

to savage and primitive man, who trepanned the skulls of the living to let out the evil spirit. They also buried their dead in sepulchres and provided the bodies with weapons of defence for their spirits after death.

The superstitions of the Egyptians passed on to the Greeks and Romans, but on the introduction of Christianity many of them were rooted out; Northern Europe, together with Britain, accepted the beliefs prevalent in Scandinavia and among the Gothic races, and these the Anglo-Saxons adopted. They included a belief in giants and dwarfs, in fairies, which were the personification of Providence, fays and elves of different orders, not dissimilar to the spiritual beings with human attributes which the Greeks and Romans peopled in their fields and mountains, woods and rivers. According to them the whole world was full of nymphs—some celestial, others terrestrial. The sylphs peopled the air, Shakespeare pictured the chief spirit of the air as Ariel, possibly after the angel that was cast out of heaven. He was the slave of Sycorax, and the guardian of innocence. The fauns or dryads inhabited the woods and were the patrons of wild animals. Those of the mountain were the Oreiades, of the sea the Nereides, and of the rivers, brooks and springs, the Naiades, whilst those of the valleys were Napææ. The Anglo-Saxons adopted from the Scandinavians the belief in Odin the sun and Freya the earth, and the latter corresponded to the Latin Venus. They worshipped Odin and Freya, together with their son Thor, the god of war, but they also worshipped emblems of the seasons.

From the introduction of Christianity in the sixth century to the middle of the seventeenth, the belief in demons—although opposed by the clergy—yet prevailed among the people. They believed in spirits, good and bad, in elves which were moving fairies. They also attributed unusual events to "lubber-fiends," which were tall, lanky, clumsy beings. The Anglo-Saxons believed in one in particular—Friar Rush, a house spirit which played domestic pranks just as Jack o' Lantern carried on outside in the fields and marshes. The Welsh believed in "Tylwyth Teg," or will of the wisp, just as the English believed in Robin Goodfellow, who did many good deeds in rural districts and was generally favoured, even by the monks. Many stories are related of the bad fairies and of the Devil's power over the priests. The fairies of the Celts were usually good little folk, regarded as diminutive beings of human appearance, perfect in form, but much more beautiful; they were so small that they could hide in flowers. The fairies were "family folk" and good neighbours, referred to as "men of peace," yet they sometimes exhibited a dwarfish malignancy. They revelled in tricks and pranks, and they often caused great trouble by kidnapping human beings—preferably unchristened infants.

It is curious that fairies were more often females than males. There were many more fairy queens than fairy kings. The domain of the fairies was underground, where the royal fairies held their court and where all was beauty and splendour. Their king was Oberon, with a crown of jewels on his head and a horn in his hand, which gave such melodious music for all to dance to on the greensward, that no mortal lips could produce the like. Their queen, Titania, was a tiny creature of surpassing loveliness. The royal fairy pageants, processions and banquets were magnificent. In processions they rode on milk-white steeds, and their dresses, always green, were rich beyond conception.

It is an easy transition—in the domain of ignorance—from a superstitious belief in good fairies, with their enchantments, to the help of evil spirits by sorcery, by which people claimed to foretell the future and to control and influence it, either by means of spells, *i.e.*, the recitation of certain words (Abracadabra) or rubbishy sentences, or

mystical formulæ described as incantations, or by the performance of certain rites or ceremonies, or the use of rings or things worn round the neck.

Occasionally spells were accomplished by the appearance of certain birds or by their flight. A single magpie is to-day believed to be an ill omen, whereas a pair brings good news. Certain birds are described as lucky, others unlucky. Swallows, storks, swans and cocks are lucky; whilst owls, ravens and crows are unlucky, as also is the peacock, which is associated with vanity. A hare running across the path is unlucky, as also is putting on the left shoe first, the spilling of salt, and going under a ladder. Cakes are sometimes regarded with superstition. The Simmel cake is eaten in mid-Lent to commemorate the banquet given by Joseph to his brethren before they left him, and as a good omen in memory of the feeding of the 5,000.

Magic writing was worn round the neck, and the Hebrews to-day have belief in their text-inscribed phylacteries. Lunacy was connected with the moon, which was believed to have a great influence over the terraqueous globe. Salt, an emblem of immortality, was a great charm, as also was rain-water on holy days. It was unlucky for the baby not to cry at its baptism, because the Devil did not get out of it. These superstitions were not wholly fanciful. They are based on some scraps of knowledge which are true and logical. Thus, the single bird implies that these birds mate for life, and to see one is to portray sorrow, separation and death. The spilling of salt is a reference to the pictures painted of the Last Supper, and walking under a ladder may have obvious results.

Witchcraft probably reached its height in the sixteenth century. By this time, owing to the denunciations of Calvin and through fanatical persecution, it had spread like a plague of mental influenza over the whole of Europe, especially to Spain, Italy, France and Germany.

Many of those who confessed to witchcraft were the victims of cerebral disorder, of delusions and hallucinations, and were insane or feeble-minded. The poor wretches were conscious of unaccustomed sensations and singular promptings, and naturally referred them to the agency of demons.

Those who were described as possessed and who were called demono-maniacs were definitely insane, and they showed the type of insanity classified as *folie à deux* or communicated insanity, the morbid ideas of one person being absorbed by or conveyed to others. The treatment of the insane in the remote past was marked with great cruelty and partook greatly of superstition, and also of the nature of witchcraft, for, as Hack Tuke remarks, it was a "curious compound of pharmacy, superstition and castigation." Demoniacal possession was regarded as the chief agency in causing insanity, and exorcism was practised by the monks, who were then both priest and doctor, to get rid of the Devil. The monks also practised pharmacy, because the monastery gardens produced the medicinal herbs and plants, and thus the religious houses became the repositories of all medicines whence healing was carried out.

Superstition was further exemplified in the cure of insanity by immersing or "bowssening," *i.e.*, drenching the patient in holy wells, such as the well of St. Nun, near Launceston, in Cornwall, or at St. Kea's, near Truro, or, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, at St. Winifred's in Holywell, Wales. There were several healing wells in Scotland for the cure of mental diseases, *viz.*, one at St. Fillan's in Perthshire, one at St. Ronan's in the Butt of Lewis, and another at St. Maree in Ross-shire. The patient was looked upon as possessed by the Devil, and in order to prevent the demon lurking in the hair after immersion, the patient was plunged over head and ears into the water and detained there (according to Sir Arthur Mitchell) almost to the point of drowning.

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