and alchemical receipts in quantity. It was probably from him that Goethe had the idea of the homunculus which appears in *Faust*; for Paracelsus discusses homunculi, though the idea is an old one among magicians. This is his way of making them.

'Nor must the generation of homunculi by any means be forgotten. For there is a certain truth in this thing, although it has long been kept hidden in great secrecy, and there was no little doubt and question among some of the ancient philosophers, whether it were possible to nature and art that a man could be produced outside the female body and the natural womb. To this I answer, that it is in no way repugnant to nature and the spagyric art, in fact it is

quite possible. But that it may be done you must proceed in this manner: "The sperm of a man must be allowed to putrefy by itself for forty days in a sealed kidney-dish in a horse-belly flask until complete putrefaction, or for so long that it begins to live and move and shake, which can easily be seen. After this time it will be somehow like a man, yet translucent and bodiless. Now if after this it is cautiously and carefully fed every day with the arcanum of human blood, and kept for forty weeks in the perpetual even heat of the horse-belly, it will then become a true and living infant, having all the limbs of an infant born of woman, but much smaller. This we call Homunculus, and it must after this be educated with great diligence and assiduity until it grows up and begins to have knowledge and intelligence. This is one of the greatest secrets which God has revealed to mortal and sinful man; for it is a miracle and marvel of God, and an arcanum above all arcana, and it ought to be kept secret until the end of time, when nothing shall be hidden, but all shall be made plain." '

It is obvious that this account, even if genuinely written by Paracelsus, is only theoretical, for he was hardly ever long enough in one place to put it in practice. The arcanum of human blood is evidently a secret preparation, and the means of making it is contained in the works of Paracelsus, either directly or by implication, but one must be an alchemist to understand it.

Besides homunculi a vast number of other magical and mysterious creatures are mentioned, such as giants, sylphs and basilisks, all of which are generated in improbable and unnatural ways, and ghosts, which Paracelsus explains as

the appearance of what is called nowadays the astral body. 'Man', he says, 'has a spirit or sidereal body, and also an elementary body. These two bodies constitute one man. Then if a man dies that body which is born and made up of the elements is given over to the earth and is consumed by decay. This decay needs time, sometimes longer and sometimes shorter. But similarly the sidereal body also must decay and be consumed like the elementary. It however does not remain in the corpse, but keeps itself in the neighbourhood or walks about in those places in which the dead man used to live, until the time of its decay is completed. For then both the body has been destroyed and the spirit. That sidereal spirit has been held to be the man himself by those who have understood the property of the sidereal body. And there are various spirits of this kind which we see or do not see, hear or do not hear, both at night and in the daytime.' If a man has buried a treasure his ghost will wander near it because the passionate desires of the heart are imprinted on the sidereal body; and similarly if he had been devoted above all things to women and wine, to food and drink, to gaming or hunting, it is in places where these may be found that his sidereal body will walk about until it is consumed.

Like all magicians Paracelsus insists greatly on the power of the imagination, for of course magic is in practice an attempt to realize things imagined by unusual means, particularly it may be by self-hypnosis. And the fact that women were more often supposed to be witches than men is attributed to the fact that a woman's imagination is stronger and she is more easily stirred up to a passionate

excess of feeling, whether it be desire or hatred. Paracelsus says therefore that women should be kept amused and that since imagination springs from desire a man may have a good or evil imagination according as he has good or evil desires. A strong desire of either kind will give rise to a strong imagination; but curses as well as blessings will be effective only if they come from the heart.

In the collected works of Paracelsus—not all of which, it seems, are genuine—may be found information about any branch of magic or alchemy, though at great length and expressed in a way that is not always easy to interpret. Possession by spirits or devils, for example, is explained on the analogy of drunkenness. Just as a man who is full of wine suffers delusions, talks nonsense and speaks in fact of another wisdom than his own—which is the wisdom of wine, and is nonsensical—so a man may become intoxicated by the influence of the heavens and speak another kind of wisdom which is not his own, but this time a heavenly wisdom. To this cause Paracelsus attributes the wisdom of Solomon and of the apostles when they spoke with tongues; to this too he would have attributed the utterances of mediums. For such people 'have not understood themselves, but have spoken out of celestial drunkenness and celestial wine, and have only understood while they are full of that wine; and when the wine is gone from them and removed, then their words have become unintelligible to them.'

By the influence of the heavens Paracelsus does not here mean only that of the planets or the stars, but of the universe as a whole. His work on the constitution of the

world is called *The Great Astronomy*, and he divides this astronomy into seven divisions or sciences, as follows: first astrology, which teaches of the constitution of heaven and earth and the relation between man and animals, the earth, and the stars; then magic, which is the bringing down to earth of heavenly influences, and transformations, and the knowledge of such supernatural things as comets, which are nature's magic; thirdly divination, which is the power to speak of the future by means of dreams, intuitions, phantasies, and the actions of fools, animals, and other simple beings; next nigromancy, which treats of sidereal bodies, ghosts, nymphs, and monsters; then signatures, which shows how to recognize in created things the influence of the forces which created them and hence to deduce their nature, as the temperament of a man from his hands, veins, and features; sixthly, the uncertain arts, which are those having no guiding principle for their practice beyond that of the imagination; and finally manual arts, which teach the making of instruments for the study of nature in all its branches.

Each of these sciences has its subdivisions. The Uncertain Arts are geomancy, pyromancy, hydromancy, and ventinina, or divination by earth, by fire, by water and by air. Magic is divided into sections treating of comets and other supernatural signs in the sky, of images formed under proper celestial influences for curing diseases, of gamahei, or stones engraved astrologically and capable of averting the effect of charms and poisons; of spells spoken or written, which have the power of helping a man; of spectres; and of incantations, which enable a man to

change himself or another into a dog or cat or other animal and to change people's minds and bodies.

Paracelsus does not actually give the method for turning a man into a cat; he says that people who behave no better than wolves actually are wolves and have no need to change their shape, so perhaps he did not really believe in these transformations. But in giving the methods for constructing the seals of the planets he does say that he has used them and found them effective. The belief in talismans he justifies thus: if by nature the influences of the planets can be condensed into terrestrial things, as that of Mars in iron or that of the Sun in heliotrope, why should not the same thing be done by a magician who knows how to put himself in harmony with the stellar influences? Thus just as a child born under Saturn will partake of the nature of Saturn, so a talisman confected under any planet will partake of the nature of that planet.

Figure 9. Sigil of Sagittarius

Seals could be made for protection from particular diseases, or to embody the influence of a sign of the zodiac; the latter did not have to be worn by people native of that sign. The method of constructing the seal of Sagittarius is

thus described: 'Prepare the seal of Sagittarius at the hour of the Sun's entry into Sagittarius and indeed to the first degree thereof. Add the signs to it on the day and hour of Jupiter, and let the Moon be increasing. This seal is another which I discovered after a very long time. I have often used this seal to elude my enemies; by the power of it they remained astonished like wild asses, so that they did not even dare to open their mouths. Its ring should be of silver, but itself fashioned entirely of tin, without the addition of other metals. It demands to be kept clean when it is worn.'

Paracelsus is said to have made various astrological predictions from time to time, but it is obvious that he was not an ordinary astrologer. His temperament was always for breaking away from dictatorships and old beliefs, so perhaps he would have denied that the stars had any influence had it not been for his experience and his belief in the unity of the universe. For like all magicians and alchemists he believed in the unity of the universe and the relation of every part to the whole; and from this it follows that those things which are of the same nature will in practice have the same effect, and that all things of the same nature are everywhere subject to the same laws, and hence wherever they are there is always this bond between them, and they will attract the same things and repel the same things. Thus Paracelsus can say: 'It is the same knowledge to know the stone Marchasite and to know the herb Galaxa. He who knows Manna is like him who knows Angelica. The anatomy of each separate sphere of knowledge is the same, and no more distant than the right eye from the left. Thus

there is one Saturn in the sky, who is of fire, and another in the earth, who is earthy. What is the conception in the womb if the celestial Venus does not perform it? What is Mars but iron and what is iron but Mars? Both are Mars and both are iron. What difference is there then between these different Suns and Moons and Mercurys and Jupiters?"

The formula for making the secret arcana are very complicated and need things difficult to obtain; and it is stated that they are to be taken metaphorically, which makes them quite impossible to understand by the profane, since to all appearance they cannot be understood except literally. How can one interpret metaphorically a prescription beginning: 'Take about eighteen live toads, dry them and powder them'? There is here, in fact, one of those mysteries of magic which only a magician can understand. Bearing in mind that the effect of magic is to work upon the imagination, these things may not be nonsense. To the mere sceptic who wishes to define magic as something fundamentally and ex hypothesi impossible these receipts are exceedingly satisfying, for he can only take them literally and by believing that they cannot work will be confirmed in his already clamped and frozen opinion that magic is nonsense. But to those who have considered the undeniable evidence of the achievements of Paracelsus both in the progress of chemistry and in the cure of patients it is questionable whether there may not be some other explanation.

For Paracelsus was not a second-rate mind or a mere dabbler in occultism, nor is it not possible to separate his

magic from his other practices. He knows that the magician is not made, but born. In his writings magic is not the contemptible shuffling practice which it has been represented, but a truly elevating form of religion.

He defines it by saying: 'Magic is nothing else than the power of bringing down celestial virtues into a medium and making use of them in that medium.' That the use of magic depends entirely on the attitude of mind is evident from the longer description which he gives in the same sixth chapter of the *Great Astronomy*:

'Magic is a wonderful thing and on account of its achievements most worthy to be practised. Sure and lasting was the saying which Christ uttered: "If ye believe, ye shall do greater things than these." If therefore Christ, who worked miracles, gave to his disciples hope of achieving greater things, yet Nature by her arts achieveth also something, and why should not we be able to excel her? . . . She was created for our sake, and we have power through her. The wise man rules Nature, not Nature the wise man.

'But if scripture can achieve more by faith than Christ did for love of his neighbour, why should not we be able to do more than the stars, since that commandment regards not the stars, but us, and all things are subject to us? And as the disciples of Christ can do more than Christ himself, so the disciples of Nature can do even more than Nature, who must be stirred up as if she were asleep. And yet Christians do neither less nor more; for Christ himself is become a mockery to them. And as almost no one heeds faith, so almost no one heeds Nature. Today all is confused

with trifling sophistries and in these is wasted the time which should be given to Nature. Rather ought that wisdom to be growing strong in us by which we may govern all things. For not only the virtues of the firmament, but also all living things are forced to obey man, though they be much stronger and dwell in the depths of the sea. For man ruleth them all, as he ruleth also the rest of creation which is set in the firmament above. Even as a dog or a Hungarian courser or anything else may be compelled to follow us, so also the stars are in the hand of man.'

CHAPTER XII

John Dee and the Alteration of Kingdoms

When the 'Peace' of Aristophanes was produced at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1547 no small surprise was created by the sight of one of the characters flying up to the ceiling upon the back of an enormous scarab-beetle. It was by this apparently marvellous machination that John Dee first drew attention to himself as anything more than a young scholar of unusual learning and application.

In the next year, when he was a student at Louvain and only twenty-one, his erudition was already so famous that the emperor Charles V came to visit him, and the Duke of Mantua and other eminent persons came actually to be instructed in logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, in the use of the astronomer's staff, the astrolabe, and the globes.

At twenty-three Dee gave in Paris the first public lectures on Euclid that were given in any European university, and so overcrowded were they that students climbed up to see through the windows.

On returning home Dee gave himself up mostly to

astronomy and to the writing of books on all sorts of subjects. He was in fact one of the most remarkable geniuses of sixteenth-century England. He tried to induce Queen Mary to found a National Library, and when she did not agree began to collect a library of his own which amounted to over four thousand of the most rare and learned books. He announced that telescopes would shortly be invented, as indeed had Roger Bacon and others before him. He proposed the institution of a 'Petty Royal Navy' for home defence and to facilitate the surveying of the coast. He knew well all the eminent men of his time and was often consulted by the merchant adventurers, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir John Hawkins, Davis, Frobisher and the rest; he made for them maps of the remote parts of the world, and one of his most famous books was on the Art of Perfect Navigation. In particular, he was a personal friend of Elizabeth, who not only consulted him as her astrologer, but used to come and dine with him. When this happened he pointed out to the Earl of Leicester that his income was only eighty pounds a year and on that he could not entertain the court; so Leicester persuaded the queen to send him another forty pounds to make the dinner possible.

As court astrologer he was asked to choose the day of the queen's coronation, and his selection of 14th January 1559 inaugurated a reign of historic brilliance and success. In 1582, the year that Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendar, Dee was asked to work out a scheme for the same purpose; but the queen, advised by the bishops, did not adopt it, and the English calendar was not finally changed to the new style until 170 years later.

At other times Dee was asked by the queen to give a written opinion on her rights to the new countries discovered by the merchant adventurers. He was also sent to Germany to consult the foreign doctors about the persistent rheumatism which afflicted Elizabeth in 1578.

Except when he was travelling Dee lived most of his life in a little house at Mortlake, trying to bring up his children and perform his experiments on the inadequate income of a couple of rectories which he held, though being a layman he could not conduct the services, and one of them he never visited.

In appearance Dee was tall and elegant, very handsome, with fair hair, a fresh, rosy complexion and, in his old age, a long pointed beard 'as white as milke'. Besides this John Aubrey says of him:

'He was a great peace-maker; if any of the neighbours fell out, he would never let them alone until he had made them friends.

'He was tall and slender. He wore a gowne like an artist's gowne, with hanging sleeves, and a slitt.

'A mighty good man he was.'

Despite his learning he was also ingenuous and simple-hearted, without the least touch of arrogance or self-importance. He believed the best of everyone like the Sagittarian he was, and with his too optimistic faith in human nature was always puzzled and hurt if any of his friends or apprentices or servants was unkind to him. Gentleness in fact seems to have been the dominant feature of his character, together with benevolence, industry and sincerity. His horoscope, drawn for 4.2 p.m. on 13th July

1527, at London, shows the first decan of Sagittarius rising, the Moon in Aquarius and Jupiter in Cancer.

But living in an extremely superstitious age it was inevitable that a man of such deep and extensive learning should be accused of magic. During his absence abroad in 1584 a mob broke into his house for that very reason and destroyed many of his books and instruments; and before he was twenty-seven he had been thrown into prison because a certain George Ferrys alleged that one of his children had been blinded and another killed by Dee's magic. On that occasion he had to be tried in the Star Chamber before he could be released. As more tangible evidence of magic, he had shown to the queen and court a marvellous glass which he possessed, perhaps a convex mirror, and that must certainly have passed for magical among the vulgar. It is certain too that he had made experiments in alchemy. At one time he was so persecuted that he began to write his books anonymously, but in the preface he complained so vividly of his sufferings that everyone immediately knew the author.

Dee himself always denied that he was a magician; but he was occupied in dealings with spirits for over seven years, and most of his experiments are recounted in a book of the following title: '*A True & Faithful Relation Of* what passed for many Yeers Between *Dr. John Dee* (A Mathematician of Great Fame in Q. *Eliz.* and King *James* their Reignes) and *Some Spirits*: *Tending* (had it succeeded) *To a General Alteration of most States and Kingdomes in the World. Out Of* The Original copy, written with Dr. Dee's own Hand: Kept in the *Library* of *Sir Tho. Cotton, Kt. Baronet. With A*

Preface Confirming the Reality (as to the Point of *Spirits*) of this *Relation*: and shewing the several good *uses* that a Sober Christian may make of All. By *Meric. Casaubon, D.D.* London, 1659'.

How it was that Dee began to be interested in spirits is not entirely clear. They were popularly believed in as the cause of anything that could not be understood and it would have been strange and irreligious of him to deny their existence out of hand. But Dee appears to have had certain experiences which, according to the ideas of the time, were suggestive of the action of spirits. On 8th March 1581, he notes in his diary: 'The strange noyse in my chamber of knocking, and the voyce, ten tymes repeted, somewhat like the shrich of an owle, but more longly drawn, and more softly, as it were in my chamber.' Later he writes; 'Aug. 3rd., all the night very strange knocking and rapping in my chamber. Aug. 4th. and this night likewise.' But on 25th May of that year, when Dee was fifty-two, is found the epoch-making entry 'I had sight in *Chrystallo* offered me, and I saw.' This is surprising, for in all his dealings with spirits Dee never saw them, although he may have heard their voices.

Not being a medium himself Dee began to look out for somebody who was; and, as always, he had trouble with his subordinates. On 5th September 1581 he writes: 'Roger Cook, who had byn with me from his 14 yeres of age till 28, of a melancholik nature, pycking and devising occasions of just cause to depart on the suddayn, abowt 4 of the clok in the afternone requested of me lycense to depart, wheruppon rose whott words between us; and he, imagin-

ing with hisself that he had the 12 of July deserved my great displeasure and finding himself barred from vew of my philosophicall dealing with Mr. Henrik, thought that he was utterly recest from intended goodnes toward him. Notwithstanding Roger Cook his unseamely dealing, I promised him, yf he used himself toward me now in his absens, one hundred pounds as sone as of my own clene hability I myght spare so much; and moreover, if he used himself well in lif toward God and the world, I promised him some pretty alchemicall experiments, whereuppon he might honestly live.'

Dee's gentleness and his habit of always thinking the best of people were too good for the times, if not indeed for any times, and he was continually discovering that he had been traduced and ill-treated by his friends.

His first séance was held on 21st December 1581, with a certain Barnabas Saul for medium; but in the following February Saul was tried at Westminster, and although he was acquitted he 'confessed that he neyther herd or saw any spirituall creature any more'. On 8th March 'Mr. Clerkson and his frende cam to my howse. Barnabas went home agayn . . . he lay not at my howse now.' Mr. Clerkson's friend was called Talbot, who the next day declared to Dee 'a great deal of Barnabas nowghty dealing', and was very soon after accepted into the household as Dee's professional clairvoyant, though not without violent protests from Mrs. Dee, who saw very well that he would never do her husband any good. Six months later he went away and returned under his proper name of Kelly; and under this name he became famous as one of

the most remarkable practitioners of the occult sciences.

It is almost invariably assumed that Kelly was a conscious fraud; but the reason for that opinion is the prejudice of commentators. So far from resting on the evidence, it is supported chiefly by the legends of his criminal youth and by the story that he concealed the loss of his ears with a long black cap and abundance of flowing hair. Most of these tales are obviously apocryphal. It would most likely be a mistake to represent him as a deliberate charlatan. He did have a prophetic vision, four years before the events, of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots and the coming of the Armada; and if as a medium he deceived himself as thoroughly as his patron, his case would certainly not be unexampled. He probably believed in his own powers, for the spirits sometimes told him to do things which brought him genuine, and not feigned, displeasure and disadvantage; and, after violent objections, he would obey.

He was twenty-seven when he entered the service of Dee, and twenty-seven years younger than his master, being born at Worcester on 1st August 1555 at 4 p.m. Like Dee he was a Sagittarian and therefore impulsive, but his chief trouble was a conjunction in the midheaven of Mars, Jupiter and Uranus, all in square to the Moon in Aquarius. This shows an exceedingly positive manner, quick to both action and anger, and at the same time somewhat pompous and independent; in fact an enterprising and self-willed person with a habit of behaving drastically. His life with Dee was punctuated by quarrels, but continued nevertheless because of Dee's great gentleness of nature. One of their scenes occurred because Kelly

to his surprise discovered some notes in his own hand in the end of a book of religious verse entitled *Seven Sobbes of a Sorrowful Soul for Sinne!*

A room in the house at Mortlake had been reserved for the sittings and in it Dee would place himself at a table and write industriously a verbatim report of the proceedings, while Kelly sat in a green chair and gazed into the crystal. Dee had several crystals, and one of these in its frame was set in the middle of the table, which the spirits ordered to be covered with a shot silk cloth having tassels hanging down at the corners. In the normal way the spirits appeared in the stone, but sometimes they would step out of it and move about the room. Dee did not see them himself, but he asked them questions and sometimes heard the answer. He did not, however, accept the phenomena without explanation; he lived in an age when everybody believed in angels and demons, and one day he addresses one of the angels thus: 'I do think you have no organs or Instruments apt for voyce, but are meere spirituall and nothing corporall, but have the power and property from God to insinuate your message or meaning to ear or eye [so that] man's imagination shall be that they hear and see you sensibly.' This is quite comparable to modern explanations of clairvoyance.

The sittings had only been begun a month when the archangel Michael ordered Kelly to marry, and made him swear obedience on the archangel's sword. Kelly complained to Dee that he had no inclination to do so, that in fact it was against his conscience; but he had sworn, and soon after obeyed and married a girl named Joan Cooper,

of Chipping Norton, who was only nineteen. It seems that Kelly was never very fond of his wife, and Jane Dee flew into a marvellous rage when her husband told her of the intended match. To her it was another proof that Kelly was only a rogue, and it annoyed her to have an unwanted addition to the household.

The crystal actually used for the sittings is called by Dee 'the Stone brought me by an Angel', and it is described how one evening towards sunset there appeared in the window of the study an angel like a child standing in the sunbeams and holding in his hand a thing 'most bright, most clere and glorius, of the bigness of an egg'. This stone Dee is to take up with his own hand and to let no other person touch it.

Meanwhile in the private diary there are many indications of the troubles of private life, preoccupations with children, money, and occasional journeys. Now and then these notes are written in Greek letters instead of English, as when it is recorded that 'Her majesty asked me obscurely of Monsieur's state; I said he will die violently.' Other entries suggest that there is always money owing from the household. 'June 27th, Mystris Stafford arrested me hora 11: I payd all. July 3rd, hora 12¼, Arthur Dee fell from the top of the Watergate Stayres down to the fote from the top, and cut his forhed on the right eyebrow. Sir Richard brought the rent. July 6th, in fear of (ar)resting by Proctor Lewys. . . . July 16th, Jane this night was sore trubbled with a collick and cramp in her belly; she vomyted this Monday more, and every night grew stiff in the sole likewise. . . . Dec. 1st, George my man, who had lyne out

all night, this morning used me very dishonestly, and sayd he owed me no servyce. . . . Jan. 24th (1583) I, Mr. Awdrian Gilbert and John Davis went by appointment to Mr. Secretary to Mr. Beale his howse, when onely we four were secret, and we made Mr. Secretarie privie of the North-West passage, and all charts and rutters were agreed upon in generall. . . . April 24th, Nurse was payd for Rowland all her wagis tyll Monday the 22 of this month, 16 pence a weke; she had all her candell and sope before.'

Modern spiritualists expect to enter into communication with the souls of the dead exclusively; in Queen Elizabeth's time that was not thought possible except by some form of unholy necromancy like that of the witch of Endor. Dee accordingly never expects to speak with the dead, but speaks first with the archangels Uriel and Michael and later with various spirits whose name and existence were hitherto unimagined. The explanation of this may be left to spiritualists at their discretion, or to anyone else who feels competent to undertake it. To Dee the spirits were real, and at one time despite Kelly's insistence of the contrary, he was ready to pawn his soul that they were good and not evil spirits.

The sittings were always accompanied by prayer, in which Dee would very humbly ask the Almighty to grant him understanding of all the most abstruse and difficult knowledge, and moreover were carried on not only in England, but throughout a journey made with Prince Albert Laski to Poland and Bohemia, where Dee remained six years until Kelly left him. Albert Laski was a person of much importance, for it is recorded in the diary: 'June

15th (1583), abowt 5 of the clok cam the Polonian Prince Lord Albert Lasky down from Bissham, where he had lodged the night before. . . . He had in his company Lord Russell, Sir Philip Sidney, and other gentlemen: he was rowed by the Quene's men, he had the barge covered with the Quene's cloth, the Quene's trumpeters, etc. He cam of purpose to do me honor, for which God be praysed! June 19th, the Lord Albert Laski cam to me and lay at my howse all nyght.'

Laski was a very learned and influential prince, handsome, extremely neatly dressed, with a very long beard. He stayed in England four months and was honoured by Oxford University, but then secretly went back to the continent leaving a great quantity of debts. He was one of the few strangers who were allowed to attend the séances, another being the King of Poland.

In the *Book of Mysteries*, which gives the exact report of many sittings, Dee refers to Kelly as E.K. and to himself by his Greek initial △—both when he speaks and when he writes in observations of his own. J. also is himself, standing for John. Being written during the sitting some of his notes are a little incoherent, and one can imagine that he was at times considerably surprised by the behaviour of the spirits. The book begins:

'As J. and E.K. sate discoursing of the Noble Polonian Albertus Lasci his great honour here with us obtained, his great good liking of all States of the people, of them that either see him or hear of him, and again how much I was beholding to God that his heart should so fervently favour me, and that he doth so much strive to suppresse and con-

found the malice and envie of my Country-men against me, for my better credit winning or recovering to do God better service hereafter thereby, etc. Suddenly there seems to come out of my Oratory a Spirituall creature, like a pretty girle of 7 or 9 yeares of age, attired on her head with her hair rowled up before, and hanging down very long behind, with a gown of Sey . . . changeable green and red, and with a train she seemed to play up and down . . . like, and seemed to go in and out behind my books, lying on heaps, the biggest . . . and as she should ever go between them, the books seemed to give place sufficiently, . . . one heap from the other, while she passed between them: And so I considered, and . . . the diverse reports which E.K. made unto me of this pretty maiden, and . . .

'I said . . . Whose maiden are you?

'She . . . Whose man are you?

'I am the servant of God both by my bound duty, and also (I hope) by his Adoption.

'A voice. . . . You shall be beaten if you tell.

'She: Am not I a fine Maiden? Give me leave to play in your house, my Mother told me she would come and dwell here.

'She went up and down with most lively gestures of a young girle, playing by herselfe, and diverse times another spake to her from the corner of my study by a great Perspective-glasse, but none was seen beside her selfe. . . .

'△. Tell me who you are?

'. . . I pray you let me play with you a little, and I will tell you who I am.

'△. In the name of Jesus then tell me.

'. . . I rejoyce in the name of Jesus, and I am a poor little Maiden, Madimi, I am the last but one of my mother's children, I have little Baby-children at home.

'△. Where is your home?

'Ma. I dare not tell you where I dwell, I shall be beaten.

'△. You shall not be beaten for telling the truth to them that love the truth, to the eternal Truth all creatures must be obedient.

'Ma. . . . I warrant you I will be obedient. My sisters say they must all come and dwell with you.

'△. I desire that they who love God should dwell with me, and I with them.

'Ma. I love you now you talke of God.

'△. Your eldest sister her name is Esémeli.

'Ma. My sister is not so short as you make her.

'△. O, I cry you mercy, she is to be pronounced Eseméli.

'E.K. She smileth, one calls her saying, Come away Maiden.

'Ma. I will read over my Gentlewoemen first. My Master Dee will teach me, if I say amisse.

'△. Read over your Gentlewoemen as it pleaseth you.

'Ma. I have Gentlemen *and* Gentlewoemen. Look you here.

'E.K. She bringeth a little book out of her pocket . . . she pointeth to a picture in the book.

'Mad. Is not this a pretty man?

'△. What is his name?

'Ma. My . . . saith, his name is Edward, look you, he hath a crown upon his head, my Mother saith, that this man was Duke of York.

'E.K. She looketh upon a Picture in the Book with a Coronet in his hand and a Crown upon his head.

'Ma. This was a jolly man when he was King of England.

'△. How long since is it that he was King of England?

'Ma. Do you ask me such a question, I am but a little Maiden?'

After showing a few more pictures the maiden added: 'My sister hath torne out the other two leaves, I will bring them when you have supped. I pray do not tell anybody of me.

'△. We were called earnestly to supper by my folks.'

Dee and Kelly naturally did not like being interrupted for meals, and now and again for visitors from court, but it does not seem to have disturbed them, and they would continue after the interruption from the place where they had left off.

In this first interview Madimi has said enough to convince Dee that she is a good and not an evil spirit, and so it is with most of them. Others are not so unconventional, and habitually speak the language of prophecy in a manner reminiscent of the Bible. There is for example a man dressed as a husbandman who appears standing on the table beside the silk cloth on which the stone stood, all dressed in red with a red buttoned cap on his head. It is tolerably plain in many places that the spirits are making fun of Dee and Kelly, and on this account Kelly's temper sometimes flashes out, as when Madimi on one occasion began to speak Greek, though saying at the same time that it was Syriac; and Kelly who was attempting to write it

down, interrupted: 'Unlesse you speak some Language which I understand, I will expresse no more of this Ghybbrish.'

There is another spirit named Galvah, who—not unplausibly—accuses Kelly of pride. But he is indignant.

'Wherein am I proud?' he says.

She answers: 'In the same wherein the Devil was first proud. Who glorified the Devil?'

Kelly replies: 'God,' but Dee rebukes him, and Galvah continues incoherently her tirade. Later she begins to prophesy:

'The finger of God stretcheth over many mountains. His spirit comforteth the weakness of many places. No sense is unfurnished where his light remaineth. For understand what I am, and it is a sufficient answer.'

(Doubtless this was true.)

Dee asks: 'At the beginning to write the book, shall I require your instructions?'

Galvah: 'Do so. The Mountains of the World shall lie flat; but the spirit of God shall never be confounded.'

Kelly interrupts to remark: 'She sitteth upon a rock, and hath done ever since supper.'

To which Galvah replies: 'Ah, Sirrah, I was a-weary.'

Dee then asks about Albert Laski and Isabel Lister, but is put off with 'Ask me these things to-morrow' and 'What is spoken by us we give but our consent to; for he that speaketh in us is to be asked no such question.' At another occasion Galvah airily declares: 'The greater thy folly is, the greater thy wisdom will be hereafter.'

On 4th July, just before Laski was due to come to the

house again, Kelly announced his intention of going away for five days. Dee accordingly wrote to Laski telling him that Kelly would be away, and adding: 'He is to return (as he says) after five days. What the very truth is, He knoweth who is our true and omnipotent God.' Dee then showed this letter to Kelly before sending it, and Kelly naturally, though somewhat to Dee's surprise, was furious at the insinuation; and though Dee destroyed the letter Kelly protested that there was a spirit telling him that if he stayed where he was he should be hanged, and added: 'I cannot abide my wife, I love her not, nay I abhor her.' (He had only been married six weeks.) Dee expostulated, but Kelly released him from all obligation to pay his stipend of £50 a year, seized his mare and rode away. Three hours later he returned by boat and came up the stairs without his boots on. 'I have lent my mare out,' said he, 'and so am returned'—as if that was all he had gone to do.

Almost immediately he declares that he sees Madimi, and Dee takes pencil and paper to note what should be said. Madimi's answers are as naughty and unhelpful as usual. When Dee asks of William and Richard Laski she retorts: 'Those were two pretty men for me to meddle withal! When you set yourselves together, and agree together, I will make all agree together.'

'Will you, Madimi,' cries Kelly, 'lend me a hundred pound for a fortnight?'

Madimi replies instantly: 'I have swept all my money out of doors,' and then goes on to deliver a lecture on love and the word of God.

At the end of this session there appear fourteen spirits of divers evil-favoured shapes, and one of them says: 'We have this man for our habitation'—meaning Kelly. Then some other spirit came 'and sealed them all in the forehead; the 14 and their principal, their sealing was as if they had been branded. They sunk all 15 downward through the floore of the Chamber, and there came a thing like a wind and pluckt them by the feet away.'

Kelly adds: 'Methinketh I am lighter than I was; and I seem to be empty, and to be returned from a great amasing; for this fortnight I do not well remember what I have done or said.'

Madimi comments: 'Thou art eased of a great burden. Love God, love thy friends, love thy wife.' And the two practitioners say the psalm of thanksgiving for Kelly's deliverance from the fifteen devils.

It must have been her theological lectures which kept Dee interested in Madimi, for it seemed possible that at any moment she might reveal some important secret of alchemy or divine philosophy; and it was after knowledge that Dee was seeking. At any rate he always seems glad to see Madimi, who with all her perverseness has a certain charm; but the same cannot be said of the spirit calling itself Il.

Il is dressed as one of the seven deadly vices in a morality play, and at first he is described as a good angel, although he has mocked at Kelly openly, and in fact his free-and-easy manner is the last thing to be expected from a good angel. After leaving the experimenters alone for a time he suddenly reappears at Bremen, with the exclamation:

'Room for a player! Jesus! who would have thought I should have met you here?'

At this language even Kelly is shocked, but he describes Il to Dee: 'He is all in his ragged apparel, down from the girdle-stead; but above he hath a white satin jerkin.'

Dee rebukes Il, who retorts: 'Tush, doubt not of me, for I am Il!' And when Kelly rebukes him too Il continues: 'If I must bear with thee for speaking foolishly, which art but flesh of thy own wisdom, how much more oughtest thou to be contented with my gesture, which is appointed of Him which regardeth not the outward form, but the fulfilling of His will. . . . How say you to this, sir, ha?'

Kelly is then forced to confess: 'He turneth up his heels to E.K.'

There follows a typical piece of spirit pantomime. Il goes into a house, brings out a man by the hand and whispers in his ear, saying: 'I have business in Denmark and this fellow is afraid to go thither.' Then a woman in English attire walks round the house, and Il is seen in a street, and a thick man with him; their dress is accurately described. A town appears next, which Kelly takes for Emden. But presently Kelly cries: 'He is gone, and all the stone as red as blood.' He comes back twice, lecturing on Jehovah as he does so, and at the end of his lecture says Amen and falls all in pieces, as small as ashes. At the end of the sitting Dee writes in Latin as usual: 'To almighty God be all honour and glory, Amen.'

It is strange to think that such unsatisfactory séances were continued by Dee for six or seven years, and not only in Mortlake, but at Bremen, Lubeck, Cracow, Prague,

Nuremberg, and largely at Tribau in Bohemia, where he settled for some time until Kelly left him. Given the times he lived in, we cannot blame Dee for his belief in spirits; but that a man of his intelligence did not see through the fraud of their religious jargon is a mark of somewhat unexpected credulity.

The curious thing about Madimi is that with the passage of years she grows up. At Tribau in 1587, a short time before Kelly went away to practise alchemy on his own, it appears that he is tiring of the partnership with Dee, for a voice rebukes him for saying that he is tired of the visions of the heavens and gives him fourteen days to decide whether he will continue or whether young Arthur Dee shall be trained as a seer in his stead. Arthur at that time was eight. The spirit also declares that he will not altogether depart from Kelly, who shall receive comfort in the works of his hands—evidently in alchemy. It seems in fact as though Kelly, who at first may have believed in his mediumistic powers, has now discovered that the sittings can be faked and is beginning to put them to his own use.

Fourteen days later, when Arthur has been tried as a seer and found wanting, there appear to Kelly a vast number of spirits in a most disorderly and filthy manner, of whom only Madimi remains, and she opens her apparel and shows herself all naked.

'Fie on thee,' cries Kelly, 'Devil avoid with this filthiness.'

'In the name of God,' asks Madimi, 'why find you fault with me?' She continues to talk with the usual mixture of pertness and religious jargon, remarking incidentally: 'The apostle Paul abounded in carnal lust,' and presently

adjures them to have everything, even their wives, in common. This new injunction was too much for Dee and Kelly, and they sat up until two in the morning discussing whether such a commandment could possibly come from God. Then Dee went up to bed and told his wife about it, and she, after lying a-tremble for a quarter of an hour, flew into a high rage and refused to believe it unless the spirits (in which she previously had confidence) should confirm it. Dee drew up a covenant to be signed by the four of them pledging obedience; he hoped that this might help them in the search for the secrets of nature by increasing their mutual love and unity. Kelly on the other hand drew up a document pointing out that he had always doubted and disliked the insinuations and doctrine of these spirits and had called upon Dee to abjure them for his soul's health; now he refused to have anything more to do with the matter. There were, however, three more sittings in the following month, at which a large number of false political predictions were poured out; and then Kelly went off to Prague. For some time he was in high favour with the emperor Rudolph II, and was made a Bohemian knight, which explains why a man who is said to have begun his career as a petty criminal is later alluded to as Sir Edward. After a year or two however he was arrested and, having written in prison works on alchemy in both prose and verse, he died the usual mysterious death.

It was commonly believed both in England and Bohemia that Dee and Kelly had made gold at Tribau. Burleigh and Ashmole recounted stories, considered by them to come from reliable sources, that the two alche-

mists had made gold, and that Queen Elizabeth had been sent a warming-pan of which part of the lid had been transmuted into gold. In *Aubrey's Lives* it is mentioned that Arthur Dee told two friends that as a boy he had played at quoits with gold plates made by alchemy in the garret of his father's lodgings in Prague. It does seem to be a fact that Dee was never so well off for money as during his stay in Bohemia; but had he really made gold it is unlikely that he would have been so poor when he returned to England. For if Kelly could make gold he could presumably have done the same.

In all this there is yet no mention of the alteration of kingdoms. This certainly was not Dee's object. He wanted knowledge and was without political ambition. The political implications of his spiritualism were not great. At one time the spirits used to promise that his patron Albert Laski should become King of Poland, which did not happen. Later Dee went to visit the emperor Rudolph II and, just like one of the Hebrew prophets, adjured him to turn to God. Rudolph was not very interested, but Dee was allowed to have consultations with Dr. Curtius of the privy council, and, encouraged by the spirits, he offered to make the philosopher's stone if the royal exchequer would bear the expense. He did not know how to do so, but was quite confident that the spirits would tell him when the time arrived. The emperor however refused to agree, and when Dee made the same offer to King Stephan of Poland he was equally unsuccessful. He wrote about the matter and about various underhand political dealings to Queen Elizabeth's secretary Sir Francis Walsingham.

The alteration of kingdoms, however, was an idea not of Dee's or Kelly's, but of Dr. Casaubon, who printed in 1659 Dee's manuscript account of his sittings. Casaubon, of course, believed in spirits as much as anyone else, in fact he says that his first object in publishing the work was that it might be used 'against Atheists, and such as do not believe that there be any Divels or Spirits.' Speaking therefore of the relations of Dee and Kelly to various European kings and princes, Casaubon states: 'I am much of opinion that these spirits had as great hopes of Dr. Dee, as ever they had of Bacchus or Mahomet. But God was not pleased at that time to permit that their malice and subtilty should prevail. And I think, if we consider it well, we have reason to praise God for it. England might have been over-run with Anabaptism. . . .'

Casaubon in fact believes that the spirits were evil and were sent from hell to corrupt Christianity, but failed because Dee was so devoutly religious. Kelly too used to protest that these were evil spirits, and Dee had great difficulty to convince him otherwise; to Dee it seemed impossible that spirits which spoke so much of God, and which came to sittings introduced by prayer, could be other than good.

After the departure of Kelly Dee's spiritualism came to an end. He returned to England and lived in poverty at Mortlake until he was made warden of Christ's College, Manchester, in 1595. But at the death of his old friend and patron Elizabeth the throne passed to a king who considered himself an expert on witchcraft and who had written a book on *Demonologie*. Acts were passed against witches, and so persistent were the rumours that Dee had

been 'a conjurer or caller or invocator of divels' that he sent a petition to the king asking to be tried and cleared of this 'most grievous and dammageable sclaunder'. But neither king nor parliament took any notice of him; he was a relic of the last century who had outlived his importance, though not his fame. At the end of his life he found another medium called Bartholomew Hickman who gave him messages from the archangel Raphael, cheering but inconclusive. He had written books on navigation, mathematics and geometry, on logic and physics, on discoveries and inventions, on astrology, astronomy and alchemy, on burning-glasses, on geography, on perspective, on missionaries, on the cabbala and on philosophy; but men only remembered him as a magician and slandered him as such. Yet it is not to be forgotten that in his old age he was so far ahead of his time as to hold the modern point of view about witches. So certain was he that they and their accusers were deluded, and not instruments of the devil, that he offered to share their fate if the contrary could be proven.

He died at the age of eighty in December 1608 and was buried at Mortlake.

To the modern mind, as incredulous in unscientific things as it is gullible in political matters, the achievements of Dee are likely to be overshadowed by his persistent practice of spiritualism, and his character to be belittled for holding beliefs which among his contemporaries were universal. It is as well therefore to remember that he was not only one of the cleverest and most useful men of Queen Elizabeth's time, but also one of the most charming.

CHAPTER XIII

Madness and Adventure

Most of the personalities discussed in this book were professional magicians. For completeness' sake it may be as well to consider what happens when men who are not born to magic turn their attention to it. For this purpose we can consider three very different types, a soldier, a scholar, and a goldsmith, representing respectively the melancholic, the intellectual, and the artistic temperament. They are Gilles de Rais, marshal of France, Jerome Cardan, scientist, and the famous adventurer and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini.

Gilles de Rais was born about 1404, very casually brought up by his grandfather and married off as soon as possible. At the impoverished court of Charles VII, however, he was perhaps the richest courtier, and so great was his courage in battle that at the age of only twenty-five he was created a Marshal of France. He was given charge of the bodyguard of Joan of Arc and accompanied her everywhere. He was also unusually handsome, and had in fact everything which anyone could ask of life. But, as so often, too many blessings proved his bane.

After the death of Joan of Arc he withdrew at the age of twenty-six to his castles of Tiffauges and Machecoul in Poitou, the coastal region south of the Loire. Here he maintained a court as rich as any king, with two hundred men-at-arms, a vast quantity of clerics, choirboys and serving-men, and open house for his guests, who were very numerous and chosen among the learned and the artistic. Despite his wealth he found himself running into debt, and as he was unwilling to reduce the splendour of his life there was no prospect of his debts doing anything but increase. In desperation he took up alchemy, and in the hope of making gold invited to his castles every alchemist he could find. All of them failed. He immersed himself in the subject not as an alchemist but as a man who is in need of money. He would not admit that he, Gilles de Rais, could no longer live as a great lord. From every quarter of France and even from Italy alchemists and magicians were brought, and though none of them could make gold two of them succeeded in convincing Gilles of the existence of the devil and his power to appear on earth. Both of these events are vouched for by the proceedings at the trial.

One sorcerer attempted to perform an evocation for Gilles de Rais and his cousin Gilles de Sillé, but Sillé refused to enter the magic circle and cowered in the window reciting exorcisms. Gilles stepped in, but shivering with fright, and after a time he felt himself seized by the nape of the neck and began to call on the Holy Virgin to save him. The sorcerer in a fury flung him out of the circle, he leapt out of the door and Sillé out of the window. Then,

listening outside, they heard screams from the room they had left and the sound of blows coming thick and fast. Not until all was quiet did they venture to push open the door, and there they found the sorcerer in a pool of blood, with a fractured skull and all the signs of a terrible beating. Later the same thing happened to Francesco Prelati, a Florentine sorcerer of only twenty-five who was the intimate friend of Gilles.

Before the first of these conjurations Gilles had signed in his blood a deed promising to give the devil whatever he wanted except his life and his soul. He was convinced by now that only the devil could help him, and yet he always refused to pledge the devil his soul, nor did he ever dare to perjure himself.

When conjurations failed Prelati announced that if Gilles would not surrender his soul he must instead commit the most heinous crimes in order to please the devil. And so it was that in all the countrysides, wherever he went, children began to disappear. How they were taken, and whether by him or by his accomplices, no one knew, but as the desolation spread around his castles and followed him on his journeys suspicion increased. Yet nobody dared to speak against him or to attack him; the king of France did not wish to attempt it, nor the Duke of Brittany. He was brought to justice by the bishop of Nantes, eight years after the death of Joan of Arc, and only then because he invaded a church in the middle of mass to carry off and throw into a dungeon a man to whom one of his mortgaged properties had been sold.

When the armed men to arrest him appeared before his

castle of Machecoul Gilles, after some hesitation, decided not to order his followers to resist. The story told by Eliphas Lévi, that his wife was only saved from joining the number of his victims by the timely arrival of the bishop with the Duke of Brittany's troops, seems to be quite unfounded. He was led off to Nantes and honourably imprisoned in the castle. When the trial began he at first attempted to browbeat the judges with insults and a refusal to plead; but they had no intention of respecting his rank, and he did not dare to swear that the accusations were untrue. For all his black magic he did not like to imperil his soul. And so finally he abandoned all his pride and confessed everything in humility and repentance, asking the people to pray for him.

So shocked was the bishop at the revelations of this confession that he rose and veiled the face of the Christ which hung above the president's chair. And indeed no normal person would have imagined such things, far less perpetrated them. Not only had Gilles and Prelati slaughtered children to use their blood in alchemic experiments, but they had made offerings to the devil of the heart, eyes and hands of these children and had sought to produce the philosopher's stone by a mixture of generation and bloodshed. Such methods were never characteristic of alchemy and indeed exceeded anything normally practised in black magic.

The number of children killed by Gilles de Rais was said to have been at least eight hundred, but far too numerous for an exact account; and it is almost certain that Perrault founded the story of Bluebeard on that of Gilles, who according to tradition had fair hair and a beard so dark

that it looked blue. Perrault has merely expurgated the tale by the substitution of seven wives for the unnumbered children whose remains were found in the castles, and added the incident of the curious wife.

With two of his accomplices Gilles was sentenced to be hanged and burnt, and the sentence was executed on the morning of 26th October 1440.

Once he had repented he conducted himself as a most exemplary son of the church and died in the conviction that his repentance would in the end admit him to paradise. His unwillingness to perjure himself in the sight of God, though it would not nowadays be found in a man of his character, was typical of the age, and one of his redeeming features. He was also brave and loyal, and it is a strange fact that his evocations of the devil were inspired by his admiration for Joan of Arc. What he wanted from Satan was not only money to pay his debts, but also power—the power to take fortresses by magic and so save his country by driving the English out of France!

The case of Gilles de Rais is far too extraordinary to seem typical of anything; and yet on consideration it must be admitted to be typical, in its exaggerated way, of the mental attitude of a man of action who is not also a man of thought. Fortunately for the world the necessity to sacrifice everything to the devil of one's ambition is not often so whole-heartedly accepted.

As a contrast to Gilles de Rais, Jerome Cardan was a man of thought and not a man of action. He was considered one of the most intelligent men of his century, and was born on 24th September 1500, almost a hundred years

after Rais and in the year before Cellini. He was physician, astrologer, inventor, and philosopher, and though he had a most unfortunate life he had for his horoscope Jupiter rising in Taurus, which gave him a steady optimism and a very kind and generous nature.

If he ever practised magic—which was against the laws of both church and state—he was careful to conceal the fact. He calls it a damnable art and Cornelius Agrippa a man born to all evil. And yet his father professed to have had for twenty-eight years a familiar spirit which answered all his questions, and he himself was always hearing mysterious noises which he attributed to supernatural agency. His books are full of ingenious ideas, careful observations, and intelligent attempts to understand nature. We cannot tell therefore whether his denunciation of magic was sincere, or merely feigned for fear of the church and public opinion; for the most part he contents himself with telling stories about it, delivering the opinions of others, and declaring it to be dangerous. As regards the evocation of demons he says that people are frequently imposed upon, yet it is possible that not all the phenomena are deliberate frauds; and he concludes that spirits do exist.

On the other hand in Chapter 91 of his book *On the Variety of Things* there is quoted from an anonymous author a long description of a method for finding out the present, past and future. The past is seen in an earthenware vessel, the present in a bronze one and the future in a vessel of glass; the three must be ranged in different order according to what one wishes to see, and must be filled, the first with wine, the second with oil, and the third with water. To

discover the past the earthenware vessel must be put first, then the brazen one, and finally the glass one, as in the picture. ' "Observe next," ' says Cardan's authority, " 'that there must be a board painted green on top and a bill like those which are used for pruning vines. In the bottom of the glass vessel there shall be a strip of plain glass, in the bottom of the brazen one a strip of green glass and in the earthenware one some myrrh, and the vessels must be exceedingly clean, and the glass one covered with a clean white linen cloth. You shall operate in an open place without shade, the weather must be very clear, and must have been so for three days past, and by day you shall operate in the sunlight and by night in the light of the moon or the stars. There must be a great silence in that place, and the practiser shall be clothed all in white, except his head and face which are to be covered in red silk or linen so that only the eyes are seen, and everything must be brilliantly red by night and brilliantly white by day. And if it is springtime the whitest flowers of different kinds shall be scattered about; and in the daytime we practise also with a wooden vessel instead of an earthenware one. The liquids must be clean and clear, and liquor of wine must be used instead of wine itself"—possibly by liquor of wine is intended the clearest of grape juice or else *aqua vitae*—"but if there is no liquor of wine to be had you may use water which has rained without thunder. And know that none of the vessels are to be full, and less so the glass one, which must be only half full of water, that what you seek may be seen in the empty part of it; and you shall look into the glass vessel from the side, because it is covered

over, but into the others from on top. And it is said that if the other vessels are perforated so as to receive the light better it will do no harm, and these vases must have a

Figure 10. Jerome Cardan's Experiment

wide mouth, though for the glass one that is no matter. And a shadow of the thing sought will be seen in the water, an image of it in the oil and the thing itself in the wine." So much for this delusion.'

The lower part of the picture shows the lonely hill on which this 'art' is to be practised. The vessels are large and their contents is written on them. The objects in the corners are, on the left a poplar wand half peeled, and on the right a root of cucumber. The inscription round the edge reads: 'A piece of wood perforated to receive the influence of the stars.'

Now this inscription is obviously not included by Cardan merely to enable him to make a mock of divination, otherwise he would have done so. Merely to call it a delusion is a piece of conciseness most untypical of medieval writing. True it is that he only quotes it as the practice of an anonymous author, and without recommendation; but he describes a number of other experiments elsewhere. We may say if we like that Cardan was prejudiced in favour of magic by having a father who had a familiar spirit, or that as an astrologer he must have been interested in other ways of attempting to discover the future. Yet one has only to read his books to see that his spirit was scientific and his critical sense acute. Like everyone of his time, Cardan had to take seriously the secret arts, and it is not improbable therefore that he may have made experiments in both magic and divination.

Now Benvenuto Cellini was a very different type of man. His professional work as a sculptor and goldsmith has made his name immortal, but it was only one part of his activity and not the most enjoyable. He was always up to some prank or other, exceedingly fond of women and wine, and having a fine physique and plenty of natural impudence was able to gratify his lusts in many directions. Sooner or

later, then, he was bound to concern himself with magic. The following adventure shows his character well, and incidentally illustrates the practice already known to the ancient Egyptians of trying to drive away a demon by means of a bad smell. Assafoetida was not so called for nothing. The pentacle used in this conjuration was probably written on a piece of virgin parchment, and as so often a boy below the age of puberty was required for the operation. The story cannot be better told than by translating it directly from Cellini's autobiography.

'At that time,' he says, 'I fell in love, as young men do, with a Sicilian girl who was very beautiful. But since she on her side showed a very great liking for me too, her mother noticed how things were and suspected what might happen to her—which was, that I had for a year been plotting to elope with this girl to Florence without her mother knowing; but she, suspecting some such thing, left Rome secretly one night and went off in the direction of Naples, giving out that she was going by Civita Vecchia, though in fact she went by Ostia. I followed them both to Civita Vecchia, and committed innumerable follies to find the girl again; to relate them in detail would take too long, suffice it to say that I was in danger of losing my wits or even my life. At the end of two months she wrote to me that she was in Sicily and very unhappy; but in the meanwhile, as it happened, I had given myself up to every imaginable pleasure and had taken a new love simply to extinguish this one.

'By various extravagant chances I happened to make friends with a certain Sicilian priest who had a very culti-

vated mind and a good knowledge of Latin and Greek; and one day in the course of conversation he came to speak of the art of necromancy, at which, being very eager to learn about it, I said: "All my life I have had the greatest desire to hear or know something of this art." At these words the priest observed that the man who sets himself to that undertaking needs very great courage and resolution. I answered that in courage and resolution I should excel if only I had occasion to put them in practice. Then the priest replied: "If you have so much courage as that, I will give you your fill of everything else." So we agreed to make a start on the undertaking.

'One evening about that time the priest made his preparations and told me to find a companion or two, but not more. I called on Vincenzio Romoli, who was a great friend of mine, and he brought with him a man from Pistoia who also had some knowledge of necromancy. We went to the Colosseum and there the priest robed himself as necromancers do and began to draw circles on the ground with the most wonderful ceremony one can imagine in the world. He had made us bring fire, and some assafoetida, which is an expensive perfume, and other foul-smelling herbs.

'When all was in order he made the entrance into the circle and taking us by the hand he led us into it; then he ordered his acolyte to throw the odours on the fire when they were needed, and to the rest of us he entrusted the care of the fire and the perfumes, and then he started the conjuration. This business lasted more than an hour and a half, and legions of devils appeared, so that the Colosseum

was full of them. I was looking after the precious perfumes, and when the priest saw there was such a quantity of devils present he turned to me and said: "Benvenuto, ask them something." I told them to put me in the company of my Sicilian friend Angelica. That night we obtained no reply whatever; but I had the very greatest satisfaction for my curiosity.

'The sorcerer told me that we must go another time and that, whatever I asked, I should be satisfied, but he desired me to bring with me a young virgin boy. I took one of my shop-boys, who was about twelve years old, and I again invited Vincenzio Romoli; and I also brought to this affair a certain Agnolino Gaddi who was frequently a companion of ours.

'When we had arrived once more at the appointed place the sorcerer made the same preparations as before, with the same and even more wonderful performances, and placed himself in the circle; this too he had made with even more wonderful care and more wonderful ceremonies. He gave to my friend Vincenzio the care of the perfumes and the fire, which Agnolino Gaddi shared, then he put into my hand the pentacle and told me to turn it in the directions which he would indicate by nodding, and under the pentacle I stationed my little errand-boy. The sorcerer began to make those terrible invocations and to summon by name a great number of the demons which are in command of legions of other; and he called upon them by the virtue and power of the uncreated God who liveth for ever, with Hebrew words and a good number of Greek and Latin too; so that in a short space of time they

filled the whole Colosseum, a hundred times more than they had filled it on the previous occasion. Vincenzio Romoli was looking after the fire with the help of Agnolino Gaddi and using a good quantity of the precious perfumes. At the sorcerer's indication I again asked to be with Angelica. The sorcerer turned to me and said: "Do you hear that they have said that in the space of a month you shall be where she is?" And then again he added that he besought me to stand by him firmly, for the legions were a thousand times more numerous than those he had summoned and they were of the most dangerous kind; and since they had settled the question I had asked we must try patiently to coax them to go away. On my other side the boy who was under the pentacle said in a terrified way that there were present a million of the fiercest men, and they were all threatening us; he said further that there had appeared four enormous giants, who were armed and showed signs of wishing to attack the circle. At this the sorcerer, who was shaking with fright, tried the best he could in a polite and gentle manner to dismiss them; and Vincenzio Romoli, who was shaking like a twig, managed the perfumes. I, who felt as much fear as any of them, tried to show it less, and so gave them courage most amazingly; but I was certain that I was a dead man from the fear that I saw in the sorcerer himself. The boy had wedged his head between his knees, saying: "I will die like this, for we are all dead men." I said to him: "These creatures are all beneath us, and what you see is only smoke and shadows, so raise your eyes." But when he had raised his eyes he said again: "The whole Colosseum is on fire and the fire is

coming down on top of us." And again he put his hands to his face and said he was dead, and that he did not want to see any more. The sorcerer besought me not to forsake him, but to stand by him firmly, and to have them make a smell with the assafoetida. So I turned to Vincenzio Romoli and told him to burn some assafoetida quickly. As I said this I looked at Agnolino Gaddi, who was so terrified that the pupils of his eyes were starting right out of his head and he was more than half dead; and I said to him: "Agnolo, on such occasions as this one should not be afraid, one should do something to be helpful; so put on quickly some of the assafoetida." The moment he tried to move, the aforesaid Agnolo emitted such a trumpet of wind and such a quantity of matter with it as was far more powerful than the assafoetida. At this noise and the fearful stench the boy, having heard me snigger, raised his head a little; and his fear being somewhat quieted he said that the demons had started to fly off at a furious rate. And thus we remained until the bells began to ring for morning prayer. The boy said then that there were only a few devils left, and they at a distance. When the sorcerer had finished the rest of his ceremonies, and disrobed and packed together a great bundle of books which he had brought, we all together stepped out of the circle with him, huddling one against the other, especially the boy, who had placed himself in the middle and taken the sorcerer by his coat and me by my cloak; and all the time that we were going homewards he kept on saying that two of the demons which we had seen in the Colosseum were going along in front of us skipping about or running along now on the

roofs and now on the ground. The sorcerer told us that of all the times he had entered a magic circle not once had such a remarkable adventure befallen him, and he tried to persuade me to consent to join him in composing a magic book from which we should gain infinite riches, for we would demand that the demons teach us about the treasures of which the earth is full and thus we should become exceedingly rich; but these affairs of love were vanity and follies which did not amount to anything.'

All the same Cellini did not, as it happens, compose the magic book; perhaps he cared more for women than wealth, and he was certainly more devoted to his art of carving and modelling than to anything else. Perhaps also he did not really believe in the power of demons despite the evidence of his eyes.

For there is no doubt that the devils were actually seen by all the participants. To write off the whole story as an attempt to impose upon the reader would be merely disingenuous. Cellini's autobiography is not a book written to impress; it was the work of an impulsive man who dashed it off as fast as he could, so much so that it has none of the pretensions to a fine style and in fact the construction of the sentences frequently breaks down. It is the work of a hot-blooded man whose mind was always ahead of his pen, who might be mistaken or exaggerate, but it is not the work of a mean liar.

It has been suggested that the whole effect was produced by throwing shadows from a magic-lantern on to clouds of smoke; but that is not necessarily the most probable explanation; if it is the true one then the sorcerer must have

been an uncommonly good actor. People do sometimes see things which are not there. It is hard to credit the fact when sitting in daylight in a well-known room, but standing rooted to the spot in a strange and ghostly place at three o'clock in the morning makes things seem very different. Hallucinations do occur, and we shall see in the last chapter that in treating of magic they are not beside the question. When Eliphas Lévi evoked Apollonius of Tyana it was not Apollonius in person that he saw, but merely an image. Why not admit that here too necromancy may for once have achieved its object and produced hallucination?

However that may be, Cellini found Angelica again and spent the night with her; and, says he, 'While I was rejoicing in this rapture, I remembered that on that very day expired the month which the demons had promised me in the necromantic circle; so let everyone who troubles himself with demons consider the inestimable dangers I passed through.'

CHAPTER XIV

The Magical Predictions of Nostradamus

The art of foretelling the future is not one which a man can be advised to take up lightly. Astrologers and others have spent their lives attempting it, and as a rule with greater trouble than advantage. The skill of Varley is forgotten, and the astrologer of Tiberius is little more than a legend. Only one man do we know of who made himself a vast reputation during his lifetime and whose prophecies are now, four hundred years later, still discussed with interest—and, what is more remarkable, without being accused of error. In his own day, of course, before history had had the time to verify his predictions, he was denounced by some and honoured by others; but no one hitherto has set himself up to demonstrate that Nostradamus was ever wrong. How did he achieve such an extraordinary result?

In the first place he published his predictions in the form of poetic quatrains so enigmatically expressed that before they are realized it is impossible to know what they mean, though afterwards the correspondence may be perfectly

plain. But if that had been all Nostradamus would never have made himself a permanent reputation. The fact is that he foretold, centuries in advance, not only events, but even the names of people and places to be involved in them.

How he did it no one can quite discover. There are two quatrains which suggest the use of magic to induce clairvoyance; and for the man who in 1555 named Varennes as the place where Louis XVI would be arrested in 1791 this is altogether more probable than not. As a rule the verses are in no particular order, but the first of all describes him seated alone at night over a brazen tripod such as was used at Delphi, with only a small flame between him and the darkness; the second seems to refer to an invocation by water.

By Nostradamus himself, however, his power of prediction is attributed largely to a hereditary talent, and this may have been not only innate, but encouraged by education. His grandfather gave him his first grounding in the occult sciences, and he graduated as a physician at Montpellier, where magic cannot have been by any means unknown. He declares also that he had come across some magic books which he burnt because they were very dangerous; but evidently not before he had squeezed the juice of them.

The tale that his family was Jewish is complicated by the more detailed statement that he was of the lost tribe of Issachar; but perhaps this is only a reference to 1 Chronicles xii, 32, where it is said that the tribe of Issachar were 'men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do'—in other words, he was a sage and

prophet. By religion he was a Roman Catholic, and unlike most magicians he seems to have been a sincere and ardent one.

He was born at St. Rémy-en-Crau, near the delta of the Rhone, on 14th December 1503 at noon. Thus, like Paracelsus, he had Aries rising and the Sun in Capricorn on the midheaven; and this accounts for his strong personal prejudice and entirely self-made career. Paracelsus, however, had Mercury and Neptune also on the midheaven, which explains his phenomenal memory and high opinion of his own powers, and the Moon rising, which gave him not only greater adaptability and a more wandering life, but also a broader face. Nostradamus was of a little less than average stature, strongly built, quick and vigorous. He had a wide and high forehead, a nose straight and well-proportioned, grey eyes, pink cheeks even in his old age, and a long thick beard. His look was typical of one born under the Sun—in repose gentle, thoughtful, and full of humanity, but in anger flaming with ferocity. In body and mind he was alert and active, and in general he thought much and spoke little; however he could talk very well when he chose, and in conversation was witty and outspoken, with a mordant humour. He practised himself regularly in fasting, praying and giving of alms, was generous to the poor, very severe to the vicious, and his favourite quotation was: 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.'

After taking his medical degree with unusual brilliance he settled in Montpellier and married, but his wife died young, so he returned to Salon, which was near his birth-

place, and married again. At what time he began to compose predictions is unknown, but it was years before the publication of his first seven *Centuries* in March 1555. This book seems to have made his reputation at once, so it is perhaps true that he had for some years been publishing annual almanacs as astrologers sometimes do. At any rate he was sent for by the king in the same or the following year, and according to one of his biographers made the journey to Paris in thirty-one days. There he was treated with honour by both king and queen and sent to Blois to read the horoscopes of their three children who became François II, Charles IX and Henri III; what he said about them is not known, but he predicted quite clearly in the *Centuries* that all three would reign and die prematurely.

After his visit to court Nostradamus composed three more 'centuries', each as before of a hundred quatrains in haphazard order, and later some '*sixains*', verse predictions in six-line stanzas, and some '*présages*'. These, with his dedicatory epistle to King Henri II, contain the whole of his predictions. He also left a book on make-up, a remedy against the plague, and one or two little writings on medicine.

As a character he is problematic, largely because there was nothing very unusual about him. To sleep only four or five hours was in those days nothing extraordinary for a hard worker. One could have talked to the old man with his pink cheeks, his watchful expression and his acid wit and never suspected that here was a practiser of magic and prophecy. And yet he claims that his predictions range from A.D. 1555 to 3797.

This figure is an invitation to incredulity. But no one can honestly call Nostradamus a fraud; the list of his successes is too imposing. Consider the quatrain: 'When a Bourbon shall be in power, bearing in himself the insignia of office, he shall receive his punishment for an illegal flight and under the name of his clan.' Louis XVI was a hereditary king, unlike more modern heads of States whom Nostradamus may describe as 'kings' from their authority, and after his flight to Varennes he was tried and condemned under the family name of Louis Capet and not Bourbon.

Quite a number of quatrains describe the rise of Napoleon. 'An emperor shall be born near Italy who shall cost the empire dear; his alliances will be much talked of and he will be found more a butcher than a prince.' Again: 'From a private soldier he shall become emperor and from the short robe he shall come to the long; valiant in arms but to the church most tiresome, he will trouble the priests as water a sponge.' Napoleon's respect for the Pope was very limited; he attacked the papal states—for which he was excommunicated—and removed Pius VII first to Savona (a name given by Nostradamus) and then to Fontainebleau; he also forced his Pope to crown him, and then at the critical moment took the crown from the Pope's hands and crowned himself.

He is described again as follows: 'Of a name that never a King of France bore; there was never so dreadful a thunderbolt; Spain, Italy and England tremble, and he is very attentive to have a foreign wife'—Marie-Louise of Austria, of course. The Hundred Days are thus epitomized: 'The captive prince, conquered and in Oetalia (which is

Latin for Elba) will go by sea past Genoa to Marseilles'; and it is said elsewhere that he will disembark near Nice, which is quite true, as he sailed from Elba to Cannes. Another quatrain mentions his last exile. 'The general who had led infinite hosts ends far from his native clime among people of strange customs and language, five thousand strong on a chalky island in the sea.'

Three things make it very difficult to translate Nostradamus; in fact his text can only be paraphrased. In the first place he deliberately leaves his grammar indecisive, as a means to attain obscurity; secondly he deals in allusion, speaking of people under anagrammatic appellations or the names of their lands and countries, or any symbolic title he can think of, such as the Key for the papacy, the Wolf for Germany, and 'Water' for revolution; and thirdly he indulges in philological tricks such as using a French word to mean whatever the same word used to mean in Latin.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that one cannot be sure of his meaning until after the event—and not always then. Consequently to say that any of his predictions have been falsified would be extremely rash. Here, however, is one which at first sight seems to refer to something which has not happened yet, and is not likely to do so in the future:

'The English prince who has Mars on his meridian would like to pursue his prosperous fortune; of the two duels one will pierce his gall. Alas for him, the beloved of his mother.'

The meaning for once in a way seems plain enough, but

what English prince has been killed in the second of two duels? It seems very unlikely that such an event will happen in the future. We have to remember, however, that Nostradamus never uses such a term as 'prime minister', and hence 'prince' may only mean a political leader, in which case the prince's mother is probably the country itself; then to be pierced in the gall is perhaps only symbolic, signifying that he will be defeated in a peculiarly galling manner. Such an event may still occur if England has a leader born under Mars.

Just occasionally Nostradamus makes himself entirely clear, as when he says: 'The third climate comprised under Aries, the year a thousand seven hundred twenty and seven in October, the king of Persia captured by those of Egypt, battle, death, loss, to the Cross great disgrace.' The first line here refers to the antique astrological division of the world into climates, in the third of which the sign of the Ram rules Palestine and possibly Persia. What actually happened in October 1727 was that the Afghan Shah of Persia defeated the Turks and made a treaty with them acknowledging the suzerainty of the Caliph, who was also the ruler of Egypt; but Christianity does not seem to have been disgraced in this purely Musulman event.

On other occasions statements apparently clear are not meant to be taken literally. One of the outstanding events of French history in the nineteen-thirties was the fusillade of 6th February 1934. Nostradamus writes as follows: 'Saturn playing the ox in the water, Mars in the arrow, the sixth of February will bring mortality.' But at 6th February 1934 Saturn was not in a watery sign nor in

Taurus, nor was Mars in Sagittarius; commentators have accordingly proposed to translate: 'When the old regime is trying to play a financial game against popular discontent Mars will let fly his arrows'—Taurus being the sign of finance and 'the wave' an expression used elsewhere by Nostradamus to signify popular revolt.

Such interpretations do seem rather like twisting the sense, but then the text is twisted in the first place; and one should not forget that as a general warning Nostradamus prefixed to the whole work these lines in Latin:

LAWFUL PRECAUTION AGAINST INEPT CRITICS

They who read these verses should meditate them ripely:
Let the profane and ignorant crowd not be attracted to them;
And let all astrologers, fools, and barbarians be far away:
He who acts otherwise, let him be properly accursed.

It is perhaps because of this warning against astrologers that most of the critics refuse to take literally such apparently astrological indications as 'when the Sun and Saturn are conjoined in water'. On one occasion, for example, 'Sol in the urn' does not mean 'when the Sun is in Aquarius' but 'When the question of royalty is put to the vote', as it implicitly was in 1871.

There are several tolerably clear references to the League of Nations, in particular the famous quatrain: 'The discourses of the Lake of Geneva will excite anger, sittings will be extended over weeks, then months, then years, then all shall prove useless, the magistrates will condemn their ineffectual laws.' This reminds us of the defiance of the League by Japan and Italy; but the follow-

ing lines recall the visits of Mr. Chamberlain to Munich, of the unfortunate Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden, of Hacha to Berlin, and of various Balkan politicians who were summoned by Hitler to be told how their countries were to be subjected: 'Many will come and talk of peace among very powerful kings and lords: but it shall not be granted them at so close quarters except they make themselves more obedient than others.' 'Many people would like to hold conversations with the great lords who will make war on them, but they will not be listened to at all. Alas! if God do not send peace on earth.'

When such clear correspondence with the past can be discovered it is natural to want to know what Nostradamus has to say about the future. That is exceedingly difficult, not only because the vast majority of the quatrains are undated but also because the reference is never very clear until after the event—the quatrain about the League of Nations, for example, was interpreted in the nineteenth century as referring to a Calvinist congress. There is also the great and unavoidable risk of interpreting in the present stanzas which are intended to refer to the future. We have before us as a warning the British Israelites, who, not content with believing the pyramid of Khufu to be an almanac in stone, push their self-importance so far as to imagine that its predictions must refer to their own lifetime and immediate future. Similarly a certain M. Rochetaillée published in 1939 a book interpreting the centuries, and discussed under fourteen separate heads the alleged references of Nostradamus to the Chautemps cabinet which was in power from 22nd June 1937 to 10th April 1938. Seeing

how unimportant in the ultimate history of France that particular cabinet is likely to prove we can hardly be blamed for thinking that Nostradamus did not intend to refer to it at all. Similarly many references to Léon Blum have been imagined in the centuries simply because Narbonne, which happened to be his constituency, is mentioned several times.

It shows a faulty sense of proportion to imagine that our own times are more important or more troublous than the past and future. Yet, even allowing for that, the wars of France and Germany are events which might well be considered important by Nostradamus. The suggestion that 'Hister', which is the Latin name of the Danube, is a cryptogram for Hitler does not take us very far, since the three stanzas which mention it are too obscure to be reliably translated. One, however, reads: 'Liberty shall not be recovered, it will be seized by one dark, proud, lowborn, unjust; when the fleet shall be prepared the republic of Venice and Hister will be vexed.' It would not be difficult to apply this description to Hitler or Mussolini and to suppose that the 'republic of Venice' means the realm of Italy, for 'republic' in past times only meant 'state'. 'The fleet' may be of aeroplanes as well as ships.

Another quatrain reads: 'A captain of great Germany will come in pretended succour to the King of Kings allied to Hungary; what a great flowing of blood his revolt will cause!' The first two lines remind one irresistibly of the attacks of Germany on her neighbours in 1938–9; but the allusion to the King of Kings is obscure. It would perhaps apply more suitably to Franz Josef in 1914, for he was

entitled King and Emperor and reigned over Austria-Hungary. There is another suggestion of Hitler and his persecution of the Jews in the lines: 'Of Trojan blood shall be born a German heart who will reach so great power that he will expel the foreign Arabian race and turn the church to its earlier pre-eminence.' The last line, however, only makes sense if we refer it back to the days before Constantine when Christianity was still persecuted; and it is possible that 'Trojan' elsewhere means 'royal', so the prediction is perhaps not yet due for realization. Elsewhere Nostradamus remarks: 'In Germany will be born divers sects resembling the ancient paganism.' This has obviously happened.

There are naturally a good number of quatrains about England, and Dr. de Fontbrune, who wrote in 1937 under the conviction that in the next war England would be the enemy of France, interpreted several as referring to the future which have obviously been realized in the past. Oliver Cromwell is plainly intended in the lines: 'More merchant than king in England, of obscure birth he will take the rulership by force; cowardly without faith or law he will blood the earth: his time approaches so closely that I sigh!' Again the enforcement of the blockade after the armistice of 1918 is suggested by this: 'Those in the Isles long time besieged will take up strength against their enemies, those outside dead of hunger and defeated shall be put in greater hunger than ever.' Yet Fontbrune suggested that in this quatrain it was the English whom Nostradamus meant as being starved. The reference might however be to 1941 or 1942.

Unfortunately it is not possible to take seriously the predictions about the future attributed to Nostradamus by his commentators; for if they did not start their work with prejudice they have developed prejudices through relying on their interpretations of doubtful quatrains as on facts. Thus Fontbrune is convinced that the Last Judgement is due in the year 2000, that the Church of England will return to Rome, and that Europe will be dominated by a French king called Henri who will be cousin to a French pope.

There are, however, a few points on which most of the commentators agree. For instance, there is to be a great revolution in Italy in which the pope will be massacred, and by the influence of three temporal powers the holy see will be transferred to a different city. Germany is expected to invade France through Switzerland and advance as far as the Loire, after which the great King Henri will arise and expel the invaders, defeating them in great battles at Poitiers and in the Jura. The year 1999 is explicitly mentioned as very critical, supposedly on account of the invasion of Europe by the yellow race, who, however will eventually be defeated; but it is supposed that Paris will be destroyed from the air in 1999 and the capital transferred to Avignon.

Without committing either ourselves or Nostradamus we may mention one or two stanzas as interesting England, for example: 'The elder sister of the Britannic Isle will be born fifteen years before the brother, by her (or his) promise on condition of verification will succeed to the realm of the Balance'—which may mean the British Empire. Whether the sister or the brother will succeed remains obscure.

'From the furthest British West where is the chief of the Britannic Isle a fleet will enter the Gironde by Blois by wine and salt, fire hidden in barrels.' Blois however is not very near the Gironde.

'Not to wish to consent to divorce, which afterwards shall be recognized as unworthy, the king of the isles will be expelled by force and will be put in his place, which will have no sign of royalty about it'—or possibly 'and so he who has no sign of royalty about him will be put in his place'—or else 'there will be put in his place one who will have no sign of royalty.' These alternative translations show how impossible it is to be sure of the meaning of the verses. *Gaulois qu' empire par guerre occupera* may mean 'The Frenchman who shall seize the realm by war' or 'He who shall seize by war the realm of France.' The rest of the stanza runs: 'shall be betrayed by his lesser brother-in-law and dragged by a rough leaping steed; for this the brother shall long be hated.' The horse and brother are presumably metaphorical, for Nostradamus might easily refer to Mussolini as the 'lesser brother' of Hitler—or possibly of Pétain; in any case the deduction is that whoever attempts to control France through war will be unseated.

Nostradamus in his dedicatory letter to Henri II explicitly mentions 1792 (the year of declaration of the French republic) as the beginning of a new era; he describes the practices of spiritualism; he mentions aerial warfare in the words, 'The machines of flying fire will come to trouble the great chief besieged; within shall be such disaffection that the defeated will be in despair.' In fact it is impossible to label him a mere imposter. And yet

the predictions of the future drawn from his works by commentators show, as far as can yet be known, a long list of uninterrupted failures. In such circumstances to pretend to reveal what Nostradamus predicted for our own future would be misleading, to say the least of it. We can only admit that he succeeded very well in his object of making predictions which could not be denounced as false.

As it happens this apparent infallibility of Nostradamus has led his critics to interpret his words as if he were always right. It is much more probable that, magic or no magic, his knowledge of the future was, like that of other prophets, patchy and not invariably exact. We have seen that his prediction for the year 1727 refers to a battle not of outstanding importance in the history of the middle east, and one in which Christianity was not concerned. Similarly Napoleon was never a private soldier. It would be more reasonable not to expect that every point in every stanza should have its perfect correspondence.

Nostradamus was one of those rare men who wrote frankly for posterity. Yet, having the good fortune to be born in the middle of the day, with most of the planets above the earth and well-disposed, he was successful also in his lifetime. When he began to grow old and feeble he was given the honorary post of physician to the king, which enabled him to live in comfort.

Somewhat naturally his reputation grew itself a mythological tail. It was said that one of his sons, vexed at finding himself unable to rival his father as a prophet, predicted the destruction of a house and then set fire to it himself. This is almost certainly an invention. It was said also that

Nostradamus was exhumed about a hundred and fifty years after his death, and when the coffin was opened the body was found in perfect preservation with a brass plate on its chest predicting the date of the exhumation!

Actually he died on the date predicted by himself, 2nd July 1566, of gout complicated by dropsy, and in the church of Salon his wife erected over him this epitaph: 'Here rest the bones of Michel Nostradamus, whose almost divine pen was by all thought worthy to trace and report to men according to the influence of the stars the events to come in all the earth. He died at Salon de Craux in Provence, the year of grace 1566, the 2 July, aged sixty-two years six months seventeen days. Ye who come after, touch not his ashes and envy not his repose.'

Against this date in his ephemeris was found written with his own hand: 'Hic prope mors est' (Here death is nigh). Saying good-night to his friend Jean Aimes de Chavigny he added: 'You will not find me alive at sunrise,' and a little before dawn he died. The manner of his passing had been predicted in the final stanza of his 'Présages':

De retour d'Ambassade, don de Roy mis au lieu;
Plus n'en fera; sera allé à Dieu:
Parans plus proches, amis, fréres du sang,
Trouvé tout mort près du lict et du banc.

'Returned from embassy, the king's gift laid away, Will do no more with it; will be gone to God: Nearest relations, friends, brothers by blood, He is found quite dead beside his bed and bench.'

So it was.

CHAPTER XV

Count Cagliostro

About the year 1780 no greater sensation could be caused in any salon than by the appearance of Count Cagliostro; and such a scene has fortunately been described for us by the Baroness d'Oberkirch—a woman whose sole importance lies in having written her memoirs. She and her husband were sitting in a magnificent apartment of the enormous château of Saverne conversing with its owner, the Cardinal de Rohan, prince-bishop of Strasbourg. The cardinal was an exceedingly handsome, fortunate, and impressionable young man, entirely worldly and very interested in women. He was also head of the Church in France, one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom, and incidentally devoted to alchemy. The baroness on the other hand was of a sceptical temper and in addition something of a snob—for in France before the revolution snobbery still existed. She resented the breaking in on the conversation of a stranger whose superior rank she did not feel disposed to acknowledge. The conversation, she writes, 'was suddenly inter-

rupted by a footman who, opening the two leaves of the door, announced: "His excellency the Count Cagliostro!"

'At once,' she continues, 'I turned my head. Since reaching Strasbourg I had heard this adventurer spoken of, but as yet I had not met him. I was astounded to see him come in like this at the bishop's, to hear him announced with such pomp, and even more astounded at the reception he encountered. He had been in Alsace since the month of September and was making himself an incredible reputation by pretending to cure all sorts of diseases. As he would not accept money, but on the contrary distributed a great deal among the poor, he attracted crowds to his house despite the ill-success of his panacea. He only cured those who were well, or at least those whose imagination was strong enough to help the remedy. The police kept their eye upon him and had him closely watched, but he pretended to be above them. He was said to be an Arab; but his accent was more like the Italian or Piedmontese. I have discovered since that he really came from Naples. At the time in question he affected strange ways in order to impress the vulgar. He only slept in an armchair and ate nothing but cheese.

'He was not exactly handsome, yet never was a more remarkable face presented for my observation. He had in particular a look of almost supernatural depth; I cannot describe the impression of his eyes; it was like fire and ice together; he was both attractive and repellant; he inspired both dread and invincible curiosity. One could draw two different portraits of him and both would be like him, yet they would be as dissimilar as possible. On his shirt, his

watch-chain, his fingers, he wore diamonds of magnificent size and purity; if they were not paste they must have been worth a king's ransom. He pretended to have made them himself. All this frippery stank of charlatanism a mile away.

'The cardinal had hardly seen him when he hurried to meet him, and in greeting him at the doors spoke a few words to him which I did not attempt to hear. The couple then approached us. I had stood up with the bishop, but I quickly sat down again, not wishing to let the adventurer imagine that I was paying any attention to him. Soon, however, I was compelled to take notice of him, and I admit to-day in all humility that I had no cause to regret it, having always had a passion for everything extraordinary.

'After five minutes, and a little resistance from me and Monsieur d'Oberkirch, his eminence managed to bring us directly into conversation with each other; he was tactful enough not to mention any name, otherwise I should have left immediately; but he so insinuated both parties into the conversation together that it became impossible not to reply. Cagliostro looked at me steadily; my husband signed to me to leave, but I did not see his signal, I was only conscious of that look boring into my bosom like a drill—I cannot express it otherwise. Suddenly he interrupted Monsieur de Rohan, who incidentally was overflowing with delight, and said abruptly to me:

' "Madame, you have no mother, you hardly ever knew your mother, but you have a daughter. You are the only daughter of your family, and you will have no children beyond the one you already have."

'I looked round so astonished that I have not even now got over his audacity in speaking thus to a woman of my position. I supposed that he was addressing someone else, and did not answer.

' "Do answer, madame," the cardinal entreated me.

' "Monseigneur," my husband replied, "Madame d'Oberkirch does not discuss such matters except with those whom she has the honour to know."

'His tone was almost impertinent, and I was afraid he showed the bishop too little respect. He rose to take his leave and so did I. The cardinal, embarrassed and accustomed to meet with courtiers everywhere, did not know where to look. However he approached Monsieur d'Oberkirch (Cagliostro was still staring at me) and spoke to him a few words so exceedingly amiable that he was forced to be complaisant.

' "Monsieur de Cagliostro," he added, "is a savant who must not be treated as if he were a nobody. Remain a few moments, my dear baron, and allow Madame d'Oberkirch to answer, I promise you there is no sin or impropriety in doing so, and besides, have I not absolutions always ready for special cases?"

' "I have not the honour to be among your flock, monseigneur," Monsieur d'Oberkirch interrupted with a trace of his ill-humour.

' "I know it too well, sir, and I regret it; you would honour our church. Baroness, tell us if Monsieur de Cagliostro is wrong, tell us, I beg of you."

' "He is certainly not wrong about the past," I replied, induced by regard for truth.

' "And I am not wrong about the future either," he answered in a voice so metallic that it vibrated like a trumpet muted with crape.

'I must admit that at that moment I had an irresistible desire to consult this man; what withheld me was the fear of annoying Monsieur d'Oberkirch, for I knew his dislike for this sort of mummery. The cardinal sat there open-mouthed; he was obviously under the influence of this clever trickster, and later he proved it only too well. That day will remain irrevocably engraved upon my memory. I found it difficult to tear myself away from a fascination which to-day, though I cannot deny it, I can hardly understand. I have not done with Cagliostro, and what I have now to say is at least as singular and even more inexplicable. He predicted the death of the empress Maria Theresa in a particular manner, and at the very hour at which she gave up the ghost. Monsieur de Rohan told me so the same evening, and the news did not arrive until five days later.'

Cagliostro arrived in Strasbourg in September 1780. So great a reputation had preceded him that people waited for hours on the bridge to greet his coach. At first he addressed himself exclusively to the poor, whom he cured of all kinds of diseases which their doctors had given up. Of his success in medical practice there is no doubt, from the evidence of many contemporaries. To his poorer clients he gave generous alms in order that they should be able to look after themselves properly, and as he had no banker and received no bills of exchange it was impossible to imagine where he obtained his money. Not only was he

always distributing small sums, but he lived and dressed splendidly, was covered with jewels, and had a carriage with three footmen in green livery.

On his first arrival in Strasbourg Cagliostro had made no attempt to assure himself connections among the rich—indeed he was rather bitter against them, probably on account of ill-treatment he had newly received at Warsaw. The Cardinal de Rohan, however, had an irresistible attraction for everything at all magical, and sent to see him. Cagliostro replied: 'If the cardinal is ill let him come to me and I will cure him; but if he is well he has no need of me nor I of him.' This was not a bad answer; if his eminence was proud and likely to be tiresome it would keep him away, but his interest, if it was genuine, would merely be sharpened. The latter soon occurred, for the cardinal feigned an illness which won him a visit from Cagliostro. The two became firm friends, so much so that his eminence was once told that his mind was worthy of Cagliostro's. A typical millionaire, the cardinal invited his favourite to stay at Saverne, to hold séances there, and even to spend weeks there in his absence.

And once the cardinal's door was open to Cagliostro very few others were closed—except of course those of the doctors, who to a man detested him, and a few others whose combination of scepticism and snobbery enabled them to disbelieve in both his achievements and his title. Petty troubles such as indigestion and middle-aged hysteria he sent back to the faculty; it was hard and incurable cases that he preferred to treat. Baron von Gleichen, who added a touch of originality to his memoirs by speaking well of

Cagliostro even after the diamond necklace affair, describes how the secretary of the Marquis de Lasalle was cured of a gangrened leg after the doctors had given him up. Sarazin, a banker of Basle, was a very faithful adherent of Cagliostro because both his wife and son had been most unexpectedly restored to health. The Prince de Soubise was at death's door and was quickly cured without even knowing who his new doctor was.

In this case, as in many others, Cagliostro refused to let anyone but the patient know the treatment. The Marquise de Créquy took one of his potions to be analysed by a chemist, and reported that it was made of 'nothing but aromatic herbs and potable gold'. Nothing but! Since potable gold was supposed to be the most wonderful remedy in the alchemist's pharmacopoeia this statement is somewhat inadequate, except perhaps as a rather uncertain testimonial to the value of alchemy! One wonders if Madame de Créquy's chemist knew potable gold when he saw it, or how to make it; for no other remedy would have appealed so strongly to the imagination of Cagliostro, especially when he was confronted with such cases as the Prince de Soubise.

Another eye-witness of Cagliostro's doings in Strasbourg was the Swiss poet Johannes Bürkli, who, though confessing to a strong prejudice in favour of scepticism, was forced to acknowledge that Cagliostro was not an ordinary quack. It may be that after a year in Strasbourg his rich friends had begun to desert him, for he was now accepting fees from those who could afford them; the day after being paid for the cure of Frau Bürkli's indigestion he gave his

attention to the couple no longer. His conversation was often boring and at times incredible—as when he alleged that in Turkey he had cured eleven million persons of plague in three months, which works out to an average of over thirteen thousand an hour. At other times, however, he showed himself a profound student of human nature, learned in physiognomy, and a real philosopher, to the astonishment of the sceptical Bürkli.

Lavater, the well-known Swiss physiognomist, who was also inclined to be a mystic, met with a rude reception from Cagliostro, and in consequence does not speak kindly of him. He says in his diary that Cagliostro pretended at times to be in communication with the highest heavenly spirits. He admitted, however, that he had met 'a man such as few are', though considering at the same time that he was a supernatural being with a diabolic mission.

It is remarkable that every single extant description of Cagliostro's appearance lays stress upon the amazing penetration of his eyes, and in a way which actually surprises the reader. But apart from his eyes, which were large and slightly projecting, he does not seem to have been imposing. His nose was broad and turned up, though without being the squashed snub attributed to Balsamo. Beugnot, who knew him well by sight, describes him as of medium height and somewhat stout, with an olive complexion, a short neck, and a round face.

His character is extremely puzzling, and his origin even more so. For over a century it was taken for granted that he was really a charlatan named Giuseppe Balsamo who was born in Palermo on 28th May 1743. In 1910, however,

W. R. H. Trowbridge in publishing the best biography of the two men that has yet been written, showed that the evidence of identification is not by any means conclusive. To make things worse, the arguments on both sides are not mere speculations, but are extremely telling. There can hardly be any character in history more certain to torment his biographer with insoluble doubts.

Both Balsamo and Cagliostro had a wife whose maiden name was Feliciani; but Balsamo's wife was called Lorenza and was imprisoned in Paris for deserting her husband, whereas Cagliostro's was called Serafina and was true to him through thick and thin. Casanova encountered the Balsamos at Aix-en-Provence in 1770, and they were distributing alms just as later the Cagliostros used to do; and Balsamo is known to have had an uncle named Alessandro Cagliostro. On the other hand Balsamo was an expert forger, swindler, and draughtsman, whereas Cagliostro in his direst need never showed any ability to earn money by these means; in fact in England he was grossly swindled in a way that could hardly have happened to the ingenious Balsamo. One English writer was so far carried away by patriotism as to praise 'the native excellence of English talent, when the most accomplished swindler of the swindling eighteenth century was so hobbled, duped, and despoiled by the masterly fictions of the English law'. This enthusiastic verdict has little contact with the probabilities of the case; in actual fact Cagliostro's ability for swindling was strictly limited.

In recent times theosophists have attempted to portray Cagliostro as one of the great and wonderful masters of

occultism. Despite his undoubted clairvoyance and his undoubted cures it is probable that here too enthusiasm has, as so often, outflown the evidence. To be a magician will not save a man out of prison; and that a despised and persecuted fugitive should fail to perform the same remarkable cures as he achieved in his prosperity is not surprising when one remembers that the preparation of alchemical remedies requires not only apparatus and ingredients, but according to all the books a serene and confident mind. The power of potable gold is perhaps the ability of the alchemist to hypnotize his patient into being cured and to hypnotize himself into believing in this power.

Like other magicians Cagliostro led a wandering and uncertain life. To Strasbourg he had come from Warsaw, a city which he is said to have left in haste because an alchemist more expert than he had caught him trying to fake an experiment. But that story like all the other derogatory accounts of Cagliostro's activity, dates from after the diamond necklace affair. Laborde, writing when Cagliostro's reputation was still intact, gives from his own knowledge a case in which Cagliostro quite correctly predicted to a young lady in Warsaw that she would shortly go on a journey to a place where she would be pelted with apples because of the oddity of her dress, then meet her future husband in a famous watering place, marry him in a town where Cagliostro himself would be, and make over to the husband all her money, very unwisely—as indeed she did.

Before arriving in Warsaw Cagliostro had been in Petersburg for some time, and before that at Mittau in Latvia,

which was then called Courland. It was here that he first seems to have practised occultism on any notable scale. His occupation in London had been with alchemy.

At Mittau the Count von Medem was intensely interested in magic, and so was his brother. Of his two daughters one was married to the Duke of Courland and the other, Elise von der Recke, became a close friend of Cagliostro, who accordingly had access to the highest society. It is now that he is first heard of holding séances in the old magical tradition, with a boy or girl below the age of puberty. The boy would be called a *pupille* and the girl a *colombe*. Whichever it was, the medium, having sat down and been anointed by Cagliostro, while he recited certain magic words, would be commanded to gaze into a glass vessel full of water, or sometimes into a crystal or a pool of oil held in the palm of the left hand.

Some of these séances were arranged beforehand with the medium, but others were not. The first séance at Mittau was certainly not arranged, but it was a great success. The details are given in the memoirs of the Countess von der Recke. The medium was a child of five, the son of the Marshal von Medem. He was anointed and told to gaze at some oil in the palm of his left hand. After praying and singing of hymns, when the child was already sweating with agitation, Cagliostro asked the Marshal what he desired his son to see. The Marshal wished him to see his sister, and at once the boy declared that he saw her. He added presently that she was placing her hand on her heart, and then that she was kissing a brother who had just come home. The Marshal declared that this was im-

possible, so Cagliostro broke off the sitting and told him to make sure; it so turned out that the brother had just returned entirely unexpected, and just before seeing him his sister had had an attack of palpitation of the heart.

It was this séance which first convinced Elise von der Recke of Cagliostro's clairvoyant powers. The memoir in which she described his doings at Mittau was not written until after the diamond necklace affair had dragged his reputation in the dust, and it is written in the unfriendly tone of one who considered that she had been deceived in putting so high a value on the man; nevertheless it is for that reason quite reliable when it brings evidence that Cagliostro's clairvoyant power was real.

It is probable, however, that at Mittau Cagliostro was still young in his profession of occultist and did not always know how to make use of his strange ability. He was experimenting, and though his successes kept his reputation high in the eyes of the local court he was now and then guilty of a failure. It was rash of him, for example, to undertake to discover by magic a buried treasure on the Marshal's estate at Wilzen, and he did not succeed in doing so. It was probably this failure which determined him to go off to Petersburg, though the esteem in which he was held by the Medem family seems not to have been diminished.

In all his travels the first thing which he attempted on arriving in any town was to found a lodge of Egyptian Freemasonry. This was his own personal form of masonry; and he accepted women initiates as well as men, though he insisted that the men should have been already admitted to a masonic lodge. Lodges of Egyptian Masonry were

established in London, Warsaw, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Lyons, Paris, and elsewhere, and according to the Baron von Gleichen Cagliostro attempted to make this order the most honourable in Europe.

As head of it he styled himself the Grand Cophta, and he made great attempts to convert other freemasons to his system. The reason for this is very easily explained by those who believe that Cagliostro was no more than a swindler; it was presumably from the initiation fees of Egyptian masonry that he drew his income, so he had every reason to wish to increase the membership. But this view, like all facile views which do not trouble to penetrate under the surface, is for that reason unconvincing. Even if he derived his income from the Masonic lodges that is not necessarily the whole of the story. It is a mistake to simplify the mentality of others to suit one's own. Some people because they are honest and patriotic themselves assume that politicians and even business men are always honest and patriotic too. It shows a lack of imagination not to realize that nature is capable of producing without warning the most unexpected and contradictory mentalities. There is not the least reason why a born and practised charlatan should not at the same time be filled with aspirations for the betterment of humanity. It is commonly thought that a charlatan is a crude type of man who can think only of himself; nature's imagination, fortunately, is not so limited as that.

That Cagliostro gave the impression of a charlatan is easier to admit than to deny. Not only was he without a medical degree, which in itself is not an entirely damning charge, but he exuded an atmosphere of colossal vanity.

His conversation was liable to be tedious and arrogant and he dressed with the greatest possible ostentation. He loved to play Croesus whether in dress or in giving alms to the poor.

Yet the one requirement for all candidates to Egyptian masonry was a belief in God—although at this time, not twenty years before the French Revolution, agnosticism and atheism were common among the rich and the philosophical. In 1785 there was a proposal for the fusion of the Egyptian masons with the lodges entitled Philalethes. It broke down because Cagliostro refused to compromise and demanded the acceptance of the full Egyptian doctrine as 'a ray of light into the darkness of your temple'. But the three delegates appointed by Philalethes to report on the 'Egyptian' system declared that Cagliostro's doctrine 'ought to be regarded as sublime and pure; and though without a perfect acquaintance with our language he employs it as did the prophets of old'. That he successfully resisted the seventy-two Masonic lodges of Paris and converted many eminent masons to his views is further evidence that his doctrine was at least as elevating as his personality was remarkable.

The ceremonial in lodges of Egyptian masonry differed from that in other lodges in being much more magical. It has been seen that Cagliostro could make children chosen as mediums imagine that they saw things; it is not therefore out of the question that he may have made other people see things too. At any rate it is reported that archangels and spirits of the dead would be evoked at meetings, and a letter is even said to have been found in which a

member of the lodge of Lyons wrote to Cagliostro to tell him that 'the first philosopher of the New Testament appeared in a blue cloud without being evoked and gave the whole lodge his blessing. Moreover two great prophets and Moses himself have given us similar convincing signs of their goodwill.' It is a pity that no more details are available of these remarkable practices. For it is impossible to believe in the famous 'banquet of the dead' at which Cagliostro is said to have shown his guests into a supper room with twice too many chairs and then to have filled the empty places with the spirits of Voltaire and others!

Cagliostro wrote no books or memoirs and consequently our evidence for his life is drawn from the statements of a few contemporaries. Most of them wrote after he was discredited and are frankly hostile, even when, like Elise von der Recke, they had previously been friendly. The most comprehensive life is that which was published by the Roman Inquisition after his trial, and not a word of what it says can be believed. The best-known account of Cagliostro in English is Carlyle's, and it is fair to say that a more disgraceful piece of misrepresentation due to wilful ignorance was never perpetrated by any eminent writer.

At one time—about 1784—Cagliostro's bust or picture might be seen everywhere with the inscription 'The Divine Cagliostro'. A year later, thanks to a lawsuit in which he should never have been concerned, he had lost his high position never to regain it. Discredited he was, but through no fault of his own—except vanity.

From Strasbourg he went to Naples, Bordeaux, Lyons, and finally Paris. It was here that on 23rd August 1785 he

was arrested on the entirely baseless charge of being concerned in the affair of the diamond necklace. Eight days earlier his friend the Cardinal de Rohan had been arrested as he was crossing the royal anti-chamber at Versailles on his way to the royal chapel to celebrate the solemn mass for Assumption Day; and had been carried off to the Bastille in his full regalia as head of the Church in France.

The trial which followed was one of the most sensational that have ever occurred in any country. On the condemnation of the several accused hung the reputation of the queen, at whose insistence they had been arrested; but the queen was already unpopular and a large party was hoping to see the cardinal acquitted. Further, the trial appeared as a struggle between the king and parliament, and all those who favoured the parliament were for acquittal. The case represented therefore a political crisis of the first importance, as well as a fight between Marie Antoinette and Rohan, who had always been enemies.

The cardinal was accused of defrauding a jeweller of 400,000 *livres* and conspiring against the queen's reputation. The whole affair had been engineered by a certain Countess de Lamotte, who was in need of money. She knew that Böhmer, the king's jeweller, had invested all his savings in an enormous and very ugly diamond necklace which he hoped to sell to the queen. She knew also that Rohan wanted to be reconciled to the queen. By a series of forged letters she persuaded Rohan that Marie Antoinette had changed her mind, but was not yet willing to acknowledge publicly her favour towards him; this she would do, however, if the cardinal would go bail for her

to the extent of 1,600,000 *livres* (about £64,000) to enable her to buy the necklace. Rohan accordingly obtained the necklace and gave it to the Countess de Lamotte to give to the queen, and the countess broke it up and began to sell the stones.

The mistake she made was in waiting until the first instalment was due before warning the cardinal that the queen would not be able to pay. Had he been given time Rohan would no doubt have attempted to raise the money, and so prevent a scandal, for at a brief interview in a park he had been duped into taking a street-girl of nineteen for Marie Antoinette (whom he never saw but once a year). As it was, when Rohan could not pay, the jeweller lost his head and told the king, and it was at that moment that the queen first heard of the affair.

In all this Cagliostro had nothing whatever to do. He had only been implicated because Madame de Lamotte, in her struggles to put the blame on someone else, took advantage of his friendship for Rohan to say that he had stolen the necklace and been at the bottom of the whole affair. In point of fact he did not arrive in Paris until after the cardinal's bond for the necklace had been given, so he had no difficulty in proving his innocence. Madame de Lamotte was condemned to life imprisonment, Rohan and Cagliostro were unanimously acquitted and the court faction suffered an entire defeat. It was on 1st June 1786 that the verdict was pronounced, and when they were released from the Bastille about eleven o'clock at night the two protagonists received a bewildering ovation from enormous crowds. The next morning Rohan was deprived of all his

dignities and confined to one of his abbeys in the Auvergne, and Cagliostro was given three weeks to leave the country. The high-water mark of his popularity had lasted only a few hours.

The trial itself, however, had done a good deal to lower his reputation. He had been regarded by some of the spectators as merely comic relief, and his pompous manner did not make it any easier to consider him seriously. His first defence was published before the trial in the form of a pamphlet edited by his counsel, as was the custom. In this he gave an account of his origin which was far too strange to carry conviction. He said that he had been born at Medina, but lost his parents very young, and then was brought up in Mecca at the court of the Sherif, where his name was Acharat. It was at this time that his enemies, prompted by an anonymous letter, leapt at the chance of identifying him with Giuseppe Balsamo.

It is alleged that Cagliostro knew no Arabic; and the fantastic story of his youth has convinced many writers that he was an imposter and must therefore have been no other than Balsamo. If he had not something to hide, why did he tell so preposterous a tale? The answer is that he was driven into a corner. Before he ever came to Paris he used to say that he was born in Arabia and knew the Levant, in order to impress people more deeply with his magic powers. If in court he had suddenly admitted that those stories were all lies he would have wrecked his reputation; the only possible course was to face it out. It may therefore be that Cagliostro had nothing to hide at all; that his past was not the criminal past of Balsamo but

the prosaic, uninspiring past of any nobody. What he could not afford to do was to admit that the Grand Cophta, hierophant of Egyptian masonry and betterer of the human race, was an adventurer who had been led to tell lies about his birth through vanity. Or even had he had something to be ashamed of in his youth, it may have been something more in character than the deeds of the sharper and pander Balsamo.

Driven from France, Cagliostro took refuge in England. He had now three powerful enemies, the French court, the medical faculty, and the Church of Rome—which last detested him for being an eminent freemason. It has even been said that he had his money from the Illuminati, a German masonic sect which aimed at the overthrow of royalty.

But in England Cagliostro was as unfortunate as before. The French government, though it failed to kidnap him, published endless libels about him in the London paper *Courrier d'Europe*, and his prestige had sunk so far that even the masons would no longer help him. From London he went to Bienne in Switzerland, thence to Rovoredo in the Austrian Tyrol, and after being expelled from Trentino finally came to Rome in 1791.

Why he did so can never be explained. Perhaps he hoped for help from his wife's relatives, for by now all the jewels were sold, the couple were in abject poverty, and he could not even cure the few patients who came to him. At last he applied to the local masonic lodge, but it was useless; the papacy had discovered its existence, the other members fled, and Cagliostro and his wife were arrested and tried.

At the trial it was assumed that Cagliostro was Balsamo, but no attempt was made to prove it or to convict him of Balsamo's crimes. The sole charge was that of being a freemason and therefore a heretic; and it was not difficult to prove, despite the declarations of the accused that they acknowledged the pope. The evidence was extracted under threat of torture and was consequently worthless. The Countess Cagliostro was shut up for life in a convent, never to see again the husband she had so lovingly followed for so many years. Cagliostro himself was imprisoned in Sant' Angelo for a few months, and then in the fortress of San Leo in a lightless cell hewn out of the solid rock. In this fortress he died on 26th August 1795, a typical example of the tyranny that must be expected when too much power is allowed to accumulate in the hands of an institution.

CHAPTER XVI

Magic in Modern Times

Magic is not dead. Yet to say so is to admit that it enjoys no longer its old vitality. It has had two enemies to contend with, first Christianity, and then the scepticism which attended the birth of modern science. In consequence it survives most easily in countries where neither science nor Christianity is practised.

Christians are taught to regard the change from polytheism to monotheism as a great step forward in the history of human culture and an advance towards a truer and more noble idea of God. It is very questionable whether they are right; Apollonius of Tyana would certainly have maintained the contrary. Had the beliefs of Apollonius prevailed instead of those of the Church fathers there would have been no heresy-hunting, no religious fanaticism, and by reflection a much more tolerant intellectual attitude in Europe. There might, however, have been less resistance to Mohammedanism. The career of Apollonius proves that the ideals of the old polytheistic religions were all substantially one and the same, and that by means of

magical ceremonies and initiations their priests were trying to discover truth and to put their followers in the way of discovering it too. They knew better than to imagine that truth could be imprisoned within the limits of dogma and recited like a password; hence the need for initiation and for the ceremonies of Eleusis and other places, which gave the candidate an opportunity to understand for himself how he ought to approach the truths which are too great to be told. The object of the ancient initiations was understanding, not mere belief, which was considered as superstition; the object of the church was the blind faith which makes understanding irrelevant. Hence the attempt to destroy the magical tradition.

It is a regular rule that when one religion is superseded by another the gods of the first become the demons of the second. It was in an instinctive attempt to depreciate magic that Christian theologians always spoke of those who practised evocation as calling up devils out of hell. Now hell is not a locality, nor can devils—meaning servants of the Evil One—be called out of it. In countries where magic was not condemned it is neither angels nor demons that are evoked, but merely spirits, who may be relatively dangerous or not, but cannot be arbitrarily divided in allegiance between God and the Devil.

The Church never contrived to kill magic, because it could neither absorb it nor outdo it; and we may wonder whether science will be any more successful. If so, it will be by absorption and not by destruction. As we have seen in this book, magicians have not always been stupid, blind, and superstitious men, but often were men of high intelli-

gence who wanted to understand the universe and to discover how they should best regard it; to them magic was a form of religion, religion being defined as an attempt to establish a true, lasting, and comprehensive practical relationship between oneself as an individual and the universe. Modern scientists are inclined to allege that science will help man to achieve this relationship, in which case religion and science will meet; and when science can understand magical phenomena to the point of making use of them then magic and science will meet and blend and that will be the end of magic as such. But there is no reason to suppose that science can destroy magic any more than religion could. At the end of the nineteenth century when scientific materialism was the fashionable religion and infected the mind of every person who took himself for an intellectual, what should break out as an antidote but the belief in spiritualism? Nature always corrects excesses, and in the present age, when science is worshipped as blindly as mumbo-jumbo, superstition is as rampant as it has ever been. The cure for all this is education; but by the time the people are so highly educated as to above superstition—and that will take a long time—scientists will be educated enough to discover that magicians were not the fools and knaves which a tradition born of ecclesiasticism has tried to represent them.

The most popular modern form of magic is spiritualism. This is not the place for a long discussion of it, especially as it does not derive directly from the ancient magical teaching. We must, however, consider the magical attitude to such things.

The existence of disembodied spirits, whether regarded as non-material or as having bodies of imperceptibly tenuous matter, is not a scientific fact. That however is no obstacle to the discussion; wireless was not a scientific fact in 1880, nor has electricity been explained to this day. As regards spirits, therefore, scepticism and belief deserve exactly the same respect as any other couple of unsupported assumptions.

The Christian religions used to teach that after death the soul 'goes to' heaven or hell or, in some sects, to purgatory. The magician, like the scientist, wants to know what really happens, and therefore must cast all preconceived ideas aside. His conclusions might be somehow as follows:

A chord in music consists of something more than its three or four notes; it consists also of the relations between those notes, and the relations, though abstract, are heard and savoured by the musician as truly as the notes themselves. So too the human body consists of something more than its chemical elements, and that something more is called life, or soul, or spirit. And as the sound of a piano may be heard after the hand has left the keys, so too, perhaps, may the soul continue to exist after its physical vehicle has ceased to function. If the soul is in origin merely the result of the working of life in the body, then it cannot exist before the body and will not long survive it; this is supposed to be the case with the so-called 'astral body'. But if the soul is not entirely controlled by the chemistry of the body (and the reverse cannot be proved) then to imagine that it ceases to exist at death is a suppo-

sition. And if it enjoys immortality after death it will naturally also enjoy immortality before birth.

The belief in invisible and immortal souls is strongly contested by that school of scientists which holds that every emotion, idea, and act of will can be explained as due to physico-chemical action within the brain and nervous system. Their argument, however, is ineffective for the simple reason that it does not explain anything. To quote a parallel case, scientists in their exploration of the nature of matter reduced it first to molecules, then to atoms, then to protons and electrons, and finally to nothing but nude electrical charges revolving hectically through nothing. Now this explanation may be entirely true, but for all practical purposes it is useless, because it does not explain; and what remains unexplained is how it happens that matter in practice appears to be solid and must be treated as such.

Similarly the fact that human emotions are accompanied by corresponding changes in the brain does not prove that there is nothing more behind. The brain is a physical nerve-centre and therefore it is merely natural that changes of nervous condition should be registered in a physical way. Behind those changes there is a consciousness, and the brain is only its instrument. By means of drugs the consciousness may be deprived of its means for remaining in contact with the physical world, yet its continuity and individuality persist. What remains unexplained is why these electro-chemical changes should bear a relation to consciousness at all.

Consciousness with its derivative powers of will and per-

ception has led to the belief in a spirit or soul. The idea that this spirit or soul is nothing more than the resultant of the integration of the physical faculties in a body is a plausible theory, but it is not a scientific fact; anyone therefore is free to differ from it. There may, then, be spirits existing apart from bodies. Yet it must be admitted that if there is a soul, then the brain is its means of maintaining contact with our physical world. Therefore to imagine that the spirits of the dead possess still all the faculties which they had in life is another assumption. It is quite possible that spirits may be as anonymous and unselfconscious as animals.

It will doubtless be contended that spiritualism has produced ample evidence that spirits are neither anonymous nor unselfconscious. One such proof for example was that a spirit came out of the booth where the medium was sitting bound, and the spirit then made by dipping its face in warm wax a mask of the person it was supposed to be. This trick, however, was later performed on the stage at Maskelyne's theatre. And many supposed proofs have gone the same way. Spiritualists are well aware that fraudulent mediums have been numerous, and therefore incredulity, though it may be due to prejudice, is understandable. And after all, before the growth of modern spiritualism the beings summoned in evocations were supposed to be not the dead, but simply spirits, some good and some evil, or, in the language of Christianity, sometimes angels and sometimes devils. Therefore in modern séances, when spirits come to an evocation, there is no reason why they should always be the dead. Assuming that the phenomena

are genuine, when at séances appear men who were famous long ago it is much more likely to be evil spirits masquerading. The case of Dee and Kelly should serve as a warning. It did seem as though Kelly were a sincere medium and believed in his own powers; and if so, either he continued for seven years to give himself hallucinations, or there are naughty spirits to be met with.

Certain occultists describe clairvoyance as 'reading the Akashic records'. These records are not in writing. The belief is that the conditions of past and future are an essential quality of that part of space-time in which they occur, and accordingly they still, or already, exist, if the mind can only reach them. That it can sometimes do so is shown by an interesting experiment which recently occurred.

The members of council of the Society for Psychical Research decided that, in the hope of proving the continued existence of the individual after death, they would each deposit in a secure place a 'post-mortem envelope' containing a message known only to themselves and which only they would think of sending. This message each one was to communicate through a medium after his own death and thus prove to the living his survival. It so happened, however, that recently the same apparently meaningless message began to be received by mediums in different parts of the world; and this message was finally recognized by a member of the Society as his own post-mortem message. Since he was still alive this meant that the reception of these secret but predetermined post-mortem messages will never prove survival; it is however a piece of evidence which can be credited at will to tele-

pathy, clairvoyance, the Akashic records, or the activity of spirits.

If spirits do exist, then evocation is not all illusory. Magicians have often attempted to call them up, but it should not be forgotten that priests have also been required to lay them. The phenomena in these cases often sound unconvincing to those who have not experienced them—strange noises at night, voices and sounds of breathing, inexplicable draughts and even visible ghosts. In the first half of the present century there was an Anglican canon of Oxford, Dr. Cooke, who several times found himself in a house where these uncomfortable manifestations were persistent. Both at Rochester and at Christ Church ghosts were seen by two of his daughters and a number of friends; even quite sceptical people when going downstairs would find themselves jostled by invisible passers; and it was not very rare for members of the family to answer voices and then find themselves alone in the room. At least one woman refused to stay in the house any longer. Canon Cooke, however, put an end to these troubles by performing a ceremony for the laying of restless spirits. The ritual he used was that of the Orthodox Church.

Spirits have sometimes been thought reponsible for poltergeists, which, for example, cause objects to be thrown across a room without any apparent agency. Such phenomena seem most frequent where there are half-witted persons about the age of adolescence; but if they are not produced deliberately, or are done by trickery, they do not really belong to magic.

There is a well-known tendency among people who

desire to believe in a thing to put it off from the impossible present to an uncontrollable distance either in space or time. Thus there are people who believe that all magic and learning are centred in Tibet. And yet, strangely enough, the theory and practice of magic among the real Tibetans is more illuminating than in any other country.

Invaluable information on the subject has been collected by Mme. Alexandra David-Neel, principally in her book *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet.* Among the magical practices she describes are the art of generating enough heat to keep one warm above the snow-line without a fire; the art of walking in a trance for days and nights without stopping and at a faster pace than anyone normally can attain; the art of sending telepathic messages to chosen people at will, and so forth. That these feats are actually performed Mme. David-Neel can testify from her own experience; and she is not a theosophist anxious to glorify Tibet, but simply an intelligent traveller and experimenter and therefore a credible witness.

There is another Tibetan practice which throws an interesting light on the problem of spirits. This is the art of creating phantoms, and it is one which Mme. David-Neel herself performed. She created a phantom monk who accompanied her on a journey. For the most part she kept his existence secret, as he was only an experiment of hers, but one day somebody came unexpectedly into the tent and immediately saluted the monk. Now this monk had originally been created as a fat and jovial fellow, but as time went on he grew more and more unpleasant until he finally looked absolutely wicked and repulsive. If he was

no more than a creature of his creator's brain, how was it that he escaped from her control and developed contrary to her wishes, entirely changing his character? And, incidentally, how was it that she found it almost impossible to get rid of him? If there are spirits in the world, the spirits of dead and unborn animals and men, then explanation is easy; she had created an opportunity for a spirit to manifest itself on the physical plane, and the spirit which did so was not an amiable one. That it should resist her desire to 'kill' it would be inevitable.

The Tibetans are not a credulous people, nor do they believe that the power to work miracles is a sign of elevated spirituality; in fact the contrary is proved by the case of the lama who accidentally fell into the trance which enabled him to walk at eight or ten miles an hour, and that because he was thinking so earnestly of the prospect of a good meal! Besides this the most spiritual lamas do not practise or admire the working of miracles to any great extent. And to keep oneself warm without fire at a height of fifteen thousand feet with only one cotton garment, and in winter, does deserve to be called a miracle.

The attitude of Tibetans to such things is the same as the attitude of magicians; they do not believe that anything contrary to the laws of nature occurs. They maintain that there are certain laws which may be called occult because it is normal to live and die without discovering them; but that those who do discover them can perform acts which other people cannot. Of the existence of these laws they have the evidence of their hermits who live without fire, their cross-country trance-walkers, and so on.

The common people of Tibet believe the world to be populated by numberless spirits. As a test of courage the evocation of demons is practised with most fantastic rites until the neophyte comes to realize that the things he sees are all subjective and nothing to be afraid of; this secret is never told to him, and before finding it he suffers agonies, all in hallucination. The attitude of the initiate lamas to these phenomena is very intelligent; they are not affected by the fashionable scepticism of the West, nor by its wishful credulity. One of them reported: 'Incredulity comes sometimes. Indeed it is one of the objects of the mystic masters, but if the disciple reaches this state of mind before the proper time he misses something which these exercises are designed to develop, that is fearlessness.

'Moreover, the teachers do not approve of simple incredulity, they deem it contrary to truth. The disciple must understand that gods and demons do really exist for those who believe in their existence, and that they are possessed with the power of benefiting or harming those who worship or fear them.

'However, very few reach incredulity in the early part of their training. Most novices actually *see* frightful apparitions.'

Mme. David-Neel comments: 'I shall not venture to contradict this latter opinion, a number of instances have proved to me that it is well grounded.'

There, are, therefore, magicians in modern times, and their power seems to be more or less the power of mind over matter. One might almost define as magical any act the means of operation of which cannot be explained.

Nature performs acts which we cannot explain, notably in such phenomena as magnetism, the determination of temperament by the signs of the zodiac, and the mere act of thinking; there is therefore no reason why man, who is part of nature, should not also perform inexplicable acts. Should the explanation be found, however, they will cease to be magical.

An obvious case which is awaiting explanation is the practice of dowsing. That a man with a hazel-twig can divine water when walking across a field is quite well known, though not everybody can do it; and it may even be possible to explain it by a theory of radiation. But no theory of radiation seems able to account for the fact that there are dowsers who can from a mere map discover where subterranean water is to be found, or where a missing person has gone. Yet these things have been often done; provisionally therefore we must put them down to magic.

An obvious case of modern magic is the procedure of Christian Science, which cures illnesses without drug or doctor. This is simply the power of suggestion, and is accordingly magical; but of course if the patient is not sufficiently amenable to suggestion either from himself or others then the cure will not be performed. To allege that illness does not exist is a mistake, for it suggests to the body that nothing is wrong and therefore nothing need be put right; hence the reserves of resistance are not called out and the disease is free to take its course. Famous magical healers like Paracelsus and Cagliostro did not succeed by denying the existence of disease; that would have destroyed their faith in their own veracity and hence in all their other

powers; they succeeded by maintaining that they could cure —that is, by faith and the ability to inspire faith. It is the faith that can move mountains which is needed in magic, and it does not need to be faith in anything abstract or external; it is simply the certain belief that you can do what you set out to do.

Magic however does not always aim at influencing men; it used to aim at influencing the gods, and in some parts of the world it still does. An English traveller was crossing the Aegean some years ago in very bad weather. In a niche by the mast was a statue of St. Andrew to which the skipper prayed industriously for calmer seas. The sea however continued for so long to be abominably rough that at length in exasperation the skipper seized St. Andrew, tied a rope around his waist and threw him into the sea to trail behind the ship. 'There!' he exclaimed, 'see how you like it! And I'll not pull you in until you make the sun come out!'

In the Middle Ages there was a good deal of so-called evidence for the existence of werewolves, men who turned themselves into wolves at night and ate flesh. If they were wounded or killed when in their animal shape, their human body would be found to bear a corresponding wound. Werewolves are mentioned in the Norse Sagas and were evidently believed in, and in Malaya there are stories of were-tigers, in fact similar tales are common among primitive peoples. Witches were often accused of being werewolves, but the accusation is no better founded than the other fantasies of witchcraft. The power of magicians to transform people into animals is often mentioned in myth-

ology, but it is not possible to find evidence of real magicians trying to do it.

But in more modern times there are other and equally surprising practices which magicians do attempt. Levitation is not commonly considered possible, and yet there is the famous case of the medium Home, who in the presence of several witnesses floated horizontally out of one window and in at the next.

Firewalking used to appear magical, but, as experiments published in *Nature* recently showed, the secret is in the method of walking, which does not leave the feet long enough in contact with the burning coals for the temperature of the skin to rise and cause a blister.

The famous Indian rope trick has provoked a good deal of discussion, and, if credited, is always explained on the supposition of mass hypnosis. Many people discover themselves reluctant to believe in mass hypnosis—which is not surprising—but the phenomenon is vouched for in a report published by the Society for Psychical Research. This case is that of a traveller on a ship who, happening one day to come up the companion-way unexpectedly, saw an Indian conjurer and before him a large audience who kept on looking from the deck to the sky and back again. On the deck were a number of clay pigeons, and nothing whatever was happening, but all the audience believed they had seen the pigeons fly away.

But there is nothing to be gained by discussing the nature of mass hypnosis. Hypnosis itself is not yet understood and accounted for, and mass hypnosis even less. These strange manifestations of the activity of mind at a distance are un-

questionably a part of the ancient repertory of magic, and if they are not called magical now that is merely because they are widely known and not because they are understood.

It is sometimes imagined that the practice of yoga enables a man to perform magical acts, but that is misleading. Breathing exercises do form a part of the training of Tibetan mystics, but the object of yogis is to reach perfect balance of mind and body and thereby to attain bliss and bring to an end the cycles of rebirth. It is claimed that telepathy and clairvoyance are developed by experts in yogic practice, but these are incidental. They are explained by the supposition that the individual mind is only a part of a cosmic mind, and so when yogic exercise has gone a long way towards destroying the sense of individuality it is easy for the individual mind to enter into communication with the cosmic mind, just as the space of a prison cell can be united to cosmic space by removing the ceiling. Theoretically it seems possible that a perfectly balanced mind, not limited by the prejudices of its body, might understand the world so perfectly that clairvoyance would be the result. But that form of clairvoyance is different from the foreknowledge sought in magical conjurations, though it is perhaps comparable to the clairvoyance induced in children by magical methods.

A very striking account of such a case is given by Lane in his account of the Modern Egyptians. This is merely one case among many, but is part of his own experience. It took place in the year 1833.

The magician, whose name was 'Abd-el-Kader el-Magh-

râbi came to visit Lane in his house in Cairo and to show off his powers. The medium was a boy of eight or nine not known to the magician. Procedure was as follows: the magician cut a narrow strip of paper and wrote on it a charm and an invocation. The charm contained a quotation from the fiftieth chapter of the Koran; it read 'And this is the removal. "And we have removed from thee thy veil: and thy sight to-day is piercing." Correct, correct.' The invocation called for the presence of the magician's two familiars Tarsh and Taryoosh.

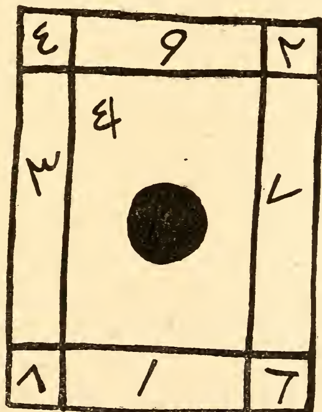


Figure 11. Magic Square for Divination
After Lane, 'Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians'.

First the invocation was cut into six strips; next the boy was brought in, and also some live charcoal in a dish, on which frankincense and coriander seed were thrown. The magician then took hold of the boy's hand and drew on the

palm of it the magic square of Saturn, as in the illustration; the figures in English are as follows:

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

so that every horizontal and vertical line adds up to 15. Then he poured a little pool of ink into the middle of the square and asked the boy if he could see his face clearly. On being told yes he ordered the boy to continue looking intently at the ink, and, still holding on to his fingers with one hand, began with the other to drop the six slips of the invocation one by one at intervals on the charcoal. Except when he was asking questions the magician continued throughout the whole performance to mutter the spell adding occasionally the words: 'If they demand informa tion, inform them; and be ye veracious.'

The charm from the Koran was placed near the boy's forehead under his cap. Presently the boy was asked if he saw anything, and at first he answered no, but about a minute later he began to tremble and said he saw a man sweeping the ground. From then on he saw a whole long spectacle. When the man had finished sweeping he was ordered to fetch a flag, which he did, and the rest of the spectacle in the ink was performed in obedience to orders which the boy gave on instructions from the magician. Seven flags were brought, then the Sultan's tent was pitched, his soldiers came and made their camp, a bull was brought, killed, cooked, and eaten, then the sultan came, coffee was served to him and his court was drawn up in order.

After all this the magician inquired if Lane desired the

boy to see anybody who was absent or dead. Lane suggested Lord Nelson. The boy had difficulty to pronounce the name, but at last managed to say to the sultan: 'My master salutes thee, and desires thee to bring Lord Nelson; bring him before my eyes, that I may see him, speedily.' Almost immediately he added: 'A messenger is gone, and has returned, and brought a man dressed in a dark blue suit of European clothes; the man has lost his left arm.' After a closer scrutiny of the ink the boy added: 'No, he has not lost his left arm; but it is placed to his breast.' Everyone knows that Nelson wore his right sleeve pinned to his breast; and since, according to the magician, the boy would see in the ink as in a mirror, the description was obviously faultless.

A number of other descriptions were given to Lane by means of the same magician operating with different boys. No attempt at collusion was made by either the magician himself or the dragoman, and would indeed have been as a rule impossible, since most of the people described were unknown to both of them. The experiment sometimes failed, in which case the magician usually said that the boy was too old and then would try again with another called in from the street; but it succeeded often enough to prove the genuine skill of the magician. Nor is there any reason to suppose that this form of magic has died out.

A more famous and more modern Egyptian magician is Tahra Bey, a fakir whose exploits have not anywhere been surpassed, even in India. He was born in the Egyptian delta and graduated as a doctor at Constantinople. His father and grandfather before him had known the secrets of the

art of fakirs, and he was trained in them from earliest age. At his house in Cairo he would give exhibitions which numbers of Europeans have attended, and at which he would thrust long needles into his flesh and also cut himself with large knives, and all without bleeding. On being asked if he was able to bleed he let out a jet of blood from a gash on his chest and stopped it instantaneously at will. Now whether he really did these things or only hypnotized the audience into seeing them is no matter; for in either case he is an actual and efficient magician. Also it would be more difficult to explain as mass hallucination his experiment of being buried alive.

In this experiment the subject ceases to breathe, and before being wrapped up and put in a coffin his body is carefully sealed with wax to keep out insects. This is essential, since burial usually takes place in the desert sand of Egypt and there is a case on record where a young fakir was unable to come to life because a beetle had found its way up one of his nostrils and eaten a vital part. Tahra Bey however performed this miracle in France, and to make quite sure that there was no trickery he was enclosed in a treble coffin under the eyes of the police and a number of witnesses and the coffin was then lowered to the bottom of a swimming-pool, where it remained for three days and nights under constant guard. When it was opened Tahra Bey was unwrapped and unsealed and he stepped out safe and well. The more we learn about the power of suggestion, including auto-suggestion, the less miraculous such deeds will seem; but at least until they are explained they must be classed as magic.

In the last hundred years there has been more magic in France than in England. This may be partly because it is a Roman Catholic country and therefore gives better occasion for satanic arts, or partly because the intellectual curiosity of the French is greater than that of other nations. It has been supposed that the black mass was practised by the French masonic lodges, which were certainly not religious institutions, but that has never been satisfactorily proved. Even were it so, it would be only a continuation of a practice which even now is not entirely dead; it would be nothing new in the history of magic.

In France in the nineteenth century there were some quite well-known magicians, particularly Stanislas de Guaita and Eliphas Lévi. The latter describes his book on ritual magic as perhaps the most daring act of his life; unfortunately he was a Roman priest and in consequence is always going out of his way to defend himself against the possibility of excommunication; and as this involves a certain amount of misrepresentation it reduces the value of his work. Neither Lévi nor Guaita drew any obvious benefit from being a magician; but that should not mislead us into thinking that magic is necessarily useless. They may have derived a good deal of satisfaction. Before condemning them for not becoming prime ministers and millionaires the reader should ask himself whether he really wants the trouble of attending Cabinet meetings and conning the balance-sheets of a couple of dozen companies.

Books on ritual magic still find buyers and even in England in the twentieth century there are men who practise magic. Whether they are satisfied in themselves that they

have made a success of it the present writer cannot say. Among them, however, there are two who are described by a number of entirely independent witnesses, who have seen them at different times, as creating the impression of a very dangerous evil personality. One woman, indeed, remarked that she was glad to have met such a man, for she knew now that real evil did exist and therefore that what she had been taught in her youth was true. This consensus of opinion is remarkable, but not, presumably, universal.

It is surely to be expected that a man who has submitted himself to a magical, as to a religious, training, will develop a characteristic attitude of mind; in fact if he is whole-hearted he is sure to do so, and this attitude may include a considerable belief in his own powers. People interested in magic have wondered whether Adolf Hitler were a magician; and it must be admitted that he developed certain qualifications, since by being an abstainer from meat, alcohol, tobacco, and women he built up in himself a tremendous concentration towards his purpose. This concentration is the object of all magical training, which frequently, but not always, demands a certain amount of abstinence.

It was in Paris that the writer encountered close to the Place de l'Opéra a man who had manufactured potable gold. He was not a magician by profession, nor a boaster by habit; he was merely exchanging experiences with a colleague; and it is not impossible to discover the formula. His training consisted of forty days' chastity and a chosen diet. He had also to gather his herbs at sunrise on astrolo-

gically appropriate days. The decoction was made with great care at the proper time and when taken bestowed, for whatever reason, a feeling of greater well-being and better health than the experimenter had ever known. He had not the fortune to be cured of anything because he did not suffer from any complaint.

Thanks to the existence of certain books it is still possible to experiment in magic. One thing however is certain, that to do so in a sceptical frame of mind is entirely useless; for since magic consists so largely in bringing to bear the power of suggestion it is obvious that a person who suggests to himself that nothing will happen can never achieve anything at all. Even the simple practice of table-turning can sometimes be made to fail by mere suggestion—in other words by trying hard not to do what you are pretending to do. Thus people who do not believe in magic can never work it; but that, however, unwilling they be may to admit it, proves merely their unbelief and proves nothing for or against the art itself.

To discuss the nature of the power of suggestion would lead nowhere, since to understand it we should need to understand the nature of mind. But as an example of the practice of modern magic, and to illustrate the working of suggestion and other phenomena, we may conclude by quoting at length the following narrative. It is an account of certain facts which actually occurred in Wales a number of years ago. The protagonist has his reasons for desiring to remain anonymous, and they are easy to understand; suffice it to say that he is not the author of this book, nor does he practice magic at the present time. His veracity,

however, is certain, and his text is given as he wrote it; the dates and places are genuine, but the personal names have been changed for pseudonyms.

'It is doubtful if the march of time and the popularization of science has entirely eradicated from the Welsh people their traditional interest in witch and warlock. At any rate when in the bleak winter of 1916–17 I stayed in T——, a large colliery town nestling in the Welsh mountains, I found the people interested in all that was bizarre and occult. These were the darkest days of the war and spiritualism had found a fertile soil to take root in nearly every town in Wales. Attracted by the mesmeric and phrenological experiments of that distinguished savant Alfred Russel Wallace, O.M., I had opened consulting-rooms in the main street and it was not long before my studio became the centre of the occult life of the town. Although I had imbibed all the leading authorities on the occult and was the proud possessor of a formidable library of fantastic books, I soon realized that theory must give way to practice if I was to make any serious headway in my researches. So, acting on the advice of many, I took larger premises and converted the studio into a spiritualistic meeting hall. Several times a week leading spiritualistic mediums from Bristol, Cardiff, and Swansea would come and conduct the service and demonstrate their unusual psychic faculties. On these occasions the hall was invariably packed to capacity, and the phenomena that took place among the congregation were astonishing if not always edifying.

'A frequent visitor to my hall was Miss Fenton (whose

comeliness was astrologically justified by the Sun in Aquarius in partile quartile aspect to Neptune in Taurus). Born under the rising of the Moon and Uranus in Virgo she possessed abnormal psychic gifts which made her a welcome visitor to nearly all the spiritualistic societies in the neighbouring towns over the hills. But her visits to the Pentecostal Society in an adjoining town were less warmly received by Mr. Bulwer, the President. Bulwer could not be described as exactly popular. He had a reputation as a magician and had delved deeply into occult literature; and his natural aptitudes for the mysterious had undoubtedly been fostered by his long sojourn in India. He was a small dark man, cold and reserved in manner, and was said to rule his wife and children with a rod of iron. In his own congregation he was respected and feared. For some unknown reason he resented my presence in T—— and warned his flock not to attend my meetings. Miss Fenton, who numbered herself among the Pentecostals, took no heed of the warning; for she continually frequented our meetings, where she was warmly received. When Bulwer discovered this his indignation knew no bounds, and at a meeting of the Pentecostals he went "under control" with "St. John the Baptist" as his guide, and accused Miss Fenton, who was present, as being a veritable Judas Iscariot. Nothing daunted, Miss Fenton in her turn went "under control" and with stinging invective accused Bulwer of charlatanry. Smarting under this unexpected attack Bulwer, there and then, swore to be avenged in a manner that neither she nor anybody else could evade or guard against. But of all this I knew nothing. I had never met

Bulwer and had only the vaguest notion as to the activities of the Pentecostals. But the drama of it all broke full upon me, when in the teeth of a blinding snowstorm a distinguished old gentleman called at my studio on Thursday afternoon, the 8th March 1917. Mr. Hammond was Vice-President of one of Wales' oldest spiritualistic societies and despite the bleakness of the weather and the danger of crossing the ice-covered hills, had travelled all the way from Pontypridd to see me. He questioned me as to my knowledge of ritualistic magic and, being satisfied in this regard, asked me if I would be prepared to perform a ceremony of exorcism that very night. When I made a gesture of protest, he pointed out that there was no time to lose, as the Moon would be full that night. Then he explained that Miss Fenton had apparently gone mad; having all the symptoms of epilepsy in its most aggravated form. Her doctor had given her a sedative and was of the opinion that she should be immediately committed to a mental home. Hammond, who knew Miss Fenton well—and who I believe was also a member of the Pentecostals—told me that in his opinion Miss Fenton had been cursed and that Bulwer was responsible; and he made a passing reference to what had occurred at their last meeting. In his opinion Miss Fenton could only be cured by ceremonial exorcism and it must be performed that midnight. I pointed out to him that while I was willing to do anything in my power to help, I had no time to prepare for a ceremony of this nature. Moreover I was without the necessary ritualistic equipment, such as the sceptre, chalice, sword and discus, the linen table-cloth, the incense-brazier and

wax candles. He assured me that if I consented he could procure all these for me, as well as two boys to act as my acolytes. Notwithstanding my reluctance, he pressed me to consent; and, being an astrologer, he hastily made some calculations fixing the commencement of the ceremony as 12.24 a.m. G.M.T. as that would be the time of true local midnight.

'When he had departed, I had the floor of the back-hall scrubbed and an improvised stand and table erected. In accordance with the ritual I drew in chalk, on the flag-stones, the necessary magical circles; inscribing therein the seals of the Angelical Hierarchy together with their planetary notation. On the circumference were written the puissant four-fold name of Jehovah—the Tetragrammaton—and such sacred names as Adonai and Elohim. Protective circles suitably inscribed were also chalked to seat the witnesses, the acolytes and the "possessed"; all circles being strictly orientated. In lieu of well-water I melted snow and procured salt. Having bathed, I clothed myself only in linen as prescribed, and spent the rest of the evening studying the Manual; endeavouring the while to stifle my nervous excitement. Punctually at half-past eleven that night a cab rumbled up to the door and Mr. Hammond arrived with Miss Fenton who was almost carried into the studio in a comatose state by two ladies and the two boys. Opening an attaché case, Mr. Hammond produced the magical sceptre, chalice, sword and discus. These were beautifully wrought and appeared to be old and valuable. The brazier and candlesticks were of solid silver and the specially prepared incense was contained in

a small but lovely silver box. The lace-edged linen cloth seemed old and faded. I wondered where Mr. Hammond got these gems of the magical art but somehow I did not dare to ask.

'Having washed Miss Fenton's face, hands and feet in melted ice, let down her hair and removed all jewellery and silken ware, her friends securely strapped her on the chair reserved for her. As the time approached for the commencement of the ritual everyone took their places in the circles allotted to them. The waxen candles were placed on the table and lit and the acolytes instructed as to their parts. Midnight by the clock had already struck and we had some time to wait. Save for the eerie whirl of the wind and the rattle of the windows and doors, all was silent within and without. The cab had gone but was to return at 12.30 a.m. Occasionally one could hear the crunching of heavy footsteps of some passer-by in the snow. True midnight (12.24 a.m.) was still some ten minutes off. Our teeth were all chattering, but whether from fear or the biting cold it was difficult to tell. Certainly there was not one of us that was not trembling. As the time drew near, Miss Fenton became restless and uneasy. At first a sigh, then a moan escaped from her; but gradually she commenced to rave and make unpleasant gestures. Everyone wished that the ordeal was over. At last Mr. Hammond whispered "time" and put out the light, and I immediately opened the missal and began to mumble the Latin phrases. The boys were frightened. Mustering up courage I spoke louder, and made the necessary signs and touches with the magical implements. Miss Fenton's screams by this

time fairly drowned my voice, while the howling of the wind and the rattle of the windows seemed to grow in intensity. Fantastic shadows were thrown on the floor and walls by the flickering candles. The room seemed to our heightened imagination full of invisible forces. Somehow we did not appear to be alone. Something sinister and unseen was with us. We were all trembling violently. Cold shivers ran up our spines. The tension became unbearable. At last invoking the names of the Elohim I charged the devils to depart hence and *to return whence they came*. Three times I commanded the Evil ones to depart; and at my repeated challenge Miss Fenton's countenance underwent a horrible transformation. It was a revolting sight. Her eyes rolled; foam gathered at her mouth, and her ear-piercing screams completely unnerved us, as she squirmed violently in the chair. Suddenly as I gave the final command, the candles dimmed and went out; Miss Fenton gave one final shriek; the room was plunged in darkness—save for the moonlight—and then—silence.

'For a split second we stood petrified and horror-stricken. Mr. Hammond was the first to break the silence by lighting the gas. Then everything seemed unreal. Miss Fenton seemed unconscious, but was quickly unstrapped, dressed and rushed to the waiting cab. Everyone was eager to get away. Hurriedly Mr. Hammond collected his magical possessions and giving me a warm shake of the hands took his departure.

'Hardly daring to undress, I went to bed, and fortunately fell into a deep slumber. But I was rudely shaken back to consciousness that afternoon with the news that

Bulwer was found dead in his bed. The doctor said it was cerebral haemorrhage. I inquired as to Miss Fenton. She was still asleep. On Saturday afternoon I called on her. She was up and about and in the best of spirits. But to my astonishment she had no recollection whatsoever of the events of Thursday night.'

It may be objected that such stories as these are merely hearsay. Of course they are. Everything written is hearsay; when experience is impossible hearsay is the only resort. The question is simply whether the witnesses are credible. Concerning the persons mentioned in this book the writer has rejected numberless stories which seemed ill-founded or absurd; only the best available evidence has been produced, and if it does not lead to a definite conclusion that is merely to be regretted. No attempt has been made to dictate to the reader how much he should believe, for we know very well that the credulous cannot disbelieve if they would and the sceptic cannot believe for all his efforts. Readers will form their own conclusions, and therefore the author who leaves them free to do so will run least risk of contradiction.

What we can say is simply this, that magic is really a religion in itself; that it has been the noble study of intelligent men and not merely the mean practice attributed to unpopular old women; and that to dismiss it as mere nonsense is a sign of fear—the fear of being thought superstitious. Also magic cannot be practised except by those who are prepared to believe in it, and not always then.

Between belief and unbelief the middle path is for most people the hardest, but, failing experience, it is the least mistaken.

INDEX

Abano, Peter, 110
Abonoteichos, 76, 81–2
Abraham the Jew, 143
Adultery, 95, 156, 164
Advertisements, 18
Aegean Sea, 280
Aesculapius, 70, 76–8, 81
Agrippa, Cornelius, 28, 31, 145–169, 222; character of, 146–7; appearance of, 146
Aix-en-Provence, 256
Akashic records, 274–5
Albertus Magnus, 111
Albumasar, 158
Alchemy, 74, 111, 114–19, 168–9, 174, 177–8, 185, 197, 212–13, 218, 254, 257
Alexander of Paphlagonia, 76–85
Alfred, King, 88
Algebra, 107
Alms, 252
Altamira, 25
Ambition, 221
Ambrosius, 88, 90, 92
America, 34
Ammianus Marcellinus, 123
Amon, 39
Amulets, 27–30, 33, 157–8, 189–90
Anabaptism, 215
Anaesthesia, 110
Angel, 202, 261
Anonymity, 197, 289
Anthropomorphism, 17, 87
Antichrist, 91, 175
Antimony, 174
Antinous, 75
Antioch, 72, 73, 124
Antiseptics, 173
Apis, 19
Apollonius of Tyana, 64–75, 232, 268; character of, 74
Apopi, 39, 44
Apples, 257
Arabia, 265
Arabian Nights, 55
Arcana, 171, 191
Archangels, 56, 201, 203, 216
Aristophanes, 194
Aristotle, 101
Armada, 200
Armour of knights, 96
Arthur, King, 86–9, 92, 93, 95–7

Ars Notoria, 114
Asceticism, 288
Ascoli, Cecco d', 110
Ashmole, 213
Asmodaeus, 58
Astral body, 186, 271
Astrology, 100, 101, 111, 146–7, 155, 158, 168, 171, 175, 178–82, 187–8, 190, 216, 222, 239–40, 288–9, 291, 293
Atheism, 215, 261
Athene's owl, 19
Athens, 66
Atoms, 115, 272
Aubrey, 196
Augurs, 119
Augustinians, 154
Aureolus, 175
Aurum potabile, see Potable gold
Averroes, 101–2, 106
Avicenna, 101–2, 106, 173
Avignon, 150, 244

Bacon, Francis, 97
Bacon, Roger, 32, 107, 111–14, 174, 195
Baldness, 38, 171–2
Balsamo, Giuseppe, 255–6, 265–7
Banishing spells, 26, 229
Banquet, 262
Barcelona, 148–9
Basilisk, 185
Basle, 173, 175–6, 254
Bastille, 264
Bat, 125
Bathsheba, 61
Beating, 219
Bedouin, 34
Beëlzebub, 58
Belgium, 151, 156, 164
Belief in magic, 14, 28, 71, 161, 289. *See* Faith and Imagination
Beugnot, 255
Bible, 123, 156, 207
Bibliomancy, 123
Bindings, 159, 161
Black calf, 37
Black cats, 28
Black magic, 23, 30, 33, 34, 55, 151, 218–21, 291–2
Black man, 136
Black mass, 137–40, 143
Black pig, 42
Blaise, 91–2, 97
Blasphemy, 137–40, 143
Blighting, 129
Blockade, 243
Blois, 236, 245
Blood, 34, 37, 106, 220, 286
Bluebeard, 220
Bluff, 42, 43
Blum, 242
Bodin, 142
Bohemia, 203, 212–13
Bombast, 170
Bonn, 164
Books on magic, 61, 99, 103, 110, 151, 157, 231, 287
Bourbon, 237
Bourignon, Mme, 129–32
Boy, 46, 162–3, 258, 293–4
Brain, 272
Bremen, 210–11
British Israelites, 241
Broomsticks, 136, 143
Brown, Rev. J. Wood, 107

Burgundy, 150–1, 165
Burial alive, 286; of food, etc., 40; pretended, 110
Bürkli, 254
Burleigh, 213
Burning to death, 141, 221

Cagliostro, 46, 168, 248–67, 279; appearance of, 249, 255; character of, 260
Calendar, 195
Cambridge, 194
Campeggio, 164
Capnomancy, 123
Cardan, 221–5
Carinthia, 175–6
Carlyle, 262
Carnarvon, Lord, 47
Carpet, magic, 54
Carter, Howard, 48
Casanova, 256
Casaubon, Dr., 198, 215
Cashel, 101
Cat, 125
Catalepsy, 139
Catilinet, 151
Cedrenus, 72
Cellini, 222, 225–32
Celsus, 58
Centuries, 236
Chamberlain, 241
Charles V, 194
Charms, *see* Amulets and Superstition
Chautemps, 241
Chemical operations, 115–16
Chemistry, 178
Cheops, 49, 51, 241
Children, *see* Boy and Sacrifice
Christianity, 16, 65, 71, 82, 139, 239, 243, 268, 271
Christian Science, 279
Church, 15, 16, 141–2, 154, 157, 269
Circles, magic, 125–6, 218, 227–32, 293
Clairvoyance, 33, 71, 81, 82, 222–5, 234, 251, 257, 258, 274, 283–5
Clark, A. J., 143
Cleanliness, 173
Cocconas, 81–2
Cockcrow, 138
Coins, 79, 85
Colet, Dean, 151
Cologne, 146–7, 151, 155, 164
Colosseum, 227
Communism of wives, 213
Composts, *see* Recipes
Compulsion, magical, 20
Consciousness, 272–3
Constantine, 162, 243
Constipation, 42
Contract with the devil, 131, 133, 219
Conviction, *see* Faith and Imagination
Cook, R., 198
Cooke, G. A., 275
Cophta, 260, 266
Coptic fathers, 46–7
Cordova, 106
Coronation, 22, 195
Correspondences, law of, 24, 117, 190
Coscinomancy, 120
Costume, magician's, 99
Credulity, *see* Scepticism

Créquy, 254
Crocodile, 38, 39, 44
Cromwell, 243
Cross, sign of, 106
Crystal, use of, 119, 123, 162, 198–9, 201 foll.
Cuckoo, 121
Cures, reported, 110, 174, 254
Curses, 47, 128

Damis, 71
Dante, 99, 103
David-Neel, Mme, 276–8
Davis, 195, 203
Days, 30–1
Dead, Book of the, 40; condition of the, 40, 44, 186, 273–5; communication with the, 44–5, 125–7
Decanates, 58
Dedi, 49
Dee, Arthur, 212, 214
Dee, Dr. John, 33, 194–216, 274; character of, 196, 199; appearance of, 196
Dee, Mrs., 199, 202, 213
Delphic oracle, 124, 234
Delrio, 167
Detective story, 47
Devil, contract with, 131, 133, 219
Devils cast out, 21, 210; evocation of, 167, 227–32, 273; worship of, 58, 138–9
Diamond necklace affair, 263–6
Diary, Dr. Dee's, 198–9, 202–4
Diet, 173, 183
Dinner, 195
Disease, treatment of, 38, 42–3, 58–9, 78, 110, 118, 128, 173–4, 181, 183, 189, 236, 253–4, 279
Disguise, 95
Distance, action at, 21, 292–6
Divination, 33, 119–25, 162–8, 188, 222–5, 283–5
Djinn, 52–61, 125
Dogs, 166
Dole, 150–1, 165
Dominicans, 152–4, 166
Domitian, 69–70, 71
Donkey, 121
Doorstep, burial under, 23, 33
Dove, 106
Dowsing, 279
Dragon, astrological, 108
Dragon, Merlin's, 96
Dreams, 21, 45
Drinking, 44

Egypt, 37–51, 61, 66, 128, 239, 282–6
Egyptian gods, 18, 38–40
Eildon Hill, 104
Elba, 238
Electrons, 272
Eleusis, 66, 269
Elijah, 21
Elixir of life, 110, 117
Elizabeth, Queen, 195–7, 202, 214–15
Emperor, Holy Roman, 101, 151, 157, 164, 194, 213
Endor, witch of, 34, 127
England, 243–5, 266
English prince, 238
Ephesus, 69
Epicureans, 82

Erasmus, 164, 173
Escape, Agrippa's, 148–9
Eucharist, 137, 140
Euclid, 194
Eusebius, 73
Evil eye, 128
Evocation, 32, 105–6, 125–7, 167, 219, 222, 227–32, 261, 273. *See also* Devils, Necromancy, Spirits
Exorcism, 292–6

Faith, 35, 123, 182, 269, 280
Fakir, 285–6
Falsehope, 104
Familiars, 20, 166, 176, 222
Fascination, 160. *See* Evil eye
Faust, 32, 184
Faustus, Dr., 110
Fertility, 23, 40, 129
Firewalking, 281
Fits, 135
Flamel, 110
Florence, 102, 226
Flying, 245
Fontbrune, 243
Footmen, 253
Forgery, 115
Fortune-telling, 82, 119
France, 217–21, 239, 244–5, 265–6, 286–7; king of, 234, 236–7, 244; queen of, 155, 165, 263
Franks, 88
Frederick II, 99–102
Freemasonry, 52, 259–62, 266, 287
Free-will, 179, 193
Fribourg, 155
Frobisher, 195
Fumigation, 158–60

Galen, 173
Gallows, 180
Galvah, 208
Geneva, 155, 240
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 93
Geomancy, 188
Germany, 241, 242–3
Ghent, 151
Ghosts, 185–6, 188, 275
Giants, 125, 185
Gilbert, 195, 203
Glass, 197
Gleichen, 253
Glycon, 78, 81–5
Gnostic talismans, 28
Goat, 136
God, name of, 26, 150
Gods, amalgamation of, 39, 139; nature of, 17–19, 27, 280
Gold, 115–18, 168–9, 178, 213, 218. *See also* Potable gold
'Golden Doctor', 175
Greek, 55, 202, 207, 227
Grenoble, 165–6
Guaita, 287

Hale, 129
Hallucination, 232, 281, 286
Hawkins, 195
Hebrew, 150–1, 156, 216, 228
Heliotrope, 189
Hell, 269
Henry VIII, 151
Herbs, 111, 227, 288
Hercules, 87, 93

Heresy, 109, 111, 141–3, 150, 154, 168, 175, 267
Hermes Trismegistus, 39
Hieroglyphics, 40–1, 44
Hilarius, 123
Hiram of Tyre, 60
Hitler, 241, 242, 288
Holland, 156
Home, 281
Homeopathy, 172
Horoscopes of magicians, 108, 146–7, 175, 196–7, 200, 221–2, 235
Horus, 19, 42, 43
Homunculus, 184
Hungary, 242
Hypnosis, 114, 162, 281
Hysterical behaviour, 135, 138, 140

Ibis, 18–19, 39
Igraine, 93
Il, 210–11
Imagination, 157–61, 182, 186. *See* Faith
Imitation, 161
Implements, 293
Imprisonment, 111, 165
Imprudence, 146–7, 156–7
Incantations, *see* Spells
Inferiority, 172
Injuries, 219
Inquisition, 141–2, 152–3, 262
Inscriptions, 27
Intuition, 183
Inventions, 112–13, 155, 216, 222
Iron, 189, 191
Isis, 39, 84
Islam, 52
Italy, 152, 165, 244

James I, 215–16
Jehovah, 26, 38, 53
Jesus, 35, 58, 65, 192
Jewish traditions, 52–3, 56 foll., 60
Jews, 234, 243
Joan of Arc, 217, 218, 219, 221
Joseph of Arimathea, 95
Judaism, 52, 71, 150
Julia, Empress, 67–8
Justin Martyr, 72

Kelly, 199–213, 215, 274; character of, 200
Key of Solomon the King, 61, 63
Khufu, 49, 51, 241
Kings, Book of, 60
Knighthood, 147, 213
Knowledge, 182
Koran, 53, 55, 283

Laborde, 257
Lamotte, 263–4
Lancelot, 96
Landulph, 148
Lane, 282–5
Langton, 101
Lasalle, 254
Laski, Prince, 203
Last Judgement, 244
Latvia, 258–9
Laudanum, 174, 176
Lavater, 255
League of Nations, 240–1
Leicester, Earl of, 195
Les Eyzies, 25

Letters, divination by, 124
Lévi, Eliphas, 220, 232, 287
Levitation, 281
Lexa, F., 37, 45
Library, National, 195
Lichtenfels, 175
Lightning, 160
Lille, 129–32
Linz, 143
London, 151, 260
Longevity, 177
Lord's Prayer, *see* Paternoster
Louis XIV, 137
Louis XVI, 234, 237
Lourdes, 78
Louvain, 164, 167, 194
Love philtres, 23, 81
Lucian, 79–81
Lully, 110
Luther, 152–4, 170, 171, 175
Lyons, 156, 165–6, 169, 260, 262

Macbeth, 121
Macedonia, 81
Madimi, 205–10, 212
Magi, the, 111
Magic, beginnings of, 16 foll., 41; explanation of by magicians, 157, 158, 182, 188, 192; object of, 22, 32, 35; partial definitions of, 22, 23, 26, 32, 33, 35, 186; squares, 28–9, 283–4
Magical procedures quoted, 106, 124, 125–6, 143–4, 162, 163, 190, 283–4, 292–6
Magicians, temperament of, 35
Magic-lantern, 231
Mahomet, 52–3, 215
Make-up, 236
Malalas, 72
Malaya, 26, 280
Malleus Maleficarum, 141
Manchester, 215
Mappae Clavicula, 116
Marcus Aurelius, 84
Margaret of Austria and Burgundy, 151, 156
Maria Theresa, 252
Marie Antoinette, 263–4
Marignano, 152
Mark of the devil, 131–2, 141
Mars, 189, 191
Mary, Queen, 195
Mary, Queen of Scots, 200
Maskelyne's theatre, 275
Mathers, S. L. M., 63, 143
Mechlin, 164
Medem, 257–9
Medicine (*see also* Disease), 79, 101, 155–6, 172–5, 181, 183, 236, 253–4; Paracelsus' theory of, 173
Mediums, 46, 162, 187, 200, 212, 273–4, 291
Memory-training, 114
Mephistopheles, 32
Merlin, 86–98, 99–100; the historical, 94
Mesmer, 162
Metz, 152–5
Michael the archangel, 56, 201, 203
Michael Scot, 31, 32, 99–108
Milan, 171
Miracles, 35, 47, 71–3, 161, 277–8
Mirific Word, 150–1, 165
Missionaries, 110, 216

Mithras, 84
Mittau, 257–9
Mohammedanism, 127, 268
Monarchy, 171, 240
Monks, 164. *See* Dominicans and Augustinians
Monotheism, *see* Polytheism
Montespan, 137, 143
Montpellier, 234
Moon, 159
Moral effect, 128
Mortlake, 196, 201, 215–16
Moses, 262
Mother's name, 24
Munich, 241
Mussolini, 242, 245
Mystery religions, 66, 82, 84, 269
Mythical stories, 42
Myths, nature of, 87

Name of God, 150
Names, influence of, 25–6
Nantes, 219–21
Napoleon, 237–8, 246
Nature, 281
Navigation, 195
Navy, 195
Necromancy, 34, 44, 45, 105–6, 125–7, 203, 227–32
Nelson, 285
Nero, 71
Norse mythology, 30, 280
Nostradamus, 233–47; character of, 235–6; appearance of, 235

Oberkirch, 248–52
Obscurity, 116, 191, 238
Occult Philosophy, 28–9, 151, 163, 168
Odyssey, 34, 89
Ointment, 136, 143
Omens, 120–1
Oracle, method of, 78–9, 82–3. *See also* Delphi
Orator, Agrippa as, 152–3
Orgies, 137, 139, 143
Origen, 58
Origin of magic, 16 foll., 41
Orphanage, 129–32
Orthodox Church, 275
Osiris, 39, 44, 87
Overboard, 280
Oxford, 100, 204

Palermo, 100–1, 255
Paracelsus, 35, 168, 170–93, 235, 279; appearance of, 176; character of, 177, 190
Paris, 100, 104, 147, 194, 236, 260, 261, 262–4, 288
Passion, 186. *See* Imagination
Passport, 156
Paternoster used as a spell, 26, 104
Pavia, 152, 154
Pentacles, 52–3, 63, 228. *See* Circles
Perjury, 219–21
Perrault, 220
Perseus, 76–7
Persia, 239
Petersburg, St., 258
Philosophers' stone, 214. *See* Potable gold and Elixir
Philostratus, 68–74
Phrenology, 172
Phylacteries, 27
Physics, 272

Pigeons, 281
Pills, 101
Pisano, 107
Plague, 236, 255
Planetary hours, 30
Planets, 28, 30. *See* Astrology
Poitou, 218, 244
Poland, 203–4, 214
Poltergeists, 275
Polytheism, 39, 67, 268–9
Pope, the, 101–2, 110, 113–14, 175, 237, 244
Possession, 161, 162, 187, 210, 292–3; cp. 129–32
Potable gold, 117, 254, 288
Potions, 23, 81, 158
Power of mind over matter, 157
Prayers, 42, 45, 215; of Apollonius, 66, 75
Precious stones, 111, 158, 250
Prelati, 219
Promises, 42
Prophecy (*see also* Clairvoyance and Divination), 78, 94, 102, 190, 200, 233–4, 237–47, 252
Psychiatry, 78
Psychical Research Society, 274, 281
Psychology, 116, 180
Pyramids, 47–8, 49
Pythagoras, 70

Radiation, 279
Rais, Gilles de, 217–21
Recipes quoted, 101, 116, 159, 185, 191
Recke, Elise von der, 258–9, 262
Rectories, 196
Reformation, 154–5, 175
Religion, 109, 192, 268–70; and magic, 15–22, 270
Remoteness, attraction of, 43, 276
Resurrection, 47
Ring, divination by, 124
Ring, magic, 54, 57, 59
Ritual, magic, 22, 26, 32–3, 35, 123, 178, 182; quoted, 124, 125–7. *See also* Magical Procedures
Ritual, religious, 20–1
Rohan, Cardinal de, 248–53, 263–4
Roman Church, 140–2, 244, 266–7, 287
Romans in Britain, 88
Rome, 226, 266
Rome, ancient, 119
Rutilian, 83

Sabbat, 136–43
Sacred writings, 54, 111; cp. Paternoster
Sacrifices, 66, 70, 137, 143, 219–21
Sagittarius, 190
Saints, 35, 280
Saint Anne, 152, 155
Saint Christopher, 27
Saint Francis, 161
Saint Helen, 162
Saint John the Baptist, 291
Saint Paul, 82, 212
Salimbene, 102
Salon, 235, 247
Salzburg, 176
Sarazin, 254
Satire, 147, 155

Saturn, 158, 284
Saul, 34, 127
Saul, Barnabus, 199
Savages, 17
Saverne, 248
Savin, 152–3
Saxons, 86, 88
Scent used in conjurations, 123, 124, 125, 159, 227
Scepticism, 14, 82, 147–8, 191, 268, 289, 296
Schuschnigg, 241
Science, 270, 272
Scientific attitude, 14–15
Scot, Michael, q.v.
Scot, Reginald, 142
Scott, Sir Walter, 103, 167
Seals of planets, 28–9, 189–90
Séances, Dee's, 201 foll.; Cagliostro's, 258. *See* Spiritualism
Secrecy, 23, 117–18
Serpents, 77–8, 81–5, 174
Seven Sobs, 201
Severus, Emperor, 67–8
Sheba, Queen of, 55
Sicily, 226
Sidney, Sir Philip, 204
Signatures, doctrine of, 24, 180, 184, 188
Signs of the times, 120–2
Sillé, 218
Smells, foul, for banishing spirits, 38, 226, 227
Snakes, 77–8, 81–5, 174
Snobbery, 248
Snowdon, 89–90
Solomon, 52–63, 122, 187; character of, 61–2
Sorcery, 34, 66
Soubise, Prince de, 254
Soul, 220–1, 271–2
Spagyric system, 173
Spain, 100–1, 106, 148–50
Spells, nature of, 41–43, 106–7; quoted, 45. *See* Magical procedures; working of, 43–4, 160
Sphinx, 47
Spirits, 38, 42–3, 106, 186, 201–16, 222, 269, 271–4, 275
Spiritual attitude, 38, 277
Spiritualism, 32, 197–9, 201–16, 270, 273, 290–1
Star Chamber, 197
Stars, influence of, 111, 225. *See* Astrology
State, 15, 267
Stigmata, 161
Stonehenge, 95
Strasbourg, 176, 248, 252, 254, 257, 260, 262
Suggestion, 25, 27, 34, 41, 42, 279, 289
Sun-god, 38, 44
Supernatural events, 198
Superstition, 27, 83, 121, 270
Surgery, 172
Swindling, 256
Switzerland, 175, 266
Sword, 176
Sylphs, 125, 185
Symbols in Nostradamus, 238–40
Sympathetic magic, 23, 174
Syphilis, 173

Table-turning, 289
Tahra Bey, 285–6
Taliesin, 92, 94
Talismans, 72, 189

Taunting, 34
Teacups, 119
Telepathy, 276
Telescopes, 195
Temperaments, 180
Temples, healing in, 70 foll., 78
Tennyson, 97
Tetragrammaton, 150–1, 293
Theodosius, 125
Theology, 150–2
Thevet, 165–6
Thief, 162–3, 180
Thoth, 19, 39
Threats, 42
Tiberius, 233
Tibet, 276–8, 282
Toledo, 100–1
Tombs, 47–8
Tongues, speaking with, 187
Torture, 141
Training, 288
Trance, 143, 277
Transformations, 104, 131, 188–9, 280
Transubstantiation, 21
Treasure-seeking, 163, 231, 259
Tribau, 212–13
Triple doctorate of Agrippa, 147
Trithemius, 111, 151, 184
Trowbridge, W. R. H., 256
Turkey, 255
Tutankhamen, 47
Tweed, 104

Unguent, 136, 143, 158
Unity of the universe, 190
Universality of religion and magic, 67
Uther, 88, 93

Valens, 123–5
Varennes, 234–7
Varley, 233
Vegetation myths, 86–7
Versailles, 263
Vienna, 118, 176
Vigneulles, Ph. de, 154
Villanova, A. de, 110
Virgin Mary, 42, 152
Virgo, 146
Voltaire, 262
Vomiting, 134–5, 161
Vortigern, 88–90, 92

Wagner, Miles, 32, 112
Wales, 90, 92, 94, 289–90
Walsingham, 214
Wapping, 133
Wars, 243–4
Warsaw, 253, 257
Water-divining, 279
Wax figures, 23
Weather signs, 120–1
Wedding-cake, 122
Welsh traditions of Merlin, 92–4
Werewolves, 280
Westcar papyrus, 49
White magic, 23, 34, 64–5, 72–3, 289–96
Wier, J., 161–3
Will, use of the, 26, 33, 157
Witchcraft, 34, 128–44, 162, 186, 280; false accusations of, 152–3, 215–16
Wives of Agrippa, 147, 154, 155, 156, 164; of Cagliostro, 256, 267; of Dee, 199, 202, 213; of Kelly, 201–2, 209, 213

Words, power of, 25–6
Writing, 27, 44

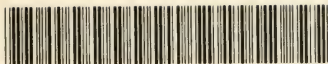
Yellow peril, 244
Yoga, 282
York, 135

Zinc, 174
Zodiac, signs of, 58, 189, 279
Zwingli, 175

J

RI

BF1589
.G55



3 9000 005 718 437

*********ATTENTION*********

THIS ITEM DOES NOT
CIRCULATE WITHOUT
A PHASE BOX OR OTHER
PROTECTIVE ENCLOSURE

FOLKLORE