

FRAZER JAMES GEORGE

THE GOLDEN BOUGH: A
STUDY IN MAGIC AND
RELIGION (THIRD EDITION,
VOL. 09 OF 12)

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Preface

With *The Scapegoat* our general discussion of the theory and practice of the Dying God is brought to a conclusion. The aspect of the subject with which we are here chiefly concerned is the use of the Dying God as a scapegoat to free his worshippers from the troubles of all sorts with which life on earth is beset. I have sought to trace this curious usage to its origin, to decompose the idea of the Divine Scapegoat into the elements out of which it appears to be compounded. If I am right, the idea resolves itself into a simple confusion between the material and the immaterial, between the real possibility of transferring a physical load to other shoulders and the supposed possibility of transferring our bodily and mental ailments to another who will bear them for us. When we survey the history of this pathetic fallacy from its crude inception in savagery to its full development in the speculative theology of civilized nations, we cannot but wonder at the

singular power which the human mind possesses of transmuting the leaden dross of superstition into a glittering semblance of gold. Certainly in nothing is this alchemy of thought more conspicuous than in the process which has refined the base and foolish custom of the scapegoat into the sublime conception of a God who dies to take away the sins of the world.

Along with the discussion of the Scapegoat I have included in this volume an account of the remarkable religious ritual of the Aztecs, in which the theory of the Dying God found its most systematic and most tragic expression. There is nothing, so far as I am aware, to shew that the men and women, who in Mexico died cruel deaths in the character of gods and goddesses, were regarded as scapegoats by their worshippers and executioners; the intention of slaying them seems rather to have been to reinforce by a river of human blood the tide of life which might else grow stagnant and stale in the veins of the deities. Hence the Aztec ritual, which prescribed the slaughter, the roasting alive, and the flaying of men and women in order that the gods might remain for ever young and strong, conforms to the general theory of deicide which I have offered in this work. On that theory death is a portal through which gods and men alike must pass to escape the decrepitude of age and to attain the vigour of eternal youth. The conception may be said to culminate in the Brahmanical doctrine that in the daily sacrifice the body of the Creator is broken anew for the salvation of the world.

J. G. Frazer.

Cambridge,
21st June, 1913.

Chapter I. The Transference of Evil

§ 1. The Transference to Inanimate Objects

The principle of vicarious suffering.

In the preceding parts of this work we have traced the practice of killing a god among peoples in the hunting, pastoral, and agricultural stages of society; and I have attempted to explain the motives which led men to adopt so curious a custom. One aspect of the custom still remains to be noticed. The accumulated misfortunes and sins of the whole people are sometimes laid upon the dying god, who is supposed to bear them away for ever, leaving the people innocent and happy. The notion that we can transfer our guilt and sufferings to some other being who will bear them for us is familiar to the savage mind. It arises from a very obvious confusion between the physical and the mental, between the material and the immaterial. Because it is possible to shift a load of wood, stones, or what not, from our own back to the back of another, the savage fancies that it is equally possible to shift the burden of his pains and sorrows to another, who will suffer them in his stead. Upon this idea he acts, and the result is an endless number of very unamiable devices for palming

off upon some one else the trouble which a man shrinks from bearing himself. In short, the principle of vicarious suffering is commonly understood and practised by races who stand on a low level of social and intellectual culture. In the following pages I shall illustrate the theory and the practice as they are found among savages in all their naked simplicity, undisguised by the refinements of metaphysics and the subtleties of theology.

Transference of evil to things. Evils swept away by rivers.

The devices to which the cunning and selfish savage resorts for the sake of easing himself at the expense of his neighbour are manifold; only a few typical examples out of a multitude can be cited. At the outset it is to be observed that the evil of which a man seeks to rid himself need not be transferred to a person; it may equally well be transferred to an animal or a thing, though in the last case the thing is often only a vehicle to convey the trouble to the first person who touches it. In some of the East Indian islands they think that epilepsy can be cured by striking the patient on the face with the leaves of certain trees and then throwing them away. The disease is believed to have passed into the leaves, and to have been thrown away with them.¹ In the Warramunga and Tjingilli tribes of Central Australia men who suffered from headache have often been seen wearing women's head-rings. "This was connected with the belief that the pain in the head would pass into the rings, and that then it could

¹ J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik- en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua* (The Hague, 1886), pp. 266 sq., 305, 357 sq.; compare *id.*, pp. 141, 340.

be thrown away with them into the bush, and so got rid of effectually. The natives have a very firm belief in the efficacy of this treatment. In the same way when a man suffers from internal pain, usually brought on by overeating, his wife's head-rings are placed on his stomach; the evil magic which is causing all the trouble passes into them, and they are then thrown away into the bushes, where the magic is supposed to leave them. After a time they are searched for by the woman, who brings them back, and again wears them in the ordinary way.”² Among the Sihanaka of Madagascar, when a man is very sick, his relatives are sometimes bidden by the diviner to cast out the evil by means of a variety of things, such as a stick of a particular sort of tree, a rag, a pinch of earth from an ant's nest, a little money, or what not. Whatever they may be, they are brought to the patient's house and held by a man near the door, while an exorcist stands in the house and pronounces the formula necessary for casting out the disease. When he has done, the things are thrown away in a southward direction, and all the people in the house, including the sick man, if he has strength enough, shake their loose robes and spit towards the door in order to expedite the departure of the malady.³ When an Atkhan of the Aleutian Islands had committed a grave sin and desired to unburden himself of his guilt, he proceeded as follows.

² Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), p. 474.

³ J. Pearse, “Customs connected with Death and Burial among the Sihanaka,” *The Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine*, vol. ii., *Reprint of the Second four Numbers* (Antananarivo, 1896), pp. 146 sq.

Having chosen a time when the sun was clear and unclouded, he picked up certain weeds and carried them about his person. Then he laid them down, and calling the sun to witness, cast his sins upon them, after which, having eased his heart of all that weighed upon it, he threw the weeds into the fire, and fancied that thus he cleansed himself of his guilt.⁴ In Vedic times a younger brother who married before his elder brother was thought to have sinned in so doing, but there was a ceremony by which he could purge himself of his sin. Fetters of reed-grass were laid on him in token of his guilt, and when they had been washed and sprinkled they were flung into a foaming torrent, which swept them away, while the evil was bidden to vanish with the foam of the stream.⁵ The Matse negroes of Togoland think that the river Awo has power to carry away the sorrows of mankind. So when one of their friends has died, and their hearts are heavy, they go to the river with leaves of the raphia palm tied round their necks and drums in their hands. Standing on the bank they beat the drums and cast the leaves into the stream. As the leaves float away out of sight to the sound of the rippling water and the roll of the drums, they fancy that their sorrow too is lifted from them.⁶ Similarly, the ancient Greeks imagined that the pangs of love might be healed by bathing in the river Selemnus.⁷ The Indians of Peru sought

⁴ Ivan Petroff, *Report on the Population, Industries, and Resources of Alaska*, p. 158.

⁵ H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Berlin, 1894), p. 322.

⁶ J. Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), p. 800.

⁷ Pausanias, vii. 23. 3.

to purify themselves from their sins by plunging their heads in a river; they said that the river washed their sins away.⁸

Transference of evil to things.

An Arab cure for melancholy or madness caused by love is to put a dish of water on the sufferer's head, drop melted lead into it, and then bury the lead in an open field; thus the mischief that was in the man goes away.⁹ Amongst the Miotse of China, when the eldest son of the house attains the age of seven years, a ceremony called "driving away the devil" takes place. The father makes a kite of straw and lets it fly away in the desert, bearing away all evil with it.¹⁰ When an Indian of Santiago Tepehuacan is ill, he will sometimes attempt to rid himself of the malady by baking thrice seven cakes; of these he places seven in the top of the highest pine-tree of the forest, seven he lays at the foot of the tree, and seven he casts into a well, with the water of which he then washes himself. By this means he transfers the sickness to the water of the well and so is made whole.¹¹ The Baganda believed that plague was caused by the god Kaumpuli, who resided in a deep hole in his temple. To prevent him from

⁸ P. J. de Arriaga, *Extirpacion de la Idolatria del Piru* (Lima, 1621), p. 29.

⁹ This I learned from my friend W. Robertson Smith, who mentioned as his authority David of Antioch, *Tazyin*, in the story "Orwa."

¹⁰ R. Andree, *Ethnographische Parallele und Vergleiche* (Stuttgart, 1878), pp. 29 sq.

¹¹ "Lettre du curé de Santiago Tepehuacan à son évêque sur les mœurs et coutumes des Indiens soumis à ses soins," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), Deuxième Série, ii. (1834) p. 182.

escaping and devastating the country, they battened him down in the hole by covering the top with plantain-stems and piling wild-cat-skins over them; there was nothing like wild-cat-skins to keep him down, so hundreds of wild cats were hunted and killed every year to supply the necessary skins. However, sometimes in spite of these precautions the god contrived to escape, and then the people died. When a garden or house was plague-stricken, the priests purified it by transferring the disease to a plantain-tree and then carrying away the tree to a piece of waste land. The way in which they effected the transference of the disease was this. They first made a number of little shields and spears out of plantain fibre and reeds and placed them at intervals along the path leading from the garden to the main road. A young plantain-tree, about to bear fruit, was then cut down, the stem was laid in the path leading to one of the plague-stricken huts, and it was speared with not less than twenty reed spears, which were left sticking in it, while some of the plantain-fibre shields were also fastened to it. This tree was then carried down the path to the waste land and left there. It went by the name of the Scapegoat (*kyonzire*). To make quite sure that the plague, after being thus deposited in the wilderness, should not return by the way it went, the priests raised an arch, covered with barkcloth, over the path at the point where it diverged from the main road. This arch was thought to interpose an insurmountable barrier to the return of the plague.¹²

¹² Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), pp. 309 *sq.*

Dyak transference of evil to things.

Dyak priestesses expel ill-luck from a house by hewing and slashing the air in every corner of it with wooden swords, which they afterwards wash in the river, to let the ill-luck float away down stream. Sometimes they sweep misfortune out of the house with brooms made of the leaves of certain plants and sprinkled with rice-water and blood. Having swept it clean out of every room and into a toy-house made of bamboo, they set the little house with its load of bad luck adrift on the river. The current carries it away out to sea, where it shifts its baleful cargo to a certain kettle-shaped ship, which floats in mid-ocean and receives in its capacious hold all the ills that flesh is heir to. Well would it be with mankind if the evils remained for ever tossing far away on the billows; but, alas, they are dispersed from the ship to the four winds, and settle again, and yet again, on the weary Dyak world. On Dyak rivers you may see many of the miniature houses, laden with manifold misfortunes, bobbing up and down on the current, or sticking fast in the thickets that line the banks.¹³

Evils transferred to other persons through the medium of things.

These examples illustrate the purely beneficent side of the transference of evil; they shew how men seek to alleviate human

¹³ C. Hupe, "Korte Verhandeling over de Godsdienst, Zeden enz. der Dajakkers," *Tijdschrift voor Neêrlands Indië*, 1846, dl. iii. pp. 149 *sq.*; F. Grabowsky, "Die Theogonie der Dajaken auf Borneo," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, v. (1892) p. 131.

sufferings by diverting them to material objects, which are then thrown away or otherwise disposed of so as to render them innocuous. Often, however, the transference of evil to a material object is only a step towards foisting it upon a living person. This is the maleficent side of such transferences. It is exemplified in the following cases. To cure toothache some of the Australian blacks apply a heated spear-thrower to the cheek. The spear-thrower is then cast away, and the toothache goes with it in the shape of a black stone called *karriitch*. Stones of this kind are found in old mounds and sandhills. They are carefully collected and thrown in the direction of enemies in order to give them toothache.¹⁴ In Mirzapur a mode of transferring disease is to fill a pot with flowers and rice and bury it in a pathway covered up with a flat stone. Whoever touches this is supposed to contract the disease. The practice is called *chalauiwa*, or “passing on” the malady. This sort of thing goes on daily in Upper India. Often while walking of a morning in the bazaar you will see a little pile of earth adorned with flowers in the middle of the road. Such a pile usually contains some scabs or scales from the body of a smallpox patient, which are placed there in the hope that some one may touch them, and by catching the disease may relieve the sufferer.¹⁵ The Bahima, a pastoral people of the Uganda Protectorate, often suffer from deep-seated abscesses:

¹⁴ J. Dawson, *Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, 1881), p. 59.

¹⁵ W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 164 sq.

“their cure for this is to transfer the disease to some other person by obtaining herbs from the medicine-man, rubbing them over the place where the swelling is, and burying them in the road where people continually pass; the first person who steps over these buried herbs contracts the disease, and the original patient recovers.”¹⁶ The practice of the Wagogo of German East Africa is similar. When a man is ill, the native doctor will take him to a cross-road, where he prepares his medicines, uttering at the same time the incantations which are necessary to give the drugs their medical virtue. Part of the dose is then administered to the patient, and part is buried under a pot turned upside down at the cross-road. It is hoped that somebody will step over the pot, and catching the disease, which lurks in the pot, will thereby relieve the original sufferer. A variation of this cure is to plaster some of the medicine, or a little of the patient's blood, on a wooden peg and to drive the peg into a tree; any one who passes the tree and is so imprudent as to draw out the peg, will carry away with it the disease.¹⁷

Evils transferred to images. Mongol transference of evil to things.

Sometimes in case of sickness the malady is transferred to an effigy as a preliminary to passing it on to a human being. Thus

¹⁶ Rev. J. Roscoe, “The Bahima, a Cow Tribe of Enkole,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. (1907) p. 103.

¹⁷ Rev. J. Cole, “Notes on the Wagogo of German East Africa,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiii. (1902) p. 313.

among the Baganda the medicine-man would sometimes make a model of his patient in clay; then a relative of the sick man would rub the image over the sufferer's body and either bury it in the road or hide it in the grass by the wayside. The first person who stepped over the image or passed by it would catch the disease. Sometimes the effigy was made out of a plantain-flower tied up so as to look like a person; it was used in the same way as the clay figure. But the use of images for this maleficent purpose was a capital crime; any person caught in the act of burying one of them in the public road would surely have been put to death.¹⁸ Among the Sena-speaking people to the north of the Zambesi, when any one is ill, the doctor makes a little pig of straw to which he transfers the sickness. The little pig is then set on the ground where two paths meet, and any passer-by who chanced to kick it over is sure to absorb the illness and to draw it away from the patient.¹⁹ Among the Korkus, a forest tribe of the Central Provinces in India, when a person wishes to transfer his sickness to another, he contrives to obtain the loin-cloth of his intended victim and paints two figures on it in lamp black, one upright and the other upside down. As soon as the owner of the loin-cloth puts it on, he falls a victim to the ailment which afflicted the artist who drew the figures.²⁰ Every nine years a Mongol celebrates

¹⁸ Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), pp. 343 *sq.*

¹⁹ Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 146.

²⁰ *Central Provinces, Ethnographic Survey*, iii., *Draft Articles on Forest Tribes* (Allahabad, 1907), p. 63.

a memorial festival of his birth for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of his life and welfare. At this solemn ceremony two lambskins, one black and the other white, are spread on the floor of the hut, which is further covered with a felt carpet, and on the carpet are made nine little ridges of earth brought from nine mountains, the bottom of a river, and a sepulchral mound. The owner of the hut, for whose benefit the rite is performed, next seats himself on the black lambskin, and opposite him is set an effigy of himself made of dough by a lama. The priest then throws a black stone at the effigy, praying that the black arrow of death may pierce it, after which he throws a white stone at the master of the hut, praying that the bright beam of life may endow him with wondrous strength. After that the Mongol gets up, steps over one of the ridges of earth and says, "I have overcome a mishap, I have escaped a death." This ceremony he performs nine times, stepping over all the ridges, one after the other. Then he sits down on the white lambskin, and the lama takes the dough effigy, swings it thrice round the man whom it represents, spits on it thrice, and hands it to attendants who carry it away into the steppe. A little holy water sprinkled over the Mongol now completes his protection against perils and dangers.²¹ This last is a case of the beneficent transference of evil; for in it no attempt seems to be made to shift the burden of misfortune to anybody else.

²¹ M. v. Beguelin, "Religiöse Volksbräuche der Mongolen," *Globus*, lvii. (1890) pp. 209 *sq.*

§ 2. The Transference to Stones and Sticks

Fatigue transferred to stones, sticks, or leaves.

In the western district of the island of Timor, when men or women are making long and tiring journeys, they fan themselves with leafy branches, which they afterwards throw away on particular spots where their forefathers did the same before them. The fatigue which they felt is thus supposed to have passed into the leaves and to be left behind. Others use stones instead of leaves.²² Similarly in the Babar Archipelago tired people will strike themselves with stones, believing that they thus transfer to the stones the weariness which they felt in their own bodies. They then throw away the stones in places which are specially set apart for the purpose.²³ A like belief and practice in many distant parts of the world have given rise to those cairns or heaps of sticks and leaves which travellers often observe beside the path, and to which every passing native adds his contribution in the shape of a stone, or stick, or leaf. Thus in the Solomon and Banks' Islands the natives are wont to throw sticks, stones, or leaves upon a

²² J. G. F. Riedel, "Die Landschaft Dawan oder West-Timor," *Deutsche geographische Blätter*, x. 231.

²³ J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik- en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua* (The Hague, 1886), p. 340.

heap at a place of steep descent, or where a difficult path begins, saying, "There goes my fatigue." The act is not a religious rite, for the thing thrown on the heap is not an offering to spiritual powers, and the words which accompany the act are not a prayer. It is nothing but a magical ceremony for getting rid of fatigue, which the simple savage fancies he can embody in a stick, leaf, or stone, and so cast it from him.²⁴

Heaps of stones or sticks among the American Indians.

An early Spanish missionary to Nicaragua, observing that along the paths there were heaps of stones on which the Indians as they passed threw grass, asked them why they did so. "Because we think," was the answer, "that thereby we are kept from weariness and hunger, or at least that we suffer less from them."²⁵ When the Peruvian Indians were climbing steep mountains and felt weary, they used to halt by the way at certain points where there were heaps of stones, which they called *apachitas*. On these heaps the weary men would place other stones, and they said that when they did so, their weariness left them.²⁶ In the passes of the eastern Andes, on the borders of Argentina and Bolivia,

²⁴ R. H. Codrington, D.D., *The Melanesians* (Oxford, 1891), p. 186.

²⁵ G. F. de Oviedo, *Histoire du Nicaragua* (Paris, 1840), pp. 42 *sq.* (Ternaux-Compans, *Voyages, Relations et Mémoires originaux, pour servir à l'Histoire de la Découverte de l'Amérique*).

²⁶ P. J. de Arriaga, *Extirpacion de la Idolatria del Piru* (Lima, 1621), pp. 37, 130. As to the custom compare J. J. von Tschudi, *Peru* (St. Gallen, 1846), ii. 77 *sq.*; H. A. Weddell, *Voyage dans le Nord de la Bolivie et dans les parties voisines du Pérou* (Paris and London, 1853), pp. 74 *sq.* These latter writers interpret the stones as offerings.

“large cairns are constantly found, and every Puna Indian, on passing, adds a stone and a coca leaf, so that neither he nor his beast of burden may tire on the way.”²⁷ In the country of the Tarahumares and Tepehuanes in Mexico heaps of stones and sticks may be observed on high points, where the track leads over a ridge between two or more valleys. “Every Indian who passes such a pile adds a stone or a stick to it in order to gain strength for his journey. Among the Tarahumares only the old men observe this custom. Whenever the Tepehuanes carry a corpse, they rest it for some fifteen minutes on such a heap by the wayside that the deceased may not be fatigued but strong enough to finish his long journey to the land of the dead. One of my Huichol companions stopped on reaching this pile, pulled up some grass from the ground and picked up a stone as big as his fist. Holding both together he spat on the grass and on the stone and then rubbed them quickly over his knees. He also made a couple of passes with them over his chest and shoulders, exclaiming ‘*Kenestiquai!*’ (May I not get tired!) and then put the grass on the heap and the stone on top of the grass.”²⁸ In Guatemala also piles of stones may be seen at the partings of ways and on the tops of cliffs and mountains. Every passing Indian used to gather a handful of grass, rub his legs with it, spit on it, and deposit it with a small stone on the pile, firmly persuaded that by so doing

²⁷ Baron E. Nordenskiöld, “Travels on the Boundaries of Bolivia and Argentina,” *The Geographical Journal*, xxi. (1903) p. 518.

²⁸ C. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (London, 1903), ii. 282.

he would restore their flagging vigour to his weary limbs.²⁹ Here the rubbing of the limbs with the grass, like the Babar custom of striking the body with a stone, was doubtless a mode of extracting the fatigue from them as a preliminary to throwing it away.

Heaps of stones or sticks among the natives of Africa.

Similarly on the plateau between Lakes Tanganyika and Nyassa the native carriers, before they ascend a steep hill with their loads, will pick up a stone, spit on it, rub the calves of their legs with it, and then deposit it on one of those small piles of stones which are commonly to be found at such spots in this part of Africa. A recent English traveller, who noticed the custom, was informed that the carriers practise it “to make their legs light,”³⁰ in other words, to extract the fatigue from them. On the banks of the Kei river in Southern Africa another English traveller noticed some heaps of stones. On enquiring what they

²⁹ Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Histoire des Nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-Centrale* (Paris, 1857-1859), ii. 564; compare iii. 486. Indians of Guatemala, when they cross a pass for the first time, still commonly add a stone to the cairn which marks the spot. See C. Sapper, “Die Gebräuche und religiösen Anschauungen der Kekchi-Indianer,” *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, viii. (1895) p. 197.

³⁰ F. F. R. Boileau, “The Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau,” *The Geographical Journal*, xiii. (1899) p. 589. In the same region Mr. L. Declé observed many trees or rocks on which were placed little heaps of stones or bits of wood, to which in passing each of his men added a fresh stone or bit of wood or a tuft of grass. “This,” says Mr. L. Declé, “is a tribute to the spirits, the general precaution to ensure a safe return” (*Three Years in Savage Africa*, London, 1898, p. 289). A similar practice prevails among the Wanyamwezi (*ibid.* p. 345). Compare J. A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa* (Edinburgh and London, 1864), pp. 133 sq.

meant, he was told by his guides that when a Caffre felt weary he had but to add a stone to the heap to regain fresh vigour.³¹ In some parts of South Africa, particularly on the Zambesi, piles of sticks take the place of cairns. "Sometimes the natives will rub their leg with a stick, and throw the stick on the heap, 'to get rid of fatigue,' they avow. Others say that throwing a stone on the heap gives one fresh vigour for the journey."³²

The heaps of stones or sticks generally on the tops of mountains or passes.

From other accounts of the Caffre custom we learn that these cairns are generally on the sides or tops of mountains, and that before a native deposits his stone on the pile he spits on it.³³ The practice of spitting on the stone which the weary wayfarer lays on the pile is probably a mode of transferring his fatigue the more effectually to the material vehicle which is to rid him of it. We have seen that the practice prevails among the Indians of Guatemala and the natives of the Tanganyika plateau, and it appears to be observed also under similar circumstances in Corea, where the cairns are to be found especially on the tops

³¹ Cowper Rose, *Four Years in Southern Africa* (London, 1829), p. 147.

³² Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 264.

³³ S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), pp. 211 *sq.*; Rev. H. Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu*, i. 66; D. Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas* (Edinburgh, 1875), pp. 146 *sq.* Compare H. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im südlichen Africa* (Berlin, 1811-1812), i. 411.

of passes.³⁴ From the primitive point of view nothing can be more natural than that the cairns or the heaps of sticks and leaves to which the tired traveller adds his contribution should stand at the top of passes and, in general, on the highest points of the road. The wayfarer who has toiled, with aching limbs and throbbing temples, up a long and steep ascent, is aware of a sudden alleviation as soon as he has reached the summit; he feels as if a weight had been lifted from him, and to the savage, with his concrete mode of thought, it seems natural and easy to cast the weight from him in the shape of a stone or stick, or a bunch of leaves or of grass. Hence it is that the piles which represent the accumulated weariness of many foot-sore and heavy-laden travellers are to be seen wherever the road runs highest in the lofty regions of Bolivia, Tibet, Bhootan, and Burma,³⁵ in the

³⁴ W. Gowland, "Dolmens and other Antiquities of Corea," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxiv. (1895) pp. 328 *sq.*; Mrs. Bishop, *Korea and her Neighbours* (London, 1898), i. 147, ii. 223. Both writers speak as if the practice were to spit on the cairn rather than on the particular stone which the traveller adds to it; indeed, Mrs. Bishop omits to notice the custom of adding to the cairns. Mr. Gowland says that almost every traveller carries up at least one stone from the valley and lays it on the pile.

³⁵ D. Forbes, "On the Aymara Indians of Peru and Bolivia," *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London*, ii. (1870) pp. 237 *sq.*; G. C. Musters, "Notes on Bolivia," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xlvii. (1877) p. 211; T. T. Cooper, *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce* (London, 1871), p. 275; J. A. H. Louis, *The Gates of Thibet, a Bird's Eye View of Independent Sikkhim, British Bhootan, and the Dooars* (Calcutta, 1894), pp. 111 *sq.*; A. Bastian, *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, ii. (Leipzig, 1866) p. 483. So among the Mrus of Aracan, every man who crosses a hill, on reaching the crest, plucks a fresh young shoot of grass and lays it on a pile of the withered

passes of the Andes and the Himalayas, as well as in Corea, Caffraria, Guatemala, and Melanesia.

Fatigue let out with the blood.

While the mountaineer Indians of South America imagine that they can rid themselves of their fatigue in the shape of a stick or a stone, other or the same aborigines of that continent believe that they can let it out with their blood. A French explorer, who had seen much of the South American Indians, tells us that “they explain everything that they experience by attributing it to sorcery, to the influence of maleficent beings. Thus an Indian on the march, when he feels weary, never fails to ascribe his weariness to the evil spirit; and if he has no diviner at hand, he wounds himself in the knees, the shoulders, and on the arms in order to let out the evil with the blood. That is why many Indians, especially the Aucas [Araucanians], have always their arms covered with scars. This custom, differently applied, is almost general in America; for I found it up to the foot of the Andes, in Bolivia, among the Chiriguana and Yuracares nations.”³⁶

Piles of stones or sticks on the scene of crimes. The Liar's Heap.

But it is not mere bodily fatigue which the savage fancies he

deposits of former travellers (T. H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India*, London, 1870, pp. 232 sq.).

³⁶ A. d'Orbigny, *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale*, ii. (Paris and Strasburg, 1839-1843) pp. 92 sq.

can rid himself of by the simple expedient of throwing a stick or a stone. Unable clearly to distinguish the immaterial from the material, the abstract from the concrete, he is assailed by vague terrors, he feels himself exposed to some ill-defined danger on the scene of any great crime or great misfortune. The place to him seems haunted ground. The thronging memories that crowd upon his mind, if they are not mistaken by him for goblins and phantoms, oppress his fancy with a leaden weight. His impulse is to flee from the dreadful spot, to shake off the burden that seems to cling to him like a nightmare. This, in his simple sensuous way, he thinks he can do by casting something at the horrid place and hurrying by. For will not the contagion of misfortune, the horror that clutched at his heart-strings, be diverted from himself into the thing? will it not gather up in itself all the evil influences that threatened him, and so leave him to pursue his journey in safety and peace? Some such train of thought, if these gropings and fumbings of a mind in darkness deserve the name of thought, seems to explain the custom, observed by wayfarers in many lands, of throwing sticks or stones on places where something horrible has happened or evil deeds have been done. When Sir Francis Younghusband was travelling across the great desert of Gobi his caravan descended, towards dusk on a June evening, into a long depression between the hills, which was notorious as a haunt of robbers. His guide, with a terror-stricken face, told how not long before nine men out of a single caravan had been murdered, and the rest left in a pitiable state to continue their

journey on foot across the awful desert. A horseman, too, had just been seen riding towards the hills. "We had accordingly to keep a sharp look-out, and when we reached the foot of the hills, halted, and, taking the loads off the camels, wrapped ourselves up in our sheepskins and watched through the long hours of the night. Day broke at last, and then we silently advanced and entered the hills. Very weird and fantastic in their rugged outline were they, and here and there a cairn of stones marked where some caravan had been attacked, and as we passed these each man threw one more stone on the heap."³⁷ In the Norwegian district of Tellemarken a cairn is piled up wherever anything fearful has happened, and every passer-by must throw another stone on it, or some evil will befall him.³⁸ In Sweden and the Esthonian island of Oesel the same custom is practised on scenes of clandestine or illicit love, with the strange addition in Oesel that when a man has lost his cattle he will go to such a spot, and, while he flings a stick or stone on it, will say, "I bring thee wood. Let me soon find my lost cattle."³⁹ Far from these northern lands, the Dyaks of Batang Lupar keep up an observance of the same sort in the forests of Borneo. Beside their paths may be seen heaps of sticks or stones which are called "lying heaps."

³⁷ (Sir) F. E. Younghusband, "A Journey across Central Asia," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, x. (1888) p. 494.

³⁸ F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde* (Heilbronn, 1879), pp. 274 sq.

³⁹ F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 274; J. B. Holzmayer, "Osiliana," *Verhandlungen der gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft zu Dorpat*, vii. (1872) p. 73.

Each heap is in memory of some man who told a stupendous lie or disgracefully failed in carrying out an engagement, and everybody who passes adds a stick or stone to the pile, saying as he does so, "For So-and-so's lying heap."⁴⁰ The Dyaks think it a sacred duty to add to every such "liar's mound" (*tugong bula*) which they pass; they imagine that the omission of the duty would draw down on them a supernatural punishment. Hence, however pressed a Dyak may be for time, he will always stop to throw on the pile some branches or twigs.⁴¹ The person to start such a heap is one of the men who has suffered by a malicious lie. He takes a stick, throws it down on some spot where people are constantly passing, and says, "Let any one who does not add to this liar's heap suffer from pains in the head." Others then do likewise, and every passer-by throws a stick on the spot lest he should suffer pains. In this way the heap often grows to a large size, and the liar by whose name it is known is greatly ashamed.⁴²

Heaps of stones, sticks, or leaves on scenes of murder.
Heaps of stones or sticks on graves.

But it is on scenes of murder and sudden death that this rude method of averting evil is most commonly practised. The custom that every passer-by must cast a stone or stick on the spot where some one has come to a violent end, whether by

⁴⁰ Spenser St. John, *Life in the Forests of the Far East*² (London, 1863), i. 88.

⁴¹ E. H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1911), pp. 66 sq.

⁴² Ch. Hose and W. McDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (London, 1912), i. 123.

murder or otherwise, has been observed in practically the same form in such many and diverse parts of the world as Ireland, France, Spain, Sweden, Germany, Bohemia, Lesbos, Morocco, Armenia, Palestine, Arabia, India, North America, Venezuela, Bolivia, Celebes, and New Zealand.⁴³ In Fiji, for example, it was the practice for every passer-by to throw a leaf on the spot where a man had been clubbed to death; “this was considered as an offering of respect to him, and, if not performed, they have

⁴³ A. C. Haddon, “A Batch of Irish Folk-lore,” *Folk-lore*, iv. (1893) pp. 357, 360; Laisnel de la Salle, *Croyances et Légendes du Centre de la France* (Paris, 1875), ii. 75, 77; J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 309; Hylten-Cavallius, quoted by F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 274; K. Haupt, *Sagenbuch der Lausitz* (Leipsic, 1862-1863), ii. 65; K. Müllenhoff, *Sagen, Märchen und Lieder der Herzogthümer Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg* (Kiel, 1845), p. 125; A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 113; A. Kuhn und W. Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche* (Leipsic, 1848), p. 85; A. Treichel, “Reisighäufung und Steinhäufung an Mordstellen,” *Am Ur-Quelle*, vi. (1896) p. 220; Georgeakis et Pineau, *Folk-lore de Lesbos*, p. 323; A. Leared, *Morocco and the Moors* (London, 1876), pp. 105 sq.; E. Doutté, “Figuig,” *La Géographie, Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), vii. (1903) p. 197; *id.*, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), pp. 424 sq.; A. von Haxthausen, *Transkaukasien* (Leipsic, 1856), i. 222; C. T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London, 1906), p. 285; W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 267 sq.; J. Bricknell, *The Natural History of North Carolina* (Dublin, 1737), p. 380; J. Adair, *History of the American Indians* (London, 1775), p. 184; K. Martin, *Bericht über eine Reise nach Nederlandsch West-Indien*, Erster Theil (Leyden, 1887), p. 166; G. C. Musters, “Notes on Bolivia,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xlvii. (1877) p. 211; B. F. Matthes, *Einige Eigenthümlichkeiten in den Festen und Gewohnheiten der Makassaren und Büginesen*, p. 25 (separate reprint from *Travaux de la 6e Session du Congrès International des Orientalistes à Leide*, vol. ii.); R. A. Cruise, *Journal of a Ten Months’ Residence in New Zealand* (London, 1823), p. 186.

a notion they will soon be killed themselves.”⁴⁴ Sometimes the scene of the murder or death may also be the grave of the victim, but it need not always be so, and in Europe, where the dead are buried in consecrated ground, the two places would seldom coincide. However, the custom of throwing stones or sticks on a grave has undoubtedly been observed by passers-by in many parts of the world, and that, too, even when the graves are not those of persons who have come to a violent end. Thus we are told that the people of Unalashka, one of the Aleutian Islands, bury their dead on the summits of hills and raise a little hillock over the grave. “In a walk into the country, one of the natives, who attended me, pointed out several of these receptacles of the dead. There was one of them, by the side of the road leading from the harbour to the village, over which was raised a heap of stones. It was observed, that every one who passed it, added one to it.”⁴⁵ The Roumanians of Transylvania think that a dying man should have a burning candle in his hand, and that any one who dies without a light has no right to the ordinary funeral ceremonies. The body of such an unfortunate is not laid in holy ground, but is buried wherever it may be found. His grave is marked only by a heap of dry branches, to which each passer-by is expected to add a handful of twigs or a thorny bough.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁴ Ch. Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, New Edition (New York, 1851), iii. 50.

⁴⁵ Captain James Cook, *Voyages* (London, 1809), vi. 479.

⁴⁶ E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest* (Edinburgh and London, 1888), i. 311,

Hottentot god or hero Heitsi-eibib died several times and came to life again. When the Hottentots pass one of his numerous graves they throw a stone, a bush, or a fresh branch on it for good luck.⁴⁷ Near the former mission-station of Blydeuitzigt in Cape Colony there was a spot called Devil's Neck where, in the opinion of the Bushmen, the devil was interred. To hinder his resurrection stones were piled in heaps about the place. When a Bushman, travelling in the company of a missionary, came in sight of the spot he seized a stone and hurled it at the grave, remarking that if he did not do so his neck would be twisted round so that he would have to look backwards for the term of his natural life.⁴⁸ Stones are cast by passers-by on the graves of murderers in some parts of Senegambia.⁴⁹ In Syria deceased robbers are not buried like honest folk, but left to rot where they lie; and a pile of stones is raised over the mouldering corpse. Every one who passes such a pile must fling a stone at it, on pain of incurring God's malison.⁵⁰ Between sixty and seventy years ago an Englishman

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⁴⁷ H. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im Südlichen Africa* (Berlin, 1811-1812), i. 349 *sq.*; Sir James E. Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1838), i. 166; C. J. Andersson, *Lake Ngami*, Second Edition (London, 1856), p. 327; W. H. I. Bleek, *Reynard the Fox in South Africa* (London, 1864), p. 76; Th. Hahn, *Tsuni-Goam, the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), p. 56. Compare *The Dying God*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Th. Hahn, "Die Buschmänner," *Globus*, xviii. 141.

⁴⁹ Th. Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, ii. (Leipsic, 1860) p. 195, referring to Raffanel, *Nouveau Voyage dans le pays des nègres* (Paris, 1856), i. 93 *sq.*

⁵⁰ Eijüb Abēla, "Beiträge zur Kenntniss abergläubischer Gebräuche in Syrien,"

was travelling from Sidon to Tyre with a couple of Musalmans. When he drew near Tyre his companions picked up some small stones, armed him in the same fashion, and requested him to be so kind as to follow their example. Soon afterwards they came in sight of a conical heap of pebbles and stones standing in the road, at which the two Musalmans hurled stones and curses with great vehemence and remarkable volubility. When they had discharged this pious duty to their satisfaction, they explained that the missiles and maledictions were directed at a celebrated robber and murderer, who had been knocked on the head and buried there some half a century before.⁵¹

Stones and sticks hurled as missiles at dangerous ghosts
and demons. Missiles to ward off dangerous ghosts.

In these latter cases it may perhaps be thought that the sticks and stones serve no other purpose than to keep off the angry and dangerous ghost who might be supposed to haunt either the place of death or the grave. This interpretation seems certainly to apply to some cases of the custom. For example, in Pomerania and West Prussia the ghosts of suicides are much feared. Such persons are buried, not in the churchyard, but at the place where they took their lives, and every passer-by must cast a stone or a

Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins, vii. (1884) p. 102.

⁵¹ Note by G. P. Badger, on *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, translated by J. W. Jones (Hakluyt Society, 1863), p. 45. For more evidence of the custom in Syria see W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (London, 1859), p. 490; F. Sessions, "Some Syrian Folklore Notes," *Folk-lore*, ix. (1898) p. 15; A. Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), p. 336.

stick on the spot, or the ghost of the suicide will haunt him by night and give him no rest. Hence the piles of sticks or stones accumulated on the graves of these poor wretches sometimes attain a considerable size.⁵² Similarly the Baganda of Central Africa used to stand in great fear of the ghosts of suicides and they took many precautions to disarm or even destroy these dangerous spirits. For this purpose the bodies of suicides were removed to waste land or cross-roads and burned there, together with the wood of the house in which the deed had been done or of the tree on which the person had hanged himself. By these means they imagined that they destroyed the ghost so that he could not come and lure others to follow his bad example. Lest, however, the ghost should survive the destruction of his body by fire, the Baganda, in passing any place where a suicide had been burnt, always threw grass or sticks on the spot to prevent the ghost from catching them. And they did the same, for the same reason, whenever they passed the places on waste ground where persons accused of witchcraft and found guilty by the poison ordeal had been burnt to death. Baganda women had a special reason for dreading all graves which were believed to be haunted by dangerous ghosts; for, imagining that they could conceive children without intercourse with the other sex, they feared to be impregnated by the entrance into them of the ghosts

⁵² A. Treichel, "Reisig- und Steinhäufung bei Ermordeten oder Selbstmördern," *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 1888, p. (569) (bound up with *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xx. 1888).

of suicides and other unfortunate or uncanny people, such as persons with a light complexion, twins, and particularly all who had the mishap to be born feet foremost. For that reason Baganda women were at pains, whenever they passed the graves of any such persons, to throw sticks or grass upon them; “for by so doing they thought that they could prevent the ghost of the dead from entering into them, and being reborn.” Hence the mounds which accumulated over these graves became in course of time large enough to deflect the path and to attract the attention of travellers. It was not merely matrons who thus took care not to become mothers unaware; the same fears were entertained and the same precautions were adopted by all women, whether old or young, whether married or single; since they thought that there was no woman, whatever her age or condition, who might not be impregnated by the entrance into her of a spirit.⁵³ In these cases, therefore, the throwing of sticks or grass at graves is a purely defensive measure; the missiles are intended to ward off the assaults of dangerous ghosts. Similarly we are told that in Madagascar solitary graves by the wayside have a sinister reputation, and that passers-by, without looking back, will throw stones or clods at them “to prevent the evil spirits from following them.”⁵⁴ The Maraves of South Africa, like the Baganda, used

⁵³ Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), pp. 20 *sq.*, 46 *sq.*, 124 *sq.*, 126 *sq.*, 289 *sq.* Stones are not mentioned among the missiles hurled at ghosts, probably because stones are scarce in Uganda. See J. Roscoe, *op. cit.* p. 5.

⁵⁴ Father Finaz, S.J., in *Les Missions Catholiques*, vii. (1875) p. 328.

to burn witches alive and to throw stones on the places of execution whenever they passed them, so that in time regular cairns gradually rose on these spots.⁵⁵ No doubt with these Maraves, as with the Baganda, the motive for throwing missiles at such places is to protect themselves against the ghosts. A protective motive is also assigned for a similar custom observed in Chota Nagpur, a region of India which is the home of many primitive tribes. There heaps of stones or of leaves and branches may often be seen beside the path; they are supposed to mark the places where people have been killed by wild beasts, and the natives think that any passer-by who failed to add a stone or a stick to the pile would himself be seized and devoured by a wild animal.⁵⁶ Here, though the ghost is not explicitly mentioned, we may perhaps suppose that out of spite he is instrumental in causing others to perish by the same untimely death by which he was himself carried off. The Kayans of Borneo imagine that they can put evil spirits to flight by hurling sticks or stones at them; so on a journey they will let fly volleys of such missiles at the rocks and dens where demons are known to reside.⁵⁷ Hence, whenever the throwing of stones at a grave is regarded as an insult to the dead, we may suppose that the missiles are intended to hit and

⁵⁵ "Der Muata Cazembe und die Völkerstämme der Maraves, Chevas, Muembas, Lundas, und andere von Süd-Afrika," *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde*, vi. (1856) p. 287.

⁵⁶ *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, lxxii. Part iii. (Calcutta, 1904) p. 87.

⁵⁷ A. W. Nieuwenhuis, *In Centraal Borneo* (Leyden, 1900), i. 146.

hurt the ghost. Thus Euripides represents the murderer Aegisthus as leaping on the tomb of his victim Agamemnon and pelting it with stones;⁵⁸ and Propertius invites all lovers to discharge stones and curses at the dishonoured grave of an old bawd.⁵⁹

But the stones and sticks thrown on heaps cannot always be explained as missiles discharged at spiritual foes. Cairns raised in honour of Moslem saints.

But if this theory seems adequately to account for some cases of the custom with which we are concerned, it apparently fails to explain others. The view that the sticks and stones hurled at certain places are weapons turned against dangerous or malignant spirits is plausible in cases where such spirits are believed to be in the neighbourhood; but in cases where no such spirits are thought to be lurking, we must, it would seem, cast about for some other explanation. For example, we have seen that it has been customary to throw sticks or stones on spots which have been defiled by deeds of moral turpitude without any shedding of blood, and again on spots where weary travellers stop to rest. It is difficult to suppose that in these latter cases the evil deeds or the sensations of fatigue are conceived in the concrete shape of demons whom it is necessary to repel by missiles, though many South American Indians, as we saw, do attribute fatigue to a demon. Still more difficult is it to apply the purely defensive theory to cases where beneficent spirits are imagined

⁵⁸ Euripides, *Electra*, 327 sq.

⁵⁹ Propertius, v. 5. 77 sq.

to be hovering somewhere near, and where the throwing of the stones or sticks is apparently regarded by those who practise it as a token of respect rather than of hostility. Thus amongst the Masai, when any one dies away from the kraal, his body is left lying on the spot where he died, and all persons present throw bunches of grass or leaves on the corpse. Afterwards every passer-by casts a stone or a handful of grass on the place, and the more the dead man was respected, the longer is the usage observed.⁶⁰ It is especially the graves of Masai medicine-men that are honoured in this way.⁶¹ In the forest near Avestad, in Sweden, the traveller, Clarke, observed “several heaps made with sticks and stones; upon which the natives, as they pass, cast either a stone, or a little earth, or the bough of a tree; deeming it an uncharitable act to omit this tribute, in their journeys to and fro. As this custom appeared closely allied to the pious practice in the Highlands of Scotland, of casting a stone upon the cairn of a deceased person, we, of course, concluded these heaps were places of sepulture.” They were said to be the graves of a band of robbers, who had plundered merchants on their passage through the forest, but had afterwards been killed and buried where they fell.⁶² However, in all these cases the practice of throwing stones on the grave, though interpreted as a mark of respect and charity,

⁶⁰ M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 193.

⁶¹ A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), pp. 305 sq.

⁶² E. D. Clarke, *Travels in various Countries of Europe and Asia*, vi. (London, 1823) p. 165.

may really be based on the fear of the ghosts, so that the motive for observing the custom may be merely that of self-defence against a dangerous spirit. Yet this explanation can hardly apply to certain other cases. Thus in Syria it is a common practice with pious Moslems, when they first come in sight of a very sacred place, such as Hebron or the tomb of Moses, to make a little heap of stones or to add a stone to a heap which has been already made. Hence every here and there the traveller passes a whole series of such heaps by the side of the track.⁶³ In Northern Africa the usage is similar. Cairns are commonly erected on spots from which the devout pilgrim first discerns the shrine of a saint afar off; hence they are generally to be seen on the top of passes. For example, in Morocco, at the point of the road from Casablanca to Azemmour, where you first come in sight of the white city of the saint gleaming in the distance, there rises an enormous cairn of stones shaped like a pyramid several hundreds of feet high, and beyond it on both sides of the road there is a sort of avalanche of stones, either standing singly or arranged in little pyramids. Every pious Mohammedan whose eyes are gladdened by the blessed sight of the sacred town adds his stone to one of the piles or builds a little pile for himself.⁶⁴

Stones as channels of communication with saints, living

⁶³ W. H. D. Rouse, "Notes from Syria," *Folk-lore*, vi. (1895) p. 173. Compare F. Sessions, "Some Syrian Folklore Notes, gathered on Mount Lebanon," *Folk-lore*, ix. (1898) p. 15.

⁶⁴ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l' Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), pp. 420-422.

or dead.

Such a custom can hardly be explained as a precaution adopted against a dangerous influence supposed to emanate from the saint and to communicate itself even to people at a distance. On the contrary, it points rather to a desire of communion with the holy man than to a wish to keep him at bay. The mode of communion adopted, however strange it may seem to us, is apparently quite in harmony with the methods by which good Mohammedans in Northern Africa attempt to appropriate to themselves the blessed influence (*baraka*) which is supposed to radiate on all sides from the person of a living saint. "It is impossible to imagine," we are told, "the extremity to which the belief in the blessed influence of saints is carried in North Africa. To form an exact idea of it you must see a great saint in the midst of the faithful. 'The people fling themselves down on his path to kiss the skirt of his robe, to kiss his stirrup if he is on horseback, to kiss even his footprint if he is on foot. Those who are too far from him to be able to touch his hand touch him with their staff, or fling a stone at him which they have marked previously so as to be able to find it afterwards and to embrace it devoutly.'"⁶⁵ Thus through the channel of the stone or the stick, which has been in bodily contact with the living saint, his blessed influence flows to the devotee who has wielded the stick or hurled the stone. In like manner we may perhaps suppose that the man who adds a

⁶⁵ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 440, quoting De Ségonzac, *Voyage au Maroc*, p. 82.

stone to a cairn in honour of a dead saint hopes to benefit by the saintly effluence which distils in a mysterious fashion through the stone to him.⁶⁶

The rite of throwing sticks or stones is perhaps best explained as a mode of purification, the evil being thought

⁶⁶ I follow the exposition of E. Doutté, whose account of the sanctity or magical influence (*baraka*) ascribed to the persons of living Mohammedan saints (marabouts) is very instructive. See his *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, pp. 438 *sqq.* Mr. E. S. Hartland had previously explained the custom of throwing stones and sticks on cairns as acts of ceremonial union with the spirit who is supposed to reside in the cairn. See his *Legend of Perseus*, ii. (London, 1895) p. 128. While this theory offers a plausible explanation of some cases of the custom, I do not think that it will cover them all. M. René Dussaud argues that the stones deposited at shrines of holy men are simply material embodiments of the prayers which at the same time the suppliants address to the saints; and he holds that the practice of depositing stones at such places rests on a principle entirely different from that of throwing stones for the purpose of repelling evil spirits. See René Dussaud, "La matérialisation de la prière en Orient," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, V. Série, vii. (1906) pp. 213-220. If I am right, the fundamental idea in these customs is neither that the stones or sticks are offerings presented to good spirits nor that they are missiles hurled at bad ones, but that they embody the evil, whether disease, misfortune, fear, horror, or what not, of which the person attempts to rid himself by transferring it to a material vehicle. But I am far from confident that this explanation applies to all cases. In particular it is difficult to reconcile it with the custom, described in the text, of throwing a marked stone at a holy man and then recovering it. Are we to suppose that the stone carries away the evil to the good man and brings back his blessing instead? The idea is perhaps too subtle and far-fetched. The word *baraka*, which in North Africa describes the powerful and in general beneficent, yet dangerous, influence which emanates from holy persons and things, is no doubt identical with the Hebrew *bērakhah* (הַבְּרָכָה) "blessing." The importance which the ancient Hebrews ascribed to the blessing or the curse of a holy man is familiar to us from many passages in the Old Testament. See, for example, Genesis xxvii., xlvi. 8 *sqq.*; Deuteronomy xxvii. 11 *sqq.*, xxviii. 1 *sqq.*

to be embodied in the missile which is thrown away.

When we survey the many different cases in which passing travellers are accustomed to add stones or sticks to existing piles, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to explain them all on one principle; different and even opposite motives appear, at least at first sight, to have operated in different cases to produce customs superficially alike. Sometimes the motive for throwing the stone is to ward off a dangerous spirit; sometimes it is to cast away an evil; sometimes it is to acquire a good. Yet, perhaps, if we could trace them back to their origin in the mind of primitive man, we might find that they all resolve themselves more or less exactly into the principle of the transference of evil. For to rid ourselves of an evil and to acquire a good are often merely opposite sides of one and the same operation; for example, a convalescent regains health in exactly the same proportion as he shakes off his malady. And though the practice of throwing stones at dangerous spirits especially at mischievous and malignant ghosts of the dead, appears to spring from a different motive, yet it may be questioned whether the difference is really as great to the savage as it seems to us. To primitive man the idea of spiritual and ghostly powers is still more indefinite than it is to his civilized brother: it fills him with a vague uneasiness and alarm; and this sentiment of dread and horror he, in accordance with his habitual modes of thought, conceives in a concrete form as something material which either surrounds and oppresses him like a fog, or has entered into and taken temporary possession of his body. In

either case he imagines that he can rid himself of the uncanny thing by stripping it from his skin or wrenching it out of his body and transferring it to some material substance, whether a stick, a stone, or what not, which he can cast from him, and so, being eased of his burden, can hasten away from the dreadful spot with a lighter heart. Thus the throwing of the sticks or stones would be a form of ceremonial purification, which among primitive peoples is commonly conceived as a sort of physical rather than moral purgation, a mode of sweeping or scouring away the morbid matter by which the polluted person is supposed to be infected. This notion perhaps explains the rite of stone-throwing observed by pilgrims at Mecca; on the day of sacrifice every pilgrim has to cast seven stones on a cairn, and the rite is repeated thrice on the three following days. The traditional explanation of the custom is that Mohammed here drove away the devil with a shower of stones;⁶⁷ but the original idea may perhaps have been that the pilgrims cleanse themselves by transferring their ceremonial impurity to the stones which they fling on the heap.

This interpretation of stone-throwing agrees with ancient Greek and Indian tradition and custom.

The theory that the throwing of stones is practised in certain circumstances as a mode of purification tallies very well with the

⁶⁷ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), pp. 430 sq.; J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*² (Berlin, 1897), p. 111. The explanation given in the text is regarded as probable by Professor M. J. de Goeje (*Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, xvi., 1904, p. 42.)

tradition as to the origin of those cairns which were to be seen by wayside images of Hermes in ancient Greece, and to which every passer-by added a stone. It was said that when Hermes was tried by the gods for the murder of Argus all the gods flung stones at him as a means of freeing themselves from the pollution contracted by bloodshed; the stones thus thrown made a great heap, and the custom of rearing such heaps at wayside images of Hermes continued ever afterwards.⁶⁸ Similarly Plato recommended that if any man had murdered his father or mother, his brother or sister, his son or daughter, he should be put to death, and that his body should be cast forth naked at a cross-road outside of the city. There the magistrates should assemble on behalf of the city, each carrying in his hand a stone, which he was to cast at the head of the corpse by way of purifying the city from the pollution it had contracted by the crime. After that the corpse was to be carried away and flung outside the boundaries.⁶⁹ In these cases it would seem that the pollution incurred by the vicinity of a murderer is thought to be gathered up in the stones as a material vehicle and to be thrown away with them. A sacrificial

⁶⁸ *Etymologicum Magnum*, s. v. Ἑρμαῖον, pp. 375 sq.; Eustathius on Homer, *Odyssey*, xvi. 471. As to the heaps of stones see Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, 16; Babrius, *Fabulae*, xlvi. 1 sq.; Suidas, s. v. Ἑρμαῖον; Scholiast on Nicander, *Ther.* 150; M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipsic, 1906), pp. 388 sqq. The method of execution by stoning may perhaps have been resorted to in order to avoid the pollution which would be entailed by contact with the guilty and dying man.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Laws*, ix. 12, p. 873 a-c λίθων ἕκαστος φέρων ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ νεκροῦ βάλλων ἀφοσιούτω τὴν πόλιν ὅλην.

custom of the Brahmans, prescribed in one of their sacred books, is susceptible of a like interpretation. At a certain stage of the ritual the sacrificer is directed to put a stone into a water-pot and to throw it away in a south-westerly direction, because that is the region of Nirriti, the goddess of Evil or Destruction. With the stone and the pitcher he is supposed to cast away his pain and evil; and he can transfer the pain to another by saying, as he throws away the stone and the pitcher, "Let thy pain enter him whom we hate," or "Let thy pain enter so-and-so," naming his enemy; but in order to ensure the transference of the pain to his enemy he must take care that the stone or the pitcher is broken.⁷⁰

The throwing of sticks or stones on piles is sometimes explained as a sacrifice. Certainly the throwing of stones is sometimes accompanied by sacrifices. Heaps of sticks at the fords of rivers in Africa.

This mode of interpreting the custom of throwing sticks and stones on piles appears preferable to the one which has generally found favour with European travellers and writers. Imperfectly acquainted for the most part with the notions which underlie primitive magic, but very familiar with the religious conception of a deity who requires sacrifice of his worshippers, they are apt to interpret the missiles in question as cheap and easy offerings

⁷⁰ *Satapatha Brahmana*, ix. 1. 2. 9-12, Part iv. p. 171 of J. Eggeling's translation (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xliii., Oxford, 1897). As to Nirriti, the Goddess of Destruction, see H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 323, 351, 354, 489 note 3.

presented by pious but frugal worshippers to ghosts or spirits whose favour they desire to win.⁷¹ Whether a likely mode of conciliating a ghost or spirit is to throw sticks and stones at him is a question about which opinions might perhaps differ. It is difficult to speak with confidence about the tastes of spiritual beings, but as a rule they bear a remarkable likeness to those of mere ordinary mortals, and it may be said without fear of contradiction that few of the latter would be gratified by being set up as a common target to be aimed at with sticks and stones by everybody who passed within range.⁷² Yet it is quite possible that a ceremony, which at first was purely magical, may in time have a religious gloss or interpretation put on it even by those who practise it; and this seems in fact to have sometimes happened

⁷¹ See, for example, O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 214; G. M. Dawson, "Notes on the Shuswap People of British Columbia," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, ix. (1891) section ii. p. 38; F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde* (Heilbronn, 1879), pp. 267 *sq.*, 273 *sq.*, 276, 278 *sq.*; R. Andree, *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche* (Stuttgart, 1878), p. 48; Catat, in *Le Tour du Monde*, lxxv. (1893), p. 40. Some of these writers have made a special study of the practices in question. See F. Liebrecht, "Die geworfenen Steine," *Zur Volkskunde*, pp. 267-284; R. Andree, "Steinhaufen," *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche*, pp. 46-58; E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, ii. (London, 1895) pp. 204 *sqq.*; E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), pp. 419 *sqq.* With the views of the last of these writers I am in general agreement.

⁷² However, at the waterfall of Kriml, in the Tyrol, it is customary for every passer-by to throw a stone into the water; and this attention is said to put the water-spirits in high good humour; for they follow the wayfarer who has complied with the custom and guard him from all the perils of the dangerous path. See F. Panzer, *Beitrag zur deutschen Mythologie* (Munich, 1848-1855), ii. 236 *sq.*

to the particular custom under consideration. Certainly some people accompany the throwing of the stone on the pile with the presentation of useful articles, which can hardly serve any other purpose than that of propitiating some local spirits. Thus travellers in Sikhim and Bhootan offer flour and wine, as well as stones, at the cairns; and they also burn incense and recite incantations or prayers,⁷³ or they tear strips from their garments, tie them to twigs or stones, and then lay them on the cairn, calling out to the spirit of the mountain, "Pray accept our offering! The spirits are victorious! The devils are defeated!"⁷⁴ Indians of Guatemala offered, according to their means, a little cotton, salt, cacao, or chili.⁷⁵ They now burn copal and sometimes dance on the tops of the passes where the cairns are to be seen, but perhaps these devotions may be paid to the crosses which at the present day are generally set up in such situations.⁷⁶ The Indian of Bolivia will squirt out the juice of his coca-quid, or throw the quid itself on the cairn, to which he adds a stone; occasionally he goes so far as to stick feathers or a leathern sandal or two on the pile. In passing the cairns he will sometimes pull a hair or two out of his eyebrows or eyelashes and puff them away towards the

⁷³ J. A. H. Louis, *The Gates of Thibet*, Second Edition (Calcutta, 1894), pp. 111 sq.

⁷⁴ L. A. Waddell, *Among the Himalayas* (Westminster, 1899), pp. 115, 188.

⁷⁵ Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Histoire des nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-Centrale*, ii. 564.

⁷⁶ C. Sapper, "Die Gebräuche und religiösen Anschauungen der Kekchí-Indianer," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, viii. (1895) pp. 197 sq.

sun.⁷⁷ Peruvian Indians used similarly to make cheap offerings of chewed coca or maize, old shoes, and so forth, on the cairns.⁷⁸ In Sweden and Corea a little money is sometimes thrown on a cairn instead of a stick or stone.⁷⁹ The shrine of the Jungle Mother in Northern India is usually a pile of stones and branches to which every passer-by contributes. When she is displeased, she lets a tiger or leopard kill her negligent votary. She is the great goddess of the herdsmen and other dwellers in the forest, and they vow to her a cock and a goat, or a young pig, if she saves them and their cattle from beasts of prey.⁸⁰ In the jungles of Mirzapur the cairn which marks the spot where a man has been killed by a tiger, and to which each passer-by contributes a stone, is commonly in charge of a Baiga or aboriginal priest, who offers upon it a cock, a pig, or some spirits, and occasionally lights a little lamp

⁷⁷ D. Forbes, "On the Aymara Indians of Bolivia and Peru," *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London*, ii. (1870) pp. 237 sq.; G. C. Musters, "Notes on Bolivia," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xlvii. (1877) p. 211; Baron E. Nordenskiöld, "Travels on the Boundaries of Bolivia and Argentina," *The Geographical Journal*, xxi. (1903) p. 518.

⁷⁸ P. J. de Arriaga, *Extirpacion de la Idolatria del Piru* (Lima, 1621), pp. 37, 130.

⁷⁹ F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 274; Brett, "Dans la Corée Septentrionale," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxxi. (1899) p. 237.

⁸⁰ W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 115. "In some parts of Bilaspore there may be seen heaps of stones, which are known as *kuriyā*, from the word *kurhonā*, meaning to heap or pile-up. Just how and why the practice was started the people cannot explain; but to this day every one who passes a *kuriyā* will take up a stone and throw it on the pile. This, they say, has been done as long as they can remember" (E. M. Gordon, *Indian Folk Tales*, London, 1908, p. 14).

at the shrine.⁸¹ Amongst the Baganda members of the Bean clan worshipped the spirit of the river Nakiza. "There was no temple, but they had two large heaps of sticks and grass, one on either side of the river by the ford; to these heaps the members went, when they wished to make an offering to the spirit, or to seek his assistance. The offerings were usually goats, beer, barkcloth, and fowls. When people crossed the river they threw a little grass or some sticks on to the heap before crossing, and again a little more on to the second heap after crossing; this was their offering to the spirit for a safe crossing."⁸² There is a ford on the Calabar river in West Africa which has an ill repute, for the stream is broad, the current rapid, and there are crocodiles in the deep places. Beside the ford is a large oval-shaped stone which the Ekoi regard as an altar of Nimm, a powerful goddess, who dwells in the depth of the river Kwa and manifests herself in the likeness now of a crocodile and now of a snake. In order to ensure a safe passage through the river it is customary to pluck a leaf, rub it on the forehead over the pineal gland, and throw it on a heap of leaves in front of the stone. As he rubs the leaf on his forehead, the person who is about to plunge into the river prays, "May I be free from danger! May I go through the water to the other side! May I see no evil!" And when he throws the leaf on the heap he prays again, saying, "I am coming across the river, may the crocodile lay down

⁸¹ W. Croke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 267 sq.

⁸² Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 163.

his head!”⁸³ Here the leaves appear to be a propitiatory offering presented to the dread goddess in the hope that she will suffer her worshipper to pass the ford unmolested. At another but smaller stream, called the River of Good Fortune, the Ekoi similarly rub leaves on their foreheads, praying for luck, and throw them on a heap before they pass through the water. They think that he who complies with this custom will have good luck throughout the year. Again, when the Ekoi kill a chameleon on the road, they do not throw the body away in the forest, but lay it by the wayside, and all who pass by pluck a few leaves and drop them on the dead animal, saying, “Look! Here is your mat.” In this way heaps of leaves accumulate over the carcasses of chameleons. The custom is intended to appease the shade of the chameleon, who, if he were not pacified, would go to the Earth-god Obassi Nsi and pray for vengeance on the race of those who had caused his death.⁸⁴ The Washamba of German East Africa believe that certain stony and dangerous places in the paths are the abodes of spirits; hence at any such spot a traveller who would have a prosperous journey must dance a little and deposit a few small stones.⁸⁵ The dance and the stones are presumably intended to soften the heart of the spirits and induce them to look favourably

⁸³ P. Amaury Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush* (London, 1912), p. 242. As to the goddess Nimm, see *id.*, pp. 2 sq.

⁸⁴ P. Amaury Talbot, *op. cit.* p. 91.

⁸⁵ A. Karasek, “Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Waschambaa,” *Baessler-Archiv*, i. (1911) p. 194.

on the dancer. In Papa Westray, one of the Orkney Islands, there is a ruined chapel called St. Tredwels, “at the door of which there is a heap of stones; which was the superstition of the common people, who have such a veneration for this chapel above any other, that they never fail, at their coming to it, to throw a stone as an offering before the door: and this they reckon an indispensable duty enjoined by their ancestors.”⁸⁶

The throwing of stones and sticks is sometimes accompanied by prayers. Gradual transformation of an old magical ceremony into a religious rite.

Prayers, too, as we have seen, are sometimes offered at these piles. In Laos heaps of stones may be seen beside the path, on which the passenger will deposit a pebble, a branch, or a leaf, while he beseeches the Lord of the Diamond to bestow on him good luck and long life.⁸⁷ In the Himalayan districts of the North-Western Provinces of India heaps of stones and sticks are often to be seen on hills or at cross-roads. They are formed by the contributions of passing travellers, each of whom in adding his stone or stick to the pile prays, saying, “Thou goddess whose home is on the ridge, eater of wood and stone, preserve me.”⁸⁸ Tibetan travellers mutter a prayer at the cairns on the tops of

⁸⁶ M. Martin, “A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland,” in John Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808-1814), iii. 691.

⁸⁷ E. Aymonier, *Notes sur la Laos* (Saigon, 1885), p. 198.

⁸⁸ E. T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, ii. (Allahabad, 1884) p. 832.

passes to which they add a few stones gathered by them on the ascent.⁸⁹ A native of South-Eastern Africa who places a small stone on a cairn is wont to say as he does so, "Cairn, grant me strength and prosperity."⁹⁰ In the same circumstances the Hottentot prays for plenty of cattle,⁹¹ and the Caffre that his journey may be prosperous, that he may have strength to accomplish it, and that he may obtain an abundant supply of food by the way.⁹² It is said that sick Bushmen used to go on pilgrimage

⁸⁹ T. T. Cooper, *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce* (London, 1871), p. 275. Compare W. W. Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas* (London, 1891), pp. 126 sq.

⁹⁰ Rev. J. Macdonald, "Manners, Customs, Superstitions, and Religions of South African Tribes," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx. (1891) p. 126.

⁹¹ Sir James E. Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1838), i. 166.

⁹² S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), pp. 211 sq. When the Bishop of Capetown once passed a heap of stones on the top of a mountain in the Amapondo country he was told that "it was customary for every traveller to add one to the heap that it might have a favourable influence on his journey, and enable him to arrive at some kraal while the pot is yet boiling" (J. Shooter, *The Kaffirs of Natal*, London, 1857, p. 217). Here there is no mention of a prayer. Similarly a Basuto on a journey, when he fears that the friend with whom he is going to stay may have eaten up all the food before his guest's arrival, places a stone on a cairn to avert the danger (E. Casalis, *The Basutos*, London, 1861, p. 272). The reason alleged for the practice in these cases is perhaps equivalent to the one assigned by the Melanesians and others; by ridding the traveller of his fatigue it enables him to journey faster and so to reach his destination before supper is over. But sometimes a travelling Mowenda will place a stone, not on a cairn, but in the fork of a tree, saying, "May the sun not set before I reach my destination." See Rev. E. Gottschling, "The Bawenda," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxv. (1905) p. 381. This last custom is a charm to prevent the sun from setting. See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 318. In Senegal the custom of throwing stones on cairns by the wayside is said to be observed "in order

to the cairn called the Devil's Neck, and pray to the spirit of the place to heal them, while they rubbed the sick part of their body and cried, "Woe! woe!" On special occasions, too, they resorted thither and implored the spirit's help.⁹³ Such customs seem to indicate the gradual transformation of an old magical ceremony into a religious rite with its characteristic features of prayer and sacrifice. Yet behind these later accretions, as we may perhaps regard them, it seems possible in many, if not in all, cases to discern the nucleus to which they have attached themselves, the original idea which they tend to conceal and in time to transmute. That idea is the transference of evil from man to a material substance which he can cast from him like an outworn garment.

to ensure a speedy and prosperous return." See Dr. Bellamy, "Notes ethnographiques recueillies dans le Haut-Sénégal," *Revue d' Ethnographie*, v. (1886) p. 83. In the Fan country of West Africa the custom of adding a leafy branch to a heap of such branches in the forest was explained by a native, who said that it was done to prevent the trees and branches from falling on the traveller's head, and their roots from wounding his feet. See Father Trilles, "Mille lieues dans l'inconnu," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxxiv. (1902) p. 142.

⁹³ Th. Hahn, "Die Buschmänner," *Globus*, xviii. 141. As to the cairn in question, see above, p. [16](#).

§ 3. The Transference to Animals

Evils transferred to animals in Africa.

Animals are often employed as a vehicle for carrying away or transferring the evil. A Guinea negro who happens to be unwell will sometimes tie a live chicken round his neck, so that it lies on his breast. When the bird flaps its wings or cheeps the man thinks it a good sign, supposing the chicken to be afflicted with the very pain from which he hopes soon to be released, or which he would otherwise have to endure.⁹⁴ When a Moor has a headache he will sometimes take a lamb or a goat and beat it till it falls down, believing that the headache will thus be transferred to the animal.⁹⁵ In Morocco most wealthy Moors keep a wild boar in their stables, in order that the jinn and evil spirits may be diverted from the horses and enter into the boar.⁹⁶ In some parts of Algeria people think that typhoid fever can be cured by taking a tortoise, putting it on its back in the road, and covering it over with a pot. The patient recovers, but whoever upsets the pot catches the fever. In Tlemcen a pregnant woman is protected against jinn by means of a black fowl which is kept in the house from the seventh month of her pregnancy till her

⁹⁴ J. Smith, *Trade and Travels in the Gulph of Guinea* (London, 1851), p. 77.

⁹⁵ O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), p. 117.

⁹⁶ A. Leared, *Morocco and the Moors* (London, 1876), p. 301. Compare E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), p. 454.

delivery. Finally, the oldest woman in the house releases the fowl in the Jews' quarter; the bird is supposed to carry the jinn away with it.⁹⁷ Amongst the Caffres of South Africa, when other remedies have failed, “natives sometimes adopt the custom of taking a goat into the presence of a sick man, and confess the sins of the kraal over the animal. Sometimes a few drops of blood from the sick man are allowed to fall on the head of the goat, which is turned out into an uninhabited part of the veldt. The sickness is supposed to be transferred to the animal, and to become lost in the desert.”⁹⁸ After an illness a Bechuana king seated himself upon an ox which lay stretched on the ground. The native doctor next poured water on the king's head till it ran down over his body. Then the head of the ox was held in a vessel of water till the animal expired; whereupon the doctor declared, and the people believed, that the ox died of the king's disease, which had been transferred from him to it.⁹⁹ The Baganda of Central Africa also attempted to transfer illness from a person to an animal. “The medicine-man would take the animal, pass some herbs over the sick man, tie these to the animal, and then drive it away to some waste land, where he would kill it, taking the meat as his perquisite. The sick man would be expected to recover.”¹⁰⁰ The Akikuyu of East Africa think that a man can

⁹⁷ E. Doutté, *op. cit.* pp. 454 sq.

⁹⁸ Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 261.

⁹⁹ Rev. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (London, 1822), ii. 207 sq.

¹⁰⁰ Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), pp. 342 sq.

transfer the guilt of incest by means of “an ignoble ceremony” to a goat, which is then killed; this saves the life of the culprit, who otherwise must die.¹⁰¹ When disease breaks out among the cattle of the Bahima, a pastoral people of Central Africa, the priest “collects herbs and other remedies to attract the disease from the cattle. An animal is chosen from the herd in the evening, which is to be the scapegoat for the herd; the herbs, etc., are tied round its neck, with certain fetiches to ensure the illness leaving the other animals; the cow is driven round the outside of the kraal several times, and afterwards placed inside with the herd for the night. Early the following morning the animal is taken out and again driven round the kraal; the priest then kills it in the gateway, and some of the blood is sprinkled over the people belonging to the kraal, and also over the herd. The people next file out, each one jumping over the carcase of the cow, and all the animals are driven over it in the same way. The disease is thus transferred to the scapegoat and the herd is saved. All the fetiches and herbs, which were upon the scapegoat, are fastened upon the door-posts and lintel of the kraal to prevent the disease from entering again.”¹⁰²

Evils transferred to animals in various parts of the world.

When the cattle of the Huzuls, a pastoral people of the Carpathians, are sick and the owner attributes the sickness to

¹⁰¹ P. Cayzac, “La religion des Kikuyu,” *Anthropos*, v. (1910) p. 311.

¹⁰² Rev. J. Roscoe, “The Bahima, a Cow Tribe of Enkole,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. (1907) p. 111.

witchcraft, he throws glowing coals into a vessel of water and then pours the water on a black dog; thus the sickness passes into the dog and the cattle are made whole.¹⁰³ In Arabia, when the plague is raging, the people will sometimes lead a camel through all the quarters of the town in order that the animal may take the pestilence on itself. Then they strangle it in a sacred place and imagine that they have rid themselves of the camel and of the plague at one blow.¹⁰⁴ In Annam, when sickness is caused by the presence of a demon in the body of the sufferer, a skilful exorcist will decoy the unwary devil into a fowl and then, quick as thought, decapitate the bird and throw it out of the door. But lest the fiend should survive this severe operation, cabalistic figures are posted on the outside of the door, which preclude him from entering the premises and assaulting the patient afresh.¹⁰⁵ It is said that when smallpox is raging the savages of Formosa will drive the demon of disease into a sow, then cut off the animal's ears and burn them or it, believing that in this way they rid themselves of the plague.¹⁰⁶ When a Kabyle child is pining for jealousy of a younger brother or sister, the parents imagine that they can cure it as follows. They take fifteen grains of wheat, wrap them up in a packet, and leave the packet all night under

¹⁰³ Dr. R. F. Kaindl, "Zauberglaube bei den Huzulen," *Globus*, lxxvi. (1899) p. 254.

¹⁰⁴ J. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle a. S., 1888-1890), i. 34.

¹⁰⁵ E. Diguët, *Les Annamites* (Paris, 1906), pp. 283 *sq.*

¹⁰⁶ W. Müller, "Über die Wildenstämme der Insel Formosa," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xlii. (1910) p. 237. The writer's use of the pronoun (*sie*) is ambiguous.

the head of the jealous child. Then in the morning they throw the grains into an ant-hill, saying, "Salutation to you, oh beautiful beings clad in black; salutation to you who dig the earth so well without the aid of any hoe by the help of God and the angels! May each of you take his share of the jealousy attached to these grains!"¹⁰⁷

Vehicles for the transference of evils in Madagascar.

Amongst the Malagasy the vehicle for carrying away evils is called a *faditra*. "The *faditra* is anything selected by the sikidy [divining board] for the purpose of taking away any hurtful evils or diseases that might prove injurious to an individual's happiness, peace, or prosperity. The *faditra* may be either ashes, cut money, a sheep, a pumpkin, or anything else the sikidy may choose to direct. After the particular article is appointed, the priest counts upon it all the evils that may prove injurious to the person for whom it is made, and which he then charges the *faditra* to take away for ever. If the *faditra* be ashes, it is blown, to be carried away by the wind. If it be cut money, it is thrown to the bottom of deep water, or where it can never be found. If it be a sheep, it is carried away to a distance on the shoulders of a man, who runs with all his might, mumbling as he goes, as if in the greatest rage against the *faditra*, for the evils it is bearing away. If it be a pumpkin, it is carried on the shoulders to a little distance, and there dashed upon the ground

¹⁰⁷ Father E. Amat, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, lxx. (1898) pp. 266 sq.

with every appearance of fury and indignation.”¹⁰⁸ A Malagasy was informed by a diviner that he was doomed to a bloody death, but that possibly he might avert his fate by performing a certain rite. Carrying a small vessel full of blood upon his head, he was to mount upon the back of a bullock; while thus mounted, he was to spill the blood upon the bullock's head, and then send the animal away into the wilderness, whence it might never return.¹⁰⁹

Extraction of kleptomania by spiders and crabs. Evils transferred to birds, which fly away with them.

Among the Toradjas of Central Celebes a chief's daughter, who suffered from kleptomania, was healed by a wise woman, who placed a bag containing spiders and crabs on the patient's hands. The physician calculated that the prehensile claws of these creatures, so suggestive of a thief's hands in the act of closing on his prey, would lay hold of the vicious propensity in the young woman's mind and extract it as neatly as a pair of forceps nips out a thorn from the flesh.¹¹⁰ The Battas of Sumatra have a ceremony which they call “making the curse to fly away.” When a woman is

¹⁰⁸ Rev. W. Ellis, *History of Madagascar* (London, n. d.), i. 422 *sq.*; compare *id.*, pp. 232, 435, 436 *sq.*; Rev. J. Sibree, *The Great African Island* (London, 1880), pp. 303 *sq.* As to divination by the *sikidy*, see J. Sibree, “Divination among the Malagasy,” *Folk-lore*, iii. (1892) pp. 193-226.

¹⁰⁹ W. Ellis, *op. cit.* i. 374; J. Sibree, *The Great African Island*, p. 304; J. Cameron, in *Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine, Reprint of the First Four Numbers* (Antananarivo, 1885), p. 263.

¹¹⁰ N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes*, i. (Batavia, 1912) p. 399.

childless, a sacrifice is offered to the gods of three grasshoppers, representing a head of cattle, a buffalo, and a horse. Then a swallow is set free, with a prayer that the curse may fall upon the bird and fly away with it.¹¹¹ “The entrance into a house of an animal which does not generally seek to share the abode of man is regarded by the Malays as ominous of misfortune. If a wild bird flies into a house, it must be carefully caught and smeared with oil, and must then be released in the open air, a formula being recited in which it is bidden to fly away with all the ill-luck and misfortunes (*sial jambalang*) of the occupier.”¹¹² In antiquity Greek women seem to have done the same with swallows which they caught in the house: they poured oil on them and let them fly away, apparently for the purpose of removing ill-luck from the household.¹¹³ The Huzuls of the Carpathians imagine that they can transfer freckles to the first swallow they see in spring by washing their face in flowing water and saying, “Swallow,

¹¹¹ W. Ködding, “Die Batakschen Götter,” *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, xii. (1885) p. 478; Dr. R. Römer, “Bijdrage tot de Geneeskunst der Karo-Batak's,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, I. (1908) p. 223.

¹¹² W. E. Maxwell, “The Folklore of the Malays,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 7 (June, 1881), p. 27; W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (London, 1900), pp. 534 sq.

¹¹³ Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* liii. vol. ii. pp. 164 sq. ed. L. Dindorf (Leipsic, 1857). Compare Plato, *Republic*, iii. 9, p. 398 a, who ironically proposes to dismiss poets from his ideal state in the same manner. These passages of Plato and Dio Chrysostom were pointed out to me by my friend Professor Henry Jackson. There was a Greek saying, attributed to Pythagoras, that swallows should not be allowed to enter a house (Plutarch, *Quaest. Conviv.* viii. 7, 1).

swallow, take my freckles, and give me rosy cheeks.”¹¹⁴ At the cleansing of a leper and of a house suspected of being tainted with leprosy among the Hebrews the priest used to let a living bird fly away into the open field,¹¹⁵ no doubt in order to carry away the leprosy with it. Similarly among the ancient Arabs a widow was expected to live secluded in a small tent for a year after her husband's death; then a bird or a sheep was brought to her, she made the creature touch her person, and let it go. It was believed that the bird or the sheep would not live long thereafter; doubtless it was supposed to suffer from the uncleanness or taint of death which the widow had transferred to it.¹¹⁶

Evils transferred to animals in India.

Among the Majhwar, a Dravidian race of South Mirzapur, if a man has died of a contagious disease, such as cholera, the village priest walks in front of the funeral procession with a chicken in his hands, which he lets loose in the direction of some other village as a scapegoat to carry the infection away. None but another very experienced priest would afterwards dare to touch or eat such a chicken.¹¹⁷ Among the Badagas of the Neilgherry

¹¹⁴ Dr. R. F. Kaindl, “Zauberglaube bei den Huzulen,” *Globus*, lxxvi. (1899) pp. 255 *sq.*

¹¹⁵ Leviticus xiv. 7, 53.

¹¹⁶ J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentumes* (Berlin, 1887), p. 156; W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, New Edition (London, 1894), pp. 422, 428.

¹¹⁷ W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), iii. 434.

Hills in Southern India, when a death has taken place, the sins of the deceased are laid upon a buffalo calf. For this purpose the people gather round the corpse and carry it outside of the village. There an elder of the tribe, standing at the head of the corpse, recites or chants a long list of sins such as any Badaga may commit, and the people repeat the last words of each line after him. The confession of sins is thrice repeated. "By a conventional mode of expression, the sum total of sins a man may do is said to be thirteen hundred. Admitting that the deceased has committed them all, the performer cries aloud, 'Stay not their flight to God's pure feet.' As he closes, the whole assembly chants aloud 'Stay not their flight.' Again the performer enters into details, and cries, 'He killed the crawling snake. It is a sin.' In a moment the last word is caught up, and all the people cry 'It is a sin.' As they shout, the performer lays his hand upon the calf. The sin is transferred to the calf. Thus the whole catalogue is gone through in this impressive way. But this is not enough. As the last shout 'Let all be well' dies away, the performer gives place to another, and again confession is made, and all the people shout 'It is a sin.' A third time it is done. Then, still in solemn silence, the calf is let loose. Like the Jewish scapegoat, it may never be used for secular work." At a Badaga funeral witnessed by the Rev. A. C. Clayton the buffalo calf was led thrice round the bier, and the dead man's hand was laid on its head. "By this act, the calf was supposed to receive all the sins of the deceased. It was then driven away to a great distance, that it might contaminate no one, and it was said

that it would never be sold, but looked on as a dedicated sacred animal.”¹¹⁸ “The idea of this ceremony is, that the sins of the deceased enter the calf, or that the task of his absolution is laid on it. They say that the calf very soon disappears, and that it is never after heard of.”¹¹⁹ Some of the Todas of the Neilgherry Hills in like manner let loose a calf as a funeral ceremony; the intention may be to transfer the sins of the deceased to the animal. Perhaps the Todas have borrowed the ceremony from the Badagas.¹²⁰ In Kumaon, a district of North-Western India, the custom of letting loose a bullock as a scapegoat at a funeral is occasionally observed. A bell is hung on the bullock's neck, and bells are tied to its feet, and the animal is told that it is to be let go in order to save the spirit of the deceased from the torments of hell. Sometimes the bullock's right quarter is branded with a trident and the left with a discus.¹²¹ Perhaps the original intention of

¹¹⁸ E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), i. 113-117; *id.*, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), pp. 192-196; Captain H. Harkness, *Description of a Singular Aboriginal Race inhabiting the Summit of the Neilgherry Hills* (London, 1832), p. 133; F. Metz, *The Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills*, Second Edition (Mangalore, 1864), p. 78; Jagor, “Ueber die Badagas im Nilgiri-Gebirge,” *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie* (1876), pp. 196 *sq.* At the Badaga funerals witnessed by Mr. E. Thurston “no calf was brought near the corpse, and the celebrants of the rites were satisfied with the mere mention by name of a calf, which is male or female according to the sex of the deceased.”

¹¹⁹ H. Harkness, *l. c.*

¹²⁰ J. W. Breeks, *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris* (London, 1873), pp. 23 *sq.*; W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), pp. 376 *sq.*

¹²¹ E. T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, ii. (Allahabad, 1884) pp. 927 *sq.* In other parts of North-Western India on the eleventh

such customs was to banish the contagion of death by means of the animal, which carried it away and so ensured the life of the survivors. The idea of sin is not primitive.

day after a death a bull calf is let loose with a trident branded on its shoulder or quarter “to become a pest.” See (Sir) Denzil C. J. Ibbetson, *Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Panipat Tahsil and Karnal Parganah of the Karnal District* (Allahabad, 1883), p. 137. In Behar, a district of Bengal, a bullock is also let loose on the eleventh day of mourning for a near relative. See G. A. Grierson, *Bihār Peasant Life* (Calcutta, 1885), p. 409.

§ 4. The Transference to Men

Evils transferred to human beings in India and elsewhere.

Again, men sometimes play the part of scapegoat by diverting to themselves the evils that threaten others. An ancient Hindoo ritual describes how the pangs of thirst may be transferred from a sick man to another. The operator seats the pair on branches, back to back, the sufferer with his face to the east, and the whole man with his face to the west. Then he stirs some gruel in a vessel placed on the patient's head and hands the stir-about to the other man to drink. In this way he transfers the pangs of thirst from the thirsty soul to the other, who obligingly receives them in his stead.¹²² There is a painful Telugu remedy for a fever: it is to embrace a bald-headed Brahman widow at the earliest streak of dawn. By doing so you get rid of the fever, and no doubt (though this is not expressly affirmed) you at the same time transfer it to the bald-headed widow.¹²³ When a Cinghalese is dangerously ill, and the physicians can do nothing, a devil-dancer is called in, who by making offerings to the devils, and dancing in the masks

¹²² W. Caland, *Altindisches Zauberritual* (Amsterdam, 1900), p. 83; *Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, translated by Maurice Bloomfield (Oxford, 1897), pp. 308 sq. (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlii.).

¹²³ M. N. Venketswami, "Telugu Superstitions," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxiv. (1895) p. 359.

appropriate to them, conjures these demons of disease, one after the other, out of the sick man's body and into his own. Having thus successfully extracted the cause of the malady, the artful dancer lies down on a bier, and shamming death, is carried to an open place outside the village. Here, being left to himself, he soon comes to life again, and hastens back to claim his reward.¹²⁴ In 1590 a Scotch witch of the name of Agnes Sampson was convicted of curing a certain Robert Kers of a disease “laid upon him by a westland warlock when he was at Dumfries, whilk sickness she took upon herself, and kept the same with great groaning and torment till the morn, at whilk time there was a great din heard in the house.” The noise was made by the witch in her efforts to shift the disease, by means of clothes, from herself to a cat or dog. Unfortunately the attempt partly miscarried. The disease missed the animal and hit Alexander Douglas of Dalkeith, who dwined and died of it, while the original patient, Robert Kers, was made whole.¹²⁵ The Dyaks believe that certain men possess in themselves the power of neutralizing bad omens. So, when evil omens have alarmed a farmer for the safety of his crops, he takes a small portion of his farm produce to one of these wise men, who eats it raw for a small consideration, “and thereby appropriates to himself the evil omen, which in him becomes

¹²⁴ A. Grünwedel, “Sinhalesische Masken,” *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, vi. (1893) pp. 85 sq.

¹²⁵ J. G. Dalyell, *Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), pp. 104 sq. I have modernised the spelling.

innocuous, and thus delivers the other from the ban of the *pemali* or taboo.”¹²⁶

Sins and misfortunes transferred to human scapegoats in New Zealand and Manipur. Annual eponyms in Manipur. Eponymous magistrates as public scapegoats.

“In one part of New Zealand an expiation for sin was felt to be necessary; a service was performed over an individual, by which all the sins of the tribe were supposed to be transferred to him, a fern stalk was previously tied to his person, with which he jumped into the river, and there unbinding, allowed it to float away to the sea, bearing their sins with it.”¹²⁷ In great emergencies the sins of the Rajah of Manipur used to be transferred to somebody else, usually to a criminal, who earned his pardon by his vicarious sufferings. To effect the transference the Rajah and his wife, clad in fine robes, bathed on a scaffold erected in the bazaar, while the criminal crouched beneath it. With the water which dripped from them on him their sins also were washed away and fell on the human scapegoat. To complete the transference the Rajah and his wife made over their fine robes to their substitute, while they themselves, clad in new raiment, mixed with the people till evening. But at the close of the day they entered into retreat and remained in seclusion for about a

¹²⁶ J. Perham, “Sea Dyak Religion,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 10 (December 1882), p. 232.

¹²⁷ Rev. Richard Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), p. 101.

week, during which they were esteemed sacred or tabooed.¹²⁸ Further, in Manipur “they have a noteworthy system of keeping count of the years. Each year is named after some man, who – for a consideration – undertakes to bear the fortune good or bad of the year. If the year be good, if there be no pestilence and a good harvest, he gets presents from all sorts of people, and I remember hearing that in 1898, when the cholera was at its worst, a deputation came to the Political Agent and asked him to punish the name-giver, as it was obvious that he was responsible for the epidemic. In former times he would have got into trouble.”¹²⁹ The nomination of the eponym, or man who is to give his name to the year, takes place at a festival called *Chirouba*, which falls about the middle of April. It is the priests who nominate the eponym, after comparing his horoscope with that of the Rajah and of the State generally. The retiring official, who gave his name to the past year, addresses his successor as follows: “My friend, I bore and took away all evil spirits and sins from the Rajah and his people during the last year. Do thou likewise from to-morrow until the next *Chirouba*.” Then the incoming official, who is to give his name to the New Year, addresses the Rajah in these words: “O son of heaven, Ruler of the Kings, great and ancient Lord, Incarnation of God, the great Lord Pakhangba, Master of

¹²⁸ T. C. Hodson, “The Native Tribes of Manipur,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxi. (1901) p. 302; *id.*, *The Meitheis* (London, 1908), pp. 106 sq.

¹²⁹ T. C. Hodson, “The Native Tribes of Manipur,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxi. (1901) p. 302.

the bright Sun, Lord of the Plain and Despot of the Hills, whose kingdom is from the hills on the east to the mountains on the west, the old year perishes, the new cometh. New is the sun of the new year, and bright as the new sun shalt thou be, and mild withal as the moon. May thy beauty and thy strength grow with the growth of the new year. From to-day will I bear on my head all thy sins, diseases, misfortunes, shame, mischief, all that is aimed in battle against thee, all that threatens thee, all that is bad and hurtful for thee and thy kingdom.” For these important services the eponym or vicar receives from the Rajah a number of gifts, including a basket of salt, and his grateful country rewards his self-sacrificing devotion by bestowing many privileges on him.¹³⁰ Elsewhere, perhaps, if we knew more about the matter, we might find that eponymous magistrates who give their names to the year have been similarly regarded as public scapegoats, who bore on their devoted heads the misfortunes, the sins, and the sorrows of the whole people.¹³¹

Indian story of the transference of sins to a holy man.

In the *Jataka*, or collection of Indian stories which narrate the many transmigrations of the Buddha, there is an instructive tale, which sets forth how sins and misfortunes can be transferred by means of spittle to a holy ascetic. A lady of easy virtue, we are told, had lost the favour of King Dandaki and bethought herself

¹³⁰ T. C. Hodson, *The Meitheis* (London, 1908), pp. 104-106.

¹³¹ Compare *The Dying God*, pp. 116 sq.

how she could recover it. As she walked in the park revolving these things in her mind, she spied a devout ascetic named Kisavaccha. A thought struck her. "Surely," said she to herself, "this must be Ill Luck. I will get rid of my sin on his person and then go and bathe." No sooner said than done. Chewing her toothpick, she collected a large clot of spittle in her mouth with which she beslavered the matted locks of the venerable man, and having hurled her toothpick at his head into the bargain she departed with a mind at peace and bathed. The stratagem was entirely successful; for the king took her into his good graces again. Not long after it chanced that the king deposed his domestic chaplain from his office. Naturally chagrined at this loss of royal favour, the clergyman repaired to the king's light o' love and enquired how she had contrived to recapture the monarch's affection. She told him frankly how she had got rid of her sin and emerged without a stain on her character by simply spitting on the head of Ill Luck in the royal park. The chaplain took the hint, and hastening to the park bespattered in like manner the sacred locks of the holy man; and in consequence he was soon reinstated in office. It would have been well if the thing had stopped there, but unfortunately it did not. By and bye it happened that there was a disturbance on the king's frontier, and the king put himself at the head of his army to go forth and fight. An unhappy idea occurred to his domestic chaplain. Elated by the success of the expedient which had restored him to royal favour, he asked the king, "Sire, do you wish for victory

or defeat?" "Why for victory, of course," replied the king. "Then you take my advice," said the chaplain; "just go and spit on the head of Ill Luck, who dwells in the royal park; you will thus transfer all your sin to his person." It seemed to the king a capital idea and he improved on it by proposing that the whole army should accompany him and get rid of their sins in like manner. They all did so, beginning with the king, and the state of the holy man's head when they had all done is something frightful to contemplate. But even this was not the worst. For after the king had gone, up came the commander-in-chief and seeing the sad plight of the pious ascetic, he took pity on him and had his poor bedabbled hair thoroughly washed. The fatal consequences of this kindly-meant but most injudicious shampoo may easily be anticipated. The sins which had been transferred with the saliva to the person of the devotee were now restored to their respective owners; and to punish them for their guilt fire fell from heaven and destroyed the whole kingdom for sixty leagues round about.¹³²

Transference of evils to human scapegoats in Uganda.

A less harmless way of relieving an army from guilt or misfortune used in former times to be actually practised by the Baganda. When an army had returned from war, and the gods warned the king by their oracles that some evil had attached itself to the soldiers, it was customary to pick out a woman slave

¹³² *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's former Births*, vol. v., translated by H. T. Francis (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 71 sq.

from the captives, together with a cow, a goat, a fowl, and a dog from the booty, and to send them back under a strong guard to the borders of the country from which they had come. There their limbs were broken and they were left to die; for they were too crippled to crawl back to Uganda. In order to ensure the transference of the evil to these substitutes, bunches of grass were rubbed over the people and cattle and then tied to the victims. After that the army was pronounced clean and was allowed to return to the capital. A similar mode of transferring evil to human and animal victims was practised by the Baganda whenever the gods warned the king that his hereditary foes the Banyoro were working magic against him and his people.¹³³

Transference of sins to a Brahman in Travancore.

Transference of sins to a Sin-eater in England.

In Travancore, when a rajah is near his end, they seek out a holy Brahman, who consents to take upon himself the sins of the dying man in consideration of the sum of ten thousand rupees. Thus prepared to immolate himself on the altar of duty as a vicarious sacrifice for sin, the saint is introduced into the chamber of death, and closely embraces the dying rajah, saying to him, "O King, I undertake to bear all your sins and diseases. May your Highness live long and reign happily." Having thus, with a noble devotion, taken to himself the sins of the sufferer, and likewise the rupees, he is sent away from the country and

¹³³ Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 342.

never more allowed to return.¹³⁴ Closely akin to this is the old Welsh custom known as “sin-eating.” According to Aubrey, “In the County of Hereford was an old Custome at funeralls to hire poor people, who were to take upon them all the sinnes of the party deceased. One of them I remember lived in a cottage on Rosse-high way. (He was a long, leane, ugly, lamentable poor raskal.) The manner was that when the Corps was brought out of the house and layd on the Biere; a Loafe of bread was brought out, and delivered to the Sinne-eater over the corps, as also a Mazar-bowle of maple (Gossips bowle) full of beer, which he was to drinke up, and sixpence in money, in consideration whereof he took upon him (ipso facto) all the Sinnes of the Defunct, and freed him (or her) from walking after they were dead... This Custome (though rarely used in our dayes) yet by some people was observed even in the strictest time of ye Presbyterian government: as at Dynder, volens nolens the Parson of ye Parish, the kinred of a woman deceased there had this ceremonie punctually performed according to her Will: and also the like was donne at ye City of Hereford in these times, when a woman kept many yeares before her death a Mazard-bowle for the Sinne-eater; and the like in other places in this Countie; as also in Brecon, *e. g.* at Llangors, where Mr. Gwin the minister about 1640 could no hinder ye performing of this ancient custome. I believe this custom was heretofore used over all Wales... In North Wales the Sinne-eaters are frequently made

¹³⁴ Rev. S. Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London, 1883), p. 136.

use of; but there, instead of a Bowle of Beere, they have a bowle of Milke.”¹³⁵ According to a letter dated February 1, 1714-15, “within the memory of our fathers, in Shropshire, in those villages adjoining to Wales, when a person dyed, there was notice given to an old sire (for so they called him), who presently repaired to the place where the deceased lay, and stood before the door of the house, when some of the family came out and furnished him with a cricket, on which he sat down facing the door. Then they gave him a groat, which he put in his pocket; a crust of bread, which he eat; and a full bowle of ale, which he drank off at a draught. After this he got up from the cricket and pronounced, with a composed gesture, the ease and rest of the soul departed for which he would pawn his own soul. This I had from the ingenious John Aubrey, Esq.”¹³⁶ In modern times some doubt has been thrown on Aubrey's account of the custom.¹³⁷ The practice, however, is reported to have prevailed in a valley not far from Llandebie to a recent period. An instance was said to have occurred about sixty years ago.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ J. Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (Folk-lore Society, London, 1881), pp. 35 sq.

¹³⁶ Bagford's letter in Leland's *Collectanea*, i. 76, quoted by J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 246 sq., Bohn's edition (London, 1882-1883).

¹³⁷ In *The Academy*, 13th Nov. 1875, p. 505, Mr. D. Silvan Evans stated that he knew of no such custom anywhere in Wales; and the custom seems to be now quite unknown in Shropshire. See C. S. Burne and G. F. Jackson, *Shropshire Folk-lore* (London, 1883), pp. 307 sq.

¹³⁸ The authority for the statement is a Mr. Moggridge, reported in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, second series, iii. 330. But Mr. Moggridge did not speak from personal

Transference of sins to a sin-eater in India.

Aubrey's statement is moreover supported by the analogy of similar customs in India. When the Rajah of Tanjore died in 1801, some of his bones and the bones of the two wives, who were burned with his corpse, were ground to powder and eaten, mixed with boiled rice, by twelve Brahmans. It was believed that the sins of the deceased passed into the bodies of the Brahmans, who were paid for the service.¹³⁹ A Brahman, resident in a village near Raipur, stated that he had eaten food (rice and milk) out of the hand of the dead Rajah of Bilaspur, and that in consequence he had been placed on the throne for the space of a year. At the end of the year he had been given presents and then turned out of the territory and forbidden apparently to return. He was an outcast among his fellows for having eaten out of a dead man's hand.¹⁴⁰ A similar custom is believed to obtain in the hill states about Kangra, and to have given rise to a caste of "outcaste" Brahmans. At the funeral of a Rani of Chamba rice and ghee were eaten out of the hands of the corpse by a Brahman paid for the purpose. Afterwards a stranger, who had been caught outside the Chamba territory, was given the costly wrappings of

knowledge, and as he appears to have taken it for granted that the practice of placing bread and salt upon the breast of a corpse was a survival of the custom of "sin-eating," his evidence must be received with caution. He repeated his statement, in somewhat vaguer terms, at a meeting of the Anthropological Institute, 14th December 1875. See *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, v. (1876) pp. 423 sq.

¹³⁹ J. A. Dubois, *Mœurs des Peuples de l'Inde* (Paris, 1825), ii. 32 sq.

¹⁴⁰ R. Richardson, in *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. p. 86, § 674 (May, 1884).

the corpse, then told to depart and never shew his face in the country again.¹⁴¹ In Oude when an infant was killed it used to be buried in the room where it had been born. On the thirteenth day afterwards the priest had to cook and eat his food in that room. By doing so he was supposed to take the whole sin upon himself and to cleanse the family from it.¹⁴² At Utch Kurgan in Turkestan Mr. Schuyler saw an old man who was said to get his living by taking on himself the sins of the dead, and thenceforth devoting his life to prayer for their souls.¹⁴³

Transference of sins in Tahiti.

In Tahiti, where the bodies of chiefs and persons of rank were embalmed and preserved above ground in special sheds or houses erected for them, a priest was employed at the funeral rites who bore the title of the “corpse-praying priest.” His office was singular. When the house for the dead had been prepared, and the corpse placed on the platform or bier, the priest ordered a hole to be made in the floor, near the foot of the platform. Over

¹⁴¹ *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. p. 86, § 674, ii. p. 93, § 559 (March, 1885). Some of these customs have been already referred to in a different connexion. See *The Dying God*, p. 154. In Uganda the eldest son used to perform a funeral ceremony, which consisted in chewing some seeds which he took with his lips from the hand of his dead father; some of these seeds he then blew over the corpse and the rest over one of the childless widows who thereafter became his wife. The meaning of the ceremony is obscure. The eldest son in Uganda never inherited his father's property. See the Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 117.

¹⁴² *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii. p. 179, § 745 (July, 1886).

¹⁴³ E. Schuyler, *Turkistan* (London, 1876), ii. 28.

this he prayed to the god by whom it was supposed that the soul of the deceased had been called away. The purport of his prayer was that all the dead man's sins, especially the one for which his soul had been required of him, might be deposited there, that they might not attach in any degree to the survivors, and that the anger of the god might be appeased. He next addressed the corpse, usually saying, "With you let the guilt now remain." The pillar or post of the corpse, as it was called, was then planted in the hole, and the hole filled up. As soon as the ceremony of depositing the sins in the hole was over, all who had touched the body or the garments of the deceased, which were buried or destroyed, fled precipitately into the sea, to cleanse themselves from the pollution which they had contracted by touching the corpse. They also cast into the sea the garments they had worn while they were performing the last offices to the dead. Having finished their ablutions, they gathered a few pieces of coral from the bottom of the sea, and returning with them to the house addressed the corpse, saying, "With you may the pollution be." So saying they threw down the coral on the top of the hole which had been dug to receive the sins and the defilement of the dead.¹⁴⁴ In this instance the sins of the departed, as well as the pollution which the primitive mind commonly associates with death, are not borne by a living person, but buried in a hole. Yet the fundamental idea – that of the transference of sins – is the

¹⁴⁴ W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832-1836), i. 401 sqq.

same in the Tahitian as in the Welsh and Indian customs; whether the vehicle or receptacle destined to catch and draw off the evil be a person, an animal, or a thing, is for the purpose in hand a matter of little moment.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ The Welsh custom of “sin-eating” has been interpreted by Mr. E. S. Hartland as a modification of an older custom of eating the corpse. See his article, “The Sin-eater,” *Folk-lore*, iii. (1892) 145-157; *The Legend of Perseus*, ii. 291 *sqq.*, iii. p. ix. I cannot think his interpretation probable or borne out by the evidence. The Badaga custom of transferring the sins of the dead to a calf which is then let loose and never used again (above, pp. [36](#) *sq.*), the Tahitian custom of burying the sins of a person whose body is carefully preserved by being embalmed, and the Manipur and Travancore customs of transferring the sins of a Rajah before his death (pp. [39](#), [42](#) *sq.*) establish the practice of transferring sins in cases where there can be no question of eating the corpse. The original intention of such practices was perhaps not so much to take away the sins of the deceased as to rid the survivors of the dangerous pollution of death. This comes out to some extent in the Tahitian custom.

§ 5. The Transference of Evil in Europe

Transference of evils in ancient Greece. The transference of warts. Transference of sickness in Scotland, Germany, and Austria.

The examples of the transference of evil hitherto adduced have been mostly drawn from the customs of savage or barbarous peoples. But similar attempts to shift the burden of disease, misfortune, and sin from one's self to another person, or to an animal or thing, have been common also among the civilized nations of Europe, both in ancient and modern times. A Roman cure for fever was to pare the patient's nails, and stick the parings with wax on a neighbour's door before sunrise; the fever then passed from the sick man to his neighbour.¹⁴⁶ Similar devices must have been resorted to by the Greeks; for in laying down laws for his ideal state, Plato thinks it too much to expect that men should not be alarmed at finding certain wax figures adhering to their doors or to the tombstones of their parents, or lying at cross-roads.¹⁴⁷ Among the ruins of the great sanctuary of Aesculapius, which were excavated not very long ago in an open valley among the mountains of Epidaurus, inscriptions have been found recording the miraculous cures which the god of healing

¹⁴⁶ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 86.

¹⁴⁷ Plato, *Laws*, xi. 12, p. 933 b.

performed for his faithful worshippers. One of them tells how a certain Pandarus, a Thessalian, was freed from the letters which, as a former slave or prisoner of war, he bore tattooed or branded on his brow. He slept in the sanctuary with a fillet round his head, and in the morning he discovered to his joy that the marks of shame – the blue or scarlet letters – had been transferred from his brow to the fillet. By and by there came to the sanctuary a wicked man, also with brands or tattoo marks on his face, who had been charged by Pandarus to pay his debt of gratitude to the god, and had received the cash for the purpose. But the cunning fellow thought to cheat the god and keep the money all to himself. So when the god appeared to him in a dream and asked anxiously after the money, he boldly denied that he had it, and impudently prayed the god to remove the ugly marks from his own brazen brow. He was told to tie the fillet of Pandarus about his head, then to take it off, and look at his face in the water of the sacred well. He did so, and sure enough he saw on his forehead the marks of Pandarus in addition to his own.¹⁴⁸ In the fourth century of our era Marcellus of Bordeaux prescribed a cure for warts, which has still a great vogue among the superstitious in various parts of Europe. Doubtless it was an old traditional remedy in the fourth, and will long survive the expiry of the twentieth, century. You are to touch your warts with as many little stones as you have warts; then wrap the stones in an ivy leaf, and throw them away

¹⁴⁸ Ἐφημερίς ἀρχαιολογική, 1883, col. 213, 214; G. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*,² No. 802, lines 48 *sqq.* (vol. ii. pp. 652 *sq.*).

in a thoroughfare. Whoever picks them up will get the warts, and you will be rid of them.¹⁴⁹ A similar cure for warts, with such trifling variations as the substitution of peas or barley for pebbles, and a rag or a piece of paper for an ivy leaf, has been prescribed in modern times in Italy, France, Austria, England, and Scotland.¹⁵⁰ Another favourite way of passing on your warts to somebody else is to make as many knots in a string as you have warts; then throw the string away or place it under a stone. Whoever treads on the stone or picks up the thread will get the warts instead of you; sometimes to complete the transference it is thought necessary that he should undo the knots.¹⁵¹ Or you

¹⁴⁹ Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xxxiv. 102. A similar cure is described by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* xxii. 149); you are to touch the warts with chick-peas on the first day of the moon, wrap the peas in a cloth, and throw them away behind you. But Pliny does not say that the warts will be transferred to the person who picks up the peas. On this subject see further J. Hardy, "Wart and Wen Cures," *Folk-lore Record*, i. (1878) pp. 216-228.

¹⁵⁰ Z. Zanetti, *La Medicina delle nostre donne* (Città di Castello, 1892), pp. 224 sq.; J. B. Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions* (Paris, 1679), p. 321; B. Souché, *Croyances, présages et traditions diverses* (Niort, 1880), p. 19; J. W. Wolf, *Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1852-1857), i. 248, § 576; Dr. R. F. Kaindl, "Aus dem Volksglauben der Rutenen in Galizien," *Globus*, lxiv. (1893) p. 93; J. Harland and T. T. Wilkinson, *Lancashire Folk-lore* (Manchester and London, 1882), p. 157; G. W. Black, *Folk-medicine* (London, 1883), p. 41; W. Gregor, *Folk-lore of the North-East of Scotland* (London, 1881), p. 49; J. G. Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1902), pp. 94 sq.

¹⁵¹ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), ii. 71, § 85; E. Monseur, *Le Folklore Wallon* (Brussels, n. d.), p. 29; H. Zahler, *Die Krankheit im Volksglauben des Simmenthals* (Bern, 1898), p. 93; R. Andree, *Braunschweiger Volkskunde* (Brunswick, 1896), p. 306.

need only place the knotted thread before sunrise in the spout of a pump; the next person who works the pump will be sure to get your warts.¹⁵² Equally effective methods are to rub the troublesome excrescences with down or fat, or to bleed them on a rag, and then throw away the down, the fat, or the bloody rag. The person who picks up one or other of these things will be sure to release you from your warts by involuntarily transferring them to himself.¹⁵³ People in the Orkney Islands will sometimes wash a sick man, and then throw the water down at a gateway, in the belief that the sickness will leave the patient and be transferred to the first person who passes through the gate.¹⁵⁴ A Bavarian cure for fever is to write upon a piece of paper, "Fever, stay away, I am not at home," and to put the paper in somebody's pocket. The latter then catches the fever, and the patient is rid of it.¹⁵⁵ Or the sufferer may cure himself by sticking a twig of the elder-tree in the ground without speaking. The fever then adheres to the twig, and whoever pulls up the twig will catch the disease.¹⁵⁶ A Bohemian prescription for the same malady is this. Take an empty pot, go with it to a cross-road, throw it down, and

¹⁵² A. Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1861-1862), i. 483.

¹⁵³ Thiers, Souché, Strackerjan, Monseur, *ll.cc.*; J. G. Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1902), p. 95.

¹⁵⁴ Ch. Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1884-1886), iii. 226.

¹⁵⁵ G. Lammert, *Volksmedizin und medizinischer Aberglaube in Bayern* (Würzburg, 1869), p. 264.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 263.

run away. The first person who kicks against the pot will catch your fever, and you will be cured.¹⁵⁷ In Oldenburg they say that when a person lies sweating with fever, he should take a piece of money to himself in bed. The money is afterwards thrown away on the street, and whoever picks it up will catch the fever, but the original patient will be rid of it.¹⁵⁸

Sickness transferred to asses, frogs, dogs, and other animals.

Often in Europe, as among savages, an attempt is made to transfer a pain or malady from a man to an animal. Grave writers of antiquity recommended that, if a man be stung by a scorpion, he should sit upon an ass with his face to the tail, or whisper in the animal's ear, "A scorpion has stung me"; in either case, they thought, the pain would be transferred from the man to the ass.¹⁵⁹ Many cures of this sort are recorded by Marcellus. For example, he tells us that the following is a remedy for toothache. Standing booted under the open sky on the ground, you catch a frog by the head, spit into its mouth, ask it to carry away the ache, and then let it go. But the ceremony must be performed

¹⁵⁷ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren* (Prague and Leipsic, 1864), p. 167, § 1180.

¹⁵⁸ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), i. 71, § 85.

¹⁵⁹ *Geoponica*, xiii. 9, xv. 1; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 155. The authorities for these cures are respectively Apuleius and Democritus. The latter is probably not the atomic philosopher. See J. G. Frazer, "The Language of Animals," *The Archæological Review*, vol. i. (May, 1888) p. 180, note 140.

on a lucky day and at a lucky hour.¹⁶⁰ In Cheshire the ailment known as aphtha or thrush, which affects the mouth or throat of infants, is not uncommonly treated in much the same manner. A young frog is held for a few moments with its head inside the mouth of the sufferer, whom it is supposed to relieve by taking the malady to itself. "I assure you," said an old woman who had often superintended such a cure, "we used to hear the poor frog whooping and coughing, mortal bad, for days after; it would have made your heart ache to hear the poor creature coughing as it did about the garden."¹⁶¹ Again Marcellus tells us that if the foam from a mule's mouth, mixed with warm water, be drunk by an asthmatic patient, he will at once recover, but the mule will die.¹⁶² An ancient cure for the gripes, recorded both by Pliny and Marcellus, was to put a live duck to the belly of the sufferer; the pains passed from the man into the bird, to which they proved fatal.¹⁶³ According to the same writers a stomachic complaint of which the cause was unknown might be cured by applying a blind puppy to the suffering part for three days. The secret disorder thus passed into the puppy; it died, and a post-mortem examination of its little body revealed the cause of the disease from which the man had suffered and of which the dog

¹⁶⁰ Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xii. 24.

¹⁶¹ W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine* (London, 1883), pp. 35 *sq.*

¹⁶² Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xvii. 18.

¹⁶³ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 61; Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xxvii. 33. The latter writer mentions (*op. cit.* xxviii. 123) that the same malady might similarly be transferred to a live frog.

had died.¹⁶⁴ Once more, Marcellus advises that when a man was afflicted with a disorder of the intestines the physician should catch a live hare, take the huckle-bone from one of its feet and the down from the belly, then let the hare go, pronouncing as he did so the words, “Run away, run away, little hare, and take away with you the intestine pain.” Further, the doctor was to fashion the down into thread, with which he was to tie the huckle-bone to the patient's body, taking great care that the thread should not be touched by any woman.¹⁶⁵ A Northamptonshire, Devonshire, and Welsh cure for a cough is to put a hair of the patient's head between two slices of buttered bread and give the sandwich to a dog. The animal will thereupon catch the cough and the patient will lose it.¹⁶⁶ Sometimes an ailment is transferred to an animal by sharing food with it. Thus in Oldenburg, if you are sick of a fever you set a bowl of sweet milk before a dog and say, “Good luck, you hound! may you be sick and I be sound!” Then when the dog has lapped some of the milk, you take a swig at the bowl; and then the dog must lap again, and then you must swig again; and when you and the dog have done it the third time, he will have the fever and you will be quit of it. A peasant woman in Abbehausen told her pastor that she suffered from fever for a

¹⁶⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 64; Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xxviii. 132.

¹⁶⁵ Marcellus, *De medicamentis*, xxix. 35.

¹⁶⁶ W. Henderson, *Folk-lore of the Northern Counties* (London, 1879), p. 143; W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine*, p. 35; Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-stories of Wales* (London, 1909), p. 226.

whole year and found no relief. At last somebody advised her to give some of her food to a dog and a cat. She did so and the fever passed from her into the animals. But when she saw the poor sick beasts always before her, she wished it undone. Then the fever left the cat and the dog and returned to her.¹⁶⁷

Sickness transferred to birds, snails, fish, and fowls.

A Bohemian cure for fever is to go out into the forest before the sun is up and look for a snipe's nest. When you have found it, take out one of the young birds and keep it beside you for three days. Then go back into the wood and set the snipe free. The fever will leave you at once. The snipe has taken it away. So in Vedic times the Hindoos of old sent consumption away with a blue jay. They said, "O consumption, fly away, fly away with the blue jay! With the wild rush of the storm and the whirlwind, oh, vanish away!"¹⁶⁸ In Oldenburg they sometimes hang up a goldfinch or a turtle-dove in the room of a consumptive patient, hoping that the bird may draw away the malady from the sufferer to itself.¹⁶⁹ A prescription for a cough in Sunderland is to shave the patient's head and hang the hair on a bush. When the birds carry the hair

¹⁶⁷ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), i. 72, § 86.

¹⁶⁸ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren* (Prague and Leipsic, 1864), p. 166, § 1173, quoting Kuhn's translation of *Rig-veda*, x. 97. 13. A slightly different translation of the verse is given by H. Grassmann, who here follows R. Roth (*Rig-veda übersetzt*, vol. ii. p. 379). Compare *Hymns of the Rigveda*, translated by R. T. H. Griffith (Benares, 1889-1892), iv. 312.

¹⁶⁹ L. Strackerjan, *op. cit.* i. 72, § 87.

to their nests, they will carry the cough with it.¹⁷⁰ In the Mark of Brandenburg a cure for headache is to tie a thread thrice round your head and then hang it in a loop from a tree; if a bird flies through the loop, it will take your headache away with it.¹⁷¹ A Saxon remedy for rupture in a child is to take a snail, thrust it at sunset into a hollow tree, and stop up the hole with clay. Then as the snail perishes the child recovers. But this cure must be accompanied by the recitation of a proper form of words; otherwise it has no effect.¹⁷² A Bohemian remedy for jaundice is as follows. Take a living tench, tie it to your bare back and carry it about with you for a whole day. The tench will turn quite yellow and die. Then throw it into running water, and your jaundice will depart with it.¹⁷³ In the village of Llandegla in Wales there is a church dedicated to the virgin martyr St. Tecla, where the falling sickness is, or used to be, cured by being transferred to a fowl. The patient first washed his limbs in a sacred well hard by, dropped fourpence into it as an offering, walked thrice round the well, and thrice repeated the Lord's prayer. Then the fowl, which was a cock or a hen according as the patient was a man or a woman, was put into a basket and carried round first the

¹⁷⁰ W. Henderson, *Folk-lore of the Northern Counties* (London, 1879), p. 143.

¹⁷¹ J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen der Altmark* (Berlin, 1839), p. 83; A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 384, § 62.

¹⁷² R. Wuttke, *Sächsische Volkskunde*² (Dresden, 1901), p. 372.

¹⁷³ J. V. Grohmann, *op. cit.* p. 230, § 1663. A similar remedy is prescribed in Bavaria. See G. Lammert, *Volksmedizin und medizinischer Aberglaube in Bayern* (Würzburg, 1869), p. 249.

well and afterwards the church. Next the sufferer entered the church and lay down under the communion table till break of day. After that he offered sixpence and departed, leaving the fowl in the church. If the bird died, the sickness was supposed to have been transferred to it from the man or woman, who was now rid of the disorder. As late as 1855 the old parish clerk of the village remembered quite well to have seen the birds staggering about from the effects of the fits which had been transferred to them.¹⁷⁴ In South Glamorgan and West Pembrokeshire it is thought possible to get rid of warts by means of a snail. You take a snail with a black shell, you rub it on each wart and say,

“Wart, wart, on the snail's shell black,
Go away soon, and never come back.”

Then you put the snail on the branch of a tree or bramble and you nail it down with as many thorns as you have warts. When the snail has rotted away on the bough, your warts will have vanished. Another Welsh cure for warts is to impale a frog on a stick and then to rub the warts on the creature. The warts disappear as the frog expires.¹⁷⁵ In both these cases we may assume that the warts are transferred from the human sufferer to the suffering animal.

Sickness and ill-luck transferred to inanimate objects.

Often the sufferer seeks to shift his burden of sickness or ill-

¹⁷⁴ J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 375; W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁵ Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-stories of Wales* (London, 1909), pp. 229 sq.

luck to some inanimate object. In Athens there is a little chapel of St. John the Baptist built against an ancient column. Fever patients resort thither, and by attaching a waxed thread to the inner side of the column believe that they transfer the fever from themselves to the pillar.¹⁷⁶ In the Mark of Brandenburg they say that if you suffer from giddiness you should strip yourself naked and run thrice round a flax-field after sunset; in that way the flax will get the giddiness and you will be rid of it.¹⁷⁷ Sometimes an attempt is made to transfer the mischief, whatever it may be, to the moon. In Oldenburg a peasant related how he rid himself of a bony excrescence by stroking it thrice crosswise in the name of the Trinity, and then making a gesture as if he were seizing the deformity and hurling it towards the moon. In the same part of Germany a cure for warts is to stand in the light of a waxing moon so that you cannot see your own shadow, then hold the disfigured hand towards the moon, and stroke it with the other hand in the direction of the luminary. Some say that in doing this you should pronounce these words, "Moon, free me from these vermin."¹⁷⁸

Sickness and trouble transferred to trees and bushes.

But perhaps the thing most commonly employed in Europe as a receptacle for sickness and trouble of all sorts is a tree or bush. The modes of transferring the mischief to it are many. For

¹⁷⁶ B. Schmidt, *Das Volksleben der Neugriechen* (Leipsic, 1871), p. 82.

¹⁷⁷ A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 386.

¹⁷⁸ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), i. 74, § 91.

example, the Esthonians say that you ought not to go out of the house on a spring morning before you have eaten or drunk; for if you do, you may chance to hear one of “the sounds which are not heard in winter,” such as the song of a bird, and that would be unlucky. They think that if you thus let yourself be deceived or outwitted, as they call it, by a bird, you will be visited by all sorts of ill-luck during the year; indeed it may very well happen that you will fall sick and die before another spring comes round. However, there is a way of averting the evil. You have merely to embrace a tree or go thrice round it, biting into the bark each time or tearing away a strip of the bark with your teeth. Thus the bad luck passes from you to the tree, which accordingly withers away.¹⁷⁹ In Sicily it is believed that all kinds of marvellous cures can be effected on the night which precedes Ascension Day. For example, people who suffer from goitre bite the bark of a peach-tree just at the moment when the clocks are striking midnight. Thus the malady is transferred to the sap of the tree, and its leaves wither away in exact proportion as the patient recovers. But in order that the cure may be successful it is absolutely essential that the bark should be bitten at midnight precisely; a bite before or after that witching hour is labour thrown away.¹⁸⁰ On St. George's Day, South Slavonian lads and lasses climb thrice up and down a cornel-tree, saying, “My laziness and sleepiness

¹⁷⁹ F. J. Wiedemann, *Aus dem inneren und äussern Leben der Ehsten* (St. Petersburg, 1876), pp. 451 *sq.*

¹⁸⁰ *Le Tour du Monde*, lxxvii. (1894) p. 308; *id.*, Nouvelle Série, v. (1899) p. 521.

to you, cornel-tree, but health and booty (?) to me.” Then as they wend homewards they turn once more towards the tree and call out, “Cornel-tree! cornel-tree! I leave you my laziness and sleepiness.”¹⁸¹ The same people attempt to cure fever by transferring it to a dwarf elder-bush. Having found such a bush with three shoots springing from the root, the patient grasps the points of the three shoots in his hand, bends them down to the ground, and fastens them there with a stone. Under the arch thus formed he creeps thrice; then he cuts off or digs up the three shoots, saying, “In three shoots I cut three sicknesses out. When these three shoots grow young again, may the fever come back.”¹⁸² A Bulgarian cure for fever is to run thrice round a willow-tree at sunrise, crying, “The fever shall shake thee, and the sun shall warm me.”¹⁸³ In the Greek island of Karpathos the priest ties a red thread round the neck of a sick person. Next morning the friends of the patient remove the thread and go out to the hillside, where they tie the thread to a tree, thinking that they thus transfer the sickness to the tree.¹⁸⁴ Italians attempt to cure fever in like manner by fastening it to a tree. The sufferer ties a thread round his left wrist at night, and hangs the thread on a tree next morning. The fever is thus believed to be tied up

¹⁸¹ F. S. Krauss, *Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Südslaven* (Münster i. W., 1890), pp. 35 sq.

¹⁸² F. S. Krauss, *op. cit.* p. 39.

¹⁸³ A. Strausz, *Die Bulgaren* (Leipsic, 1898), p. 400, compare p. 401.

¹⁸⁴ *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1886, p. 239.

to the tree, and the patient to be rid of it; but he must be careful not to pass by that tree again, otherwise the fever would break loose from its bonds and attack him afresh.¹⁸⁵ An old French remedy for fever was to bind the patient himself to a tree and leave him there for a time; some said that the ceremony should be performed fasting and early in the morning, that the cord or straw rope with which the person was bound to the tree should be left there to rot, and that the sufferer should bite the bark of the tree before returning home.¹⁸⁶ In Bohemia the friends of a fever patient will sometimes carry him head foremost, by means of straw ropes, to a bush, on which they dump him down. Then he must jump up and run home. The friends who carried him also flee, leaving the straw ropes and likewise the fever behind them on the bush.¹⁸⁷

Sickness transferred to trees by means of knots.

Sometimes the sickness is transferred to the tree by making a knot in one of its boughs. Thus in Mecklenburg a remedy for fever is to go before sunrise to a willow-tree and tie as many knots in one of its branches as the fever has lasted days; but

¹⁸⁵ Z. Zanetti, *La medicina delle nostre donne* (Città di Castello, 1892), p. 73.

¹⁸⁶ J. B. Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions* (Paris, 1679), pp. 323 sq.

¹⁸⁷ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren* (Prague and Leipsic, 1864), p. 167, § 1178. A Belgian cure of the same sort is reported by J. W. Wolf (*Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie*, Göttingen, 1852-1857, i. 223 (wrongly numbered 219), § 256).

going and coming you must be careful not to speak a word.¹⁸⁸ A Flemish cure for the ague is to go early in the morning to an old willow, tie three knots in one of its branches, say, “Good-morrow, Old One, I give thee the cold; good-morrow, Old One,” then turn and run away without looking round.¹⁸⁹ In Rhenish Bavaria the cure for gout is similar. The patient recites a spell or prayer while he stands at a willow-bush holding one of its boughs. When the mystic words have been spoken, he ties a knot in the bough and departs cured. But all his life long he must never go near that willow-bush again, or the gout will come back to him.¹⁹⁰ In Sonnenberg, if you would rid yourself of gout you should go to a young fir-tree and tie a knot in one of its twigs, saying, “God greet thee, noble fir. I bring thee my gout. Here will I tie a knot and bind my gout into it. In the name,” etc.¹⁹¹ Not far from Marburg, at a place called Neuhof, there is a wood of birches. Thither on a morning before sunrise, in the last quarter of the moon, bands of gouty people may often be seen hobbling in silence. Each of them takes his stand before a separate tree and pronounces these solemn words: “Here stand I before the judgment bar of God and tie up all my gout. All the disease in

¹⁸⁸ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), i. 74, § 90.

¹⁸⁹ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*⁴ (Berlin, 1875-1878), ii. 979.

¹⁹⁰ *Bavaria, Landes- und Volkskunde des Königreichs Bayern*, iv. 2 (Munich, 1867), p. 406.

¹⁹¹ A. Schleicher, *Volkstümliches aus Sonnenberg* (Weimar, 1858), p. 150; A. Witschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Thüringen* (Vienna, 1878), p. 283, § 82.

my body shall remain tied up in this birch-tree.” Meanwhile the good physician ties a knot in a birch-twigg, repeating thrice, “In the name of the Father,” etc.¹⁹²

Sickness transferred to trees by means of the patient's hair or nails.

Another way of transferring gout from a man to a tree is this. Pare the nails of the sufferer's fingers and clip some hairs from his legs. Bore a hole in an oak, stuff the nails and hair in the hole, stop up the hole again, and smear it with cow's dung. If, for three months thereafter, the patient is free of gout, you may be sure the oak has it in his stead.¹⁹³ A German cure for toothache is to bore a hole in a tree and cram some of the sufferer's hair into it.¹⁹⁴ In these cases, though no doubt the tree suffers the pangs of gout or toothache respectively, it does so with a sort of stoical equanimity, giving no outward and visible sign of the pains that rack it inwardly. It is not always so, however. The tree cannot invariably suppress every symptom of its suffering. It may hide its toothache, but it cannot so easily hide its warts. In Cheshire if you would be rid of warts, you have only to rub them with a piece of bacon, cut a slit in the bark of an ash-tree, and slip the bacon under the bark. Soon the warts will disappear from your hand, only however to reappear in the shape of rough excrescences or

¹⁹² W. Kolbe, *Hessische Volks-Sitten und Gebrauche*² (Marburg, 1888), pp. 88 sq.

¹⁹³ C. Meyer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters* (Bâle, 1884), p. 104.

¹⁹⁴ H. Zahler, *Die Krankheit im Volksglauben des Simmenthals* (Bern, 1898), p. 94.

knobs on the bark of the tree.¹⁹⁵ Again in Beauce and Perche, two provinces of France, fever may be transferred to a young aspen by inserting the parings of the patient's nails in the tree and then plastering up the hole to prevent the fever from getting out. But the operation must be performed by night.¹⁹⁶ How subject an aspen is to fever must be obvious to the meanest capacity from the trembling of its leaves in every breath of wind; nothing therefore can be easier or more natural than to transfer the malady, with its fits of shaking, to the tree. At Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, there used to be certain oak-trees which were long celebrated for the cure of ague. The transference of the malady to the tree was simple but painful. A lock of the sufferer's hair was pegged into an oak; then by a sudden wrench he left his hair and his ague behind him in the tree.¹⁹⁷

Toothache, headache, and fevers plugged up in trees.

It seems clear that, though you may stow away your pain or sickness in a tree, there is a considerable risk of its coming out again. To obviate this danger common prudence suggests that you should plug or bung up the hole as tight as you can. And this, as we should naturally expect, is often done. A German cure for toothache or headache is to wrap some of the sufferer's cut hair and nails in paper, make a hole in the tree, stuff the parcel

¹⁹⁵ W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine*, p. 38.

¹⁹⁶ F. Chapiseau, *Le Folk-lore de la Beauce et du Perche* (Paris, 1902), i. 213.

¹⁹⁷ W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine*, p. 39.

into it, and stop up the hole with a plug made from a tree which has been struck by lightning.¹⁹⁸ In Bohemia they say that, if you feel the fever coming on, you should pull out some of your hair, tear off a strip of a garment you are wearing, and bore a hole in a willow-tree. Having done so, you put the hair and the rag in the hole and stop it up with a wedge of hawthorn. Then go home without looking back, and if a voice calls to you, be sure not to answer. When you have complied with this prescription, the fever will cease.¹⁹⁹ In Oldenburg a common remedy for fever is to bore a hole in a tree, breathe thrice into the hole, and then plug it up. Once a man who had thus shut up his fever in a tree was jeered at by a sceptical acquaintance for his credulity. So he went secretly to the tree and drew the stopper, and out came that fever and attacked the sceptic.²⁰⁰ Sometimes they say that the tree into which you thus breathe your fever or ague should be a hollow willow, and that in going to the tree you should be careful not to utter a word, and not to cross water.²⁰¹ Again, we read of a man who suffered acute pains in his arm. So “they beat up red corals with oaken leaves, and having kept them on the part affected till suppuration, they did in the morning put this mixture into an hole bored with an auger in the root of an oak, respecting

¹⁹⁸ A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*² (Berlin, 1869), p. 310, § 490.

¹⁹⁹ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, p. 165, § 1160.

²⁰⁰ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg*, ii. 74 sq., § 89.

²⁰¹ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ ii. 979.

the east, and stop up this hole with a peg made of the same tree; from thenceforth the pain did altogether cease, and when they took out the amulet immediately the torments returned sharper than before.”²⁰² These facts seem to put it beyond the reach of reasonable doubt that the pain or malady is actually in the tree and waiting to pop out, if only it gets the chance.

²⁰² T. J. Pettigrew, *On Superstitions connected with the History and Practice of Medicine and Surgery* (London, 1844), p. 77; W. G. Black, *Folk-medicine*, p. 37.

§ 6. The Nailing of Evils

Sickness and pain pegged or nailed into trees.

Often the patient, without troubling to bore a hole in the tree, merely knocks a wedge, a peg, or a nail into it, believing that he thus pegs or nails the sickness or pain into the wood. Thus a Bohemian cure for fever is to go to a tree and hammer a wedge into it with the words "There, I knock you in, that you may come no more out to me."²⁰³ A German way of getting rid of toothache is to go in silence before sunrise to a tree, especially a willow-tree, make a slit in the bark on the north side of the tree, or on the side that looks towards the sunrise, cut out a splinter from the place thus laid bare, poke the splinter into the aching tooth till blood comes, then put back the splinter in the tree, fold down the bark over it, and tie a string round the trunk, that the splinter may grow into the trunk as before. As it does so, your pain will vanish; but you must be careful not to go near the tree afterwards, or you will get the toothache again. And any one who pulls the splinter out will also get the toothache. He has in fact uncorked the toothache which was safely bottled up in the tree, and he must take the natural consequence of his rash act.²⁰⁴ A simpler

²⁰³ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, p. 167, § 1182.

²⁰⁴ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg*, i. 73, § 89; A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*,² pp. 309 sq., § 490.

plan, practised in Persia as well as in France and Germany, is merely to scrape the aching tooth with a nail or a twig till it bleeds, and then hammer the nail or the twig into a tree. In the Vosges, in Voigtland, and probably elsewhere, it is believed that any person who should draw out such a nail or twig would get the toothache.²⁰⁵ An old lime-tree at Evessen, in Brunswick, is studded with nails of various shapes, including screw-nails, which have been driven into it by persons who suffered from aching teeth.²⁰⁶ In the Mark of Brandenburg they say that the ceremony should be performed when the moon is on the wane, and that the bloody nail should be knocked, without a word being spoken, into the north side of an oak-tree, where the sun cannot shine on it; after that the person will have no more toothache so long as the tree remains standing.²⁰⁷ Here it is plainly implied that the toothache is bottled up in the tree. If further proof were needed that in such cases the malady is actually transferred to the tree and stowed away in its trunk, it would be afforded by the belief that if the tree is cut down the toothache will return to the

²⁰⁵ L. F. Sauv , *Le Folk-lore des Hautes-Vosges* (Paris, 1889), p. 40; A. Meyrac, *Traditions, Coutumes, L gendes et Contes des Ardennes* (Charleville, 1890), p. 174; A. Schleicher, *Volkst mliches aus Sonnenberg* (Weimer, 1858), p. 149; J. A. E. K hler, *Volksbrauch, Aberglauben, Sagen und andre alte Ueberlieferungen im Voigtlande* (Leipsic, 1867), p. 414; A. Witzschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebr uche aus Th ringen* (Vienna, 1878), p. 283,   79; H. Zahler, *Die Krankheit im Volksglauben des Simmenthals* (Bern, 1898), p. 93.

²⁰⁶ R. Andree, *Braunschweiger Volkskunde* (Brunswick, 1896), p. 307.

²⁰⁷ A. Kuhn, *M rkische Sagen und M rchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 384,   66.

original sufferer.²⁰⁸ Rupture as well as toothache can be nailed to an oak. For that purpose all that need be done is to take a coffin-nail and touch with it the injured part of the patient; then set the sufferer barefoot before an oak-tree, and knock the nail into the trunk above his head. That transfers the rupture to the tree, and that is why you may often see the boles of ancient oaks studded with nails.²⁰⁹

Ghosts and gods bunged up in India. Demon plugged up
and ghost nailed down.

Such remedies are not confined to Europe. At Bilda in Algeria, there is a sacred old olive-tree, in which pilgrims, especially women, knock nails for the purpose of ridding themselves of their ailments and troubles.²¹⁰ Again, the Majhwars, a Dravidian tribe in the hill country of South Mirzapur, believe that all disease is due to ghosts, but that ghosts, when they become troublesome, can be shut up in a certain tree, which grows on a little islet in a very deep pool of the Sukandar, a tributary of the Kanhar river. Accordingly, when the country is infested by ghosts, in other words when disease is raging, a skilful wizard seeks for a piece of deer-horn in the jungle. When he has found it, he hammers it with a stone into the tree and thus shuts up the ghost. The tree is covered with

²⁰⁸ H. Zahler, *loc. cit.*

²⁰⁹ P. Wagler, *Die Eiche in alter und neuer Zeit*, i. (Wurzen, n. d.) p. 23.

²¹⁰ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), p. 436.

hundreds of such pieces of horn.²¹¹ Again, when a new settlement is being made in some parts of the North-Western Provinces of India, it is deemed necessary to apprehend and lay by the heels the local deities, who might otherwise do a deal of mischief to the intruders on their domain. A sorcerer is called in to do the business. For days he marches about the place mustering the gods to the tuck of drum. When they are all assembled, two men known as the Earthman and the Leafman, who represent the gods of the earth and of the trees respectively, become full of the spirit, being taken possession of bodily by the local deities. In this exalted state they shout and caper about in a fine frenzy, and their seemingly disjointed ejaculations, which are really the divine voice speaking through them, are interpreted by the sorcerer. When the critical moment has come, the wizard rushes in between the two incarnations of divinity, clutches at the spirits which are hovering about them in the air, and pours grains of sesame through their hands into a perforated piece of the wood of the sacred fig-tree. Then without a moment's delay he plasters up the hole with a mixture of clay and cow-dung, and carefully buries the piece of wood on the spot which is to be the shrine of the local deities. Needless to say that the gods themselves are bunged up in the wood and are quite incapable of doing further mischief, provided always that the usual offerings

²¹¹ W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), iii. 436 sq.; compare *id.*, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 43, 162. Compare E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), pp. 313, 331.

are made to them at the shrine where they live in durance vile.²¹² In this case the source of mischief is imprisoned, not in a tree, but in a piece of one; but the principle is clearly the same. Similarly in Corea an English lady observed at a cross-road a small log with several holes like those of a mouse-trap, one of which was plugged up doubly with bungs of wood. She was told that a demon, whose ravages spread sickness in a family, had been inveigled by a sorceress into that hole and securely bunged up. It was thought proper for all passers-by to step over the incarcerated devil, whether to express their scorn and abhorrence of him, or more probably as a means of keeping him forcibly down.²¹³ In Cochinchina a troublesome ghost can be confined to the grave by the simple process of knocking a nail or thrusting a bar of iron into the earth at the point where the head of the corpse may be presumed to repose.²¹⁴

Evils nailed into stones, walls, door-posts, and so on.

From knocking the mischief into a tree or a log it is only a step to knocking it into a stone, a door-post, a wall, or such like. At the head of Glen Mor, near Port Charlotte, in Islay, there may be seen a large boulder, and it is said that whoever drives a nail into this stone will thereafter be secure from attacks of toothache. A farmer in Islay told an enquirer some years ago how a passing

²¹² W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 102 sq.

²¹³ Mrs. Bishop, *Korea and her Neighbours* (London, 1898), ii. 143 sq.

²¹⁴ P. Giran, *Magie et Religion Annamites* (Paris, 1912), pp. 132 sq.

stranger once cured his grandmother of toothache by driving a horse-nail into the lintel of the kitchen door, warning her at the same time to keep the nail there, and if it should come loose just to tap it with a hammer till it had a grip again. She had no more toothache for the rest of her life.²¹⁵ In Brunswick it is open to any one to nail his toothache either into a wall or into a tree, as he thinks fit; the pain is cured quite as well in the one way as in the other.²¹⁶ So in Beauce and Perche a healer has been known to place a new nail on the aching tooth of a sufferer and then knock the nail into a door, a beam, or a joist.²¹⁷ The procedure in North Africa is similar. You write certain Arabic letters and numbers on the wall; then, while the patient puts a finger on the aching tooth, you knock a nail, with a light tap of a hammer, into the first letter on the wall, reciting a verse of the Coran as you do so. Next you ask the sufferer whether the pain is now abated, and if he says "Yes" you draw out the nail entirely. But if he says "No," you shift the nail to the next letter in the wall, and so on, till the pain goes away, which it always does, sooner or later.²¹⁸ A Bohemian who fears he is about to have an attack of fever will snatch up the first thing that comes to hand and nail it to the wall.

²¹⁵ R. C. Maclagan, "Notes on folk-lore Objects collected in Argyleshire," *Folk-lore*, vi. (1895) p. 158.

²¹⁶ R. Andree, *Braunschweiger Volkskunde* (Brunswick, 1896), p. 307.

²¹⁷ F. Chapiseau, *Le Folk-lore de la Beauce et du Perche* (Paris, 1902), i. 170.

²¹⁸ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), pp. 228 sq.

That keeps the fever from him.²¹⁹

Devils and ghosts nailed down in Morocco, Tunis, and Egypt. Headache nailed into a door or a wall. Plague pegged into a hole.

As in Europe we nail toothache or fever to a wall, so in Morocco they nail devils. A house in Mogador having been infested with devils, who threw stones about it in a way that made life a burden to the inmates, a holy man was called in to exorcise them, which he did effectually by pronouncing an incantation and driving a nail into the wall; at every stroke of the hammer a hissing sound announced that another devil had received his quietus.²²⁰ Among the modern Arabs the soul of a murdered man must be nailed down. Thus if a man be murdered in Egypt, his ghost will rise from the ground where his blood was shed: but it can be prevented from doing so by driving a new nail, which has never been used, into the earth at the spot where the murder was committed. In Tripoli the practice is similar. Some years ago a native was murdered close to the door of a little Italian inn. Immediately the Arabs of the neighbourhood thronged thither and effectually laid the ghost with hammer and nail. When the innkeeper rashly attempted to remove the nail, he was warned that to do so would be to set the ghost free.²²¹ In modern Egypt

²¹⁹ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, p. 116, § 1172.

²²⁰ A. Leared, *Morocco and the Moors* (London, 1876), pp. 275 *sqq.*

²²¹ R. C. Thompson, *Semitic Magic* (London, 1908), p. 17. It would seem that

numbers of people afflicted with headache used to knock a nail into the great wooden door of the old south gate of Cairo, for the purpose of charming away the pain; others who suffered from toothache used to extract a tooth and insert it in a crevice of the door, or fix it in some other way, in order to be rid of toothache for the future. A holy and miraculous personage, invisible to mortal eyes, was supposed to have one of his stations at this gate.²²² In Mosul also a sheikh can cure headache by first laying his hands on the sufferer's head and then hammering a nail into a wall.²²³ Not far from Neuenkirchen, in Oldenburg, there is a farmhouse to which, while the Thirty Years' War was raging, the plague came lounging along from the neighbouring town in the shape of a bluish vapour. Entering the house it popped into a hole in the door-post of one of the rooms. The farmer saw his chance, and quick as thought he seized a peg and hammered it into the hole, so that the plague could not possibly get out. After a time, however, thinking the danger was past, he drew out the peg. Alas! with the peg came creeping and curling out of the hole the blue vapour once more. The plague thus let loose seized on

in Macedonia demons and ghosts can be hammered into walls. See G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 221. In Chittagong, as soon as a coffin has been carried out of the house, a nail is knocked into the threshold "to prevent death from entering the dwelling, at least for a time." See Th. Bérengier, "Les funérailles à Chittagong," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xiii. (1881) p. 504.

²²² E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Paisley and London, 1895), ch. x. p. 240.

²²³ R. C. Thompson, *Semitic Magic* (London, 1908), p. 18.

every member of the family in that unhappy house and left not one of them alive.²²⁴ Again, the great plague which devastated the ancient world in the reign of Marcus Antoninus is said to have originated in the curiosity and greed of some Roman soldiers, who, pillaging the city of Seleucia, came upon a narrow hole in a temple and incautiously enlarged the opening in the expectation of discovering treasure. But that which came forth from the hole was not treasure but the plague. It had been pent up in a secret chamber by the magic art of the Chaldeans; but now, released from its prison by the rash act of the spoilers, it stalked abroad and spread death and destruction from the Euphrates to the Nile and the Atlantic.²²⁵

Plague nailed down in ancient Rome.

The simple ceremony, in which to this day the superstition of European peasants sees a sovereign remedy for plague and fever and toothache, has come down to us from a remote antiquity; for in days when as yet Paris and London were not, when France still revered the Druids as the masters of all knowledge, human and divine, and when our own country was still covered with virgin forests, the home of savage beasts and savage men, the same ceremony was solemnly performed from time to time by the highest magistrate at Rome, to stay the ravages of pestilence or retrieve disaster that threatened the foundations of the national

²²⁴ L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg*, ii. 120, § 428 a. A similar story is told of a house in Neuenburg (*op. cit.* ii. 182, § 512 c).

²²⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiii. 6. 24.

life. In the fourth century before our era the city of Rome was desolated by a great plague which raged for three years, carrying off some of the highest dignitaries and a great multitude of common folk. The historian who records the calamity informs us that when a banquet had been offered to the gods in vain, and neither human counsels nor divine help availed to mitigate the violence of the disease, it was resolved for the first time in Roman history to institute dramatical performances as an appropriate means of appeasing the wrath of the celestial powers. Accordingly actors were fetched from Etruria, who danced certain simple and decorous dances to the music of a flute. But even this novel spectacle failed to amuse or touch, to move to tears or laughter the sullen gods. The plague still raged, and at the very moment when the actors were playing their best in the circus beside the Tiber, the yellow river rose in angry flood and drove players and spectators, wading and splashing through the fast-deepening waters, away from the show. It was clear that the gods spurned plays as well as prayers and banquets; and in the general consternation it was felt that some more effectual measure should be taken to put an end to the scourge. Old men remembered that a plague had once been stayed by the knocking of a nail into a wall; and accordingly the Senate resolved that now in their extremity, when all other means had failed, a supreme magistrate should be appointed for the sole purpose of performing this solemn ceremony. The appointment was made, the nail was knocked,

and the plague ceased, sooner or later.²²⁶ What better proof could be given of the saving virtue of a nail?

Pestilence and civil discord nailed into a wall in Rome.

Twice more within the same century the Roman people had recourse to the same venerable ceremony as a cure for public calamities with which the ordinary remedies, civil and religious, seemed unable to cope. One of these occasions was a pestilence;²²⁷ the other was a strange mortality among the leading men, which public opinion traced, rightly or wrongly, to a series of nefarious crimes perpetrated by noble matrons, who took their husbands off by poison. The crimes, real or imaginary, were set down to frenzy, and nothing could be thought of so likely to minister to minds diseased as the knocking of a nail into a wall. Search among the annals of the city proved that in a season of civil discord, when the state had been rent by party feud, the same time-honoured remedy, the same soothing balm, had been applied with the happiest results to the jarring interests and heated passions of the disputants. Accordingly the old nostrum was tried once more, and again success appeared to justify the experiment.²²⁸

The annual ceremony of knocking in a nail at Rome.

²²⁶ Livy, vii. 1-3. The plague raged from 365 to 363 b. c., when it was happily stayed in the manner described in the text.

²²⁷ Livy, ix. 28. This happened in the year 313 b. c.

²²⁸ Livy, viii. 18. These events took place in 331 b. c.

If the Romans in the fourth century before Christ thus deemed it possible to rid themselves of pestilence, frenzy, and sedition by hammering them into a wall, even as French and German peasants still rid themselves of fever and toothache by knocking them into a tree, their prudent ancestors appear to have determined that so salutary a measure should not be restricted in its scope to meeting special and urgent emergencies as they arose, but should regularly diffuse its benefits over the community by anticipating and, as it were, nipping in the bud evils which, left unchecked, might grow to dangerous proportions. This, we may conjecture, was the original intention of an ancient Roman law which ordained that the highest magistrate of the republic should knock in a nail every year on the thirteenth day of September. The law might be seen, couched in old-fashioned language, engraved on a tablet which was fastened to a wall of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter; and although the place where the nails were driven in is nowhere definitely stated by classical writers, there are some grounds for thinking that it may have been the same wall on which the law that sanctioned the custom was exhibited. Livy tells us that the duty of affixing the nail, at one time discharged by the consuls, was afterwards committed to dictators, whose higher rank consorted better with the dignity and importance of the function. At a later time the custom fell into abeyance, and the ancient ceremony was revived only from time to time in seasons of grave peril or extraordinary calamity, which seemed to attest the displeasure of the gods at modern

ways, and disposed men to bethink them of ancestral lore and to walk in the old paths.²²⁹

The ceremony was probably a purificatory rite designed to disarm and disable all evils that might threaten the Roman state in the course of the year. Roman cure for epilepsy.

In antiquity the annual practice of hammering a nail into a wall was not confined to Rome. It was observed also at Vulsinii, in Etruria, where the nails thus fixed in the temple of the goddess Nortia served as a convenient means of recording and numbering the years.²³⁰ To Roman antiquaries of a later period it seemed, naturally enough, that such a practice had indeed no other object than that of marking the flight of time

²²⁹ Livy, vii. 3. Livy says nothing as to the place where the nails were affixed; but from Festus (p. 56 ed. C. O. Müller) we learn that it was the wall of a temple, and as the date of the ceremony was also the date of the dedication of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol (Plutarch, *Publicola*, 14), we may fairly conjecture that this temple was the scene of the rite. It is the more necessary to call attention to the uncertainty which exists on this point because modern writers, perhaps misunderstanding the words of Livy, have commonly stated as a fact what is at best only a more or less probable hypothesis. Octavian seems to have provided for the knocking of a nail into the temple of Mars by men who had held the office of censor. See Dio Cassius, iv. 10, ἤλόν τε αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τῶν τιμητευσάντων προσπήγνυσθαι.

²³⁰ Livy, vii. 3. Festus speaks (p. 56 ed. C. O. Müller) of “the annual nail, which was fixed in the walls of temples for the purpose of numbering the years,” as if the practice were common. From Cicero's passing reference to the custom (“*Ex hoc die clavum anni movebis*,” *Epist. ad Atticum*, v. 15. 1) we see that it was matter of notoriety. Hence we may safely reject Mommsen's theory, which Mr. W. Warde Fowler is disposed to accept (*The Roman Festivals of the period of the Republic*, London, 1899, pp. 234 sq.), that the supposed annual custom never existed except in the brains of Roman Dryasdusts.

in ages when writing was but little used.²³¹ Yet a little reflection will probably convince us that this, though it was doubtless a useful consequence of the custom, can hardly have been its original intention. For it will scarcely be disputed that the annual observance of the custom cannot be wholly dissociated from its occasional observance in seasons of great danger or calamity, and that whatever explanation we give of the one ought to apply to the other also. Now it is plain that if we start from the annual observance and regard it as no more than a timekeeper or mode of recording the years, we shall never reach an adequate explanation of the occasional observance. If the nails were merely ready reckoners of the years, how could they come to be used as supreme remedies for pestilence, frenzy, and sedition, resorted to by the state in desperate emergencies when all the ordinary resources of policy and religion had failed? On the other hand, if we start from the occasional observance and view it, in accordance with modern analogies, as a rude attempt to dispose of intangible evils as if they were things that could be handled and put away out of sight, we can readily understand how such an attempt, from being made occasionally, might come to be repeated annually for the sake of wiping out all the old troubles and misfortunes of the past year and enabling the community to start afresh, unencumbered by a fardel of ills, at the beginning of a new year. Fortunately we can shew that the analogy which is thus assumed to exist between the Roman custom and modern

²³¹ See Livy and Festus, *ll. cc.*

superstition is not a merely fanciful one; in other words, it can be proved that the Romans, like modern clowns, did believe in the possibility of nailing down trouble, in a literal and physical sense, into a material substance. Pliny tells us that an alleged cure for epilepsy, or the falling sickness, was to drive an iron nail into the ground on the spot which was first struck by the patient's head as he fell.²³² In the light of the modern instances which have come before us, we can hardly doubt that the cure was supposed to consist in actually nailing the disease into the earth in such a way that it could not get up and attack the sufferer again. Precisely parallel is a Suffolk cure for ague. You must go by night alone to a cross-road, and just as the clock strikes the midnight hour you must turn yourself about thrice and drive a tenpenny nail up to the head into the ground. Then walk away backwards from the spot before the clock is done striking twelve, and you will miss the ague; but the next person who passes over the nail will catch the malady in your stead.²³³ Here it is plainly

²³² Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 63.

²³³ *County Folk-lore, Suffolk*, edited by Lady E. C. Gurdon (London, 1893), p. 14. In the north-west Highlands of Scotland it used to be customary to bury a black cock alive on the spot where an epileptic patient fell down. Along with the cock were buried parings of the patient's nails and a lock of his hair. See (Sir) Arthur Mitchell, *On various Superstitions in the North-West Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 26; J. G. Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1902), p. 97. Probably the disease was supposed to be buried with the cock in the ground. The ancient Hindoos imagined that epilepsy was caused by a dog-demon. When a boy fell down in a fit, his father or other competent person used to wrap the sufferer in a net, and carry him into the hall, not through the door, but

assumed that the ague of which the patient is relieved has been left by him nailed down into the earth at the cross-road, and we may fairly suppose that a similar assumption underlay the Roman cure for epilepsy. Further, we seem to be now justified in holding that originally, when a Roman dictator sought to stay a plague, to restore concord, or to terminate an epidemic of madness by knocking a nail into a wall, he was doing for the commonwealth exactly what any private man might do for an epileptic patient by knocking a nail into the ground on the spot where his poor friend had collapsed. In other words, he was hammering the plague, the discord, or the madness into a hole from which it could not get out to afflict the community again.²³⁴

Knocking nails into idols as a means of attracting the attention of the deity or spirit.

Different in principle from the foregoing customs appears to

through an opening made for the purpose in the roof. Then taking up some earth in the middle of the hall, at the place where people gambled, he sprinkled the spot with water, cast dice on it, and laid the boy on his back on the dice. After that he prayed to the dog-demon, saying, "Doggy, let him loose! Reverence be to thee, barker, bender! Doggy, let him loose! Reverence be to thee, barker, bender!" See *The Grihya Sutras*, translated by H. Oldenberg, Part i. (Oxford, 1886) pp. 296 *sq.*; *id.* Part ii. (Oxford, 1892) pp. 219 *sq.*, 286 *sq.* (*Sacred Books of the East*, vols. xxix. and xxx.). Apparently the place where people gambled was for some reason supposed to be a spot where an epileptic could divest himself most readily of his malady. But the connexion of thought is obscure.

²³⁴ The analogy of the Roman custom to modern superstitious practices has been rightly pointed out by Mr. E. S. Hartland (*Folk-lore*, iv. (1893) pp. 457, 464; *Legend of Perseus*, ii. 188), but I am unable to accept his general explanation of these and some other practices as modes of communion with a divinity.

be the Loango practice of sticking nails into wooden idols or fetishes. The intention of knocking a nail into a worshipful image is said to be simply to attract the notice of the deity in a forcible manner to the request of his worshipper; it is like pinching a man or running a pin into his leg as a hint that you desire to speak with him. Hence in order to be quite sure of riveting the god's attention the nails are sometimes made red-hot.²³⁵ Even the most absent-minded deity could hardly overlook a petition urged in so importunate a fashion. The practice is resorted to in many emergencies. For example, when a man has been robbed, he will go and get a priest to knock a nail into an idol. The sharp pang naturally exasperates the deity and he seeks to wreak his wrath on the thief, who is the real occasion of his suffering. So when the thief hears of what has been done, he brings back the stolen goods in fear and trembling. Similarly a nail may be knocked into an idol for the purpose of making somebody fall ill; and if a sick man fancies that his illness is due to an enemy who has played him this trick, he will send to the priest of the idol and pay him to remove the nail.²³⁶ This mode of refreshing the

²³⁵ A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste* (Jena, 1874-1875), ii. 176.

²³⁶ A. Bastian, *op. cit.* ii. 175-178. Compare Father Campana, "Congo, Mission Catholique de Landana," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxvii. (1895) p. 93; *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, i. (Brussels, 1902-1906) pp. 153, 246; B. H. Mullen, "Fetishes from Landana, South-West Africa," *Man*, v. (1905) pp. 102-104; R. E. Dennett, "Bavili Notes," *Folk-lore*, xvi. (1905) pp. 382 *sqq.*; *id.*, *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind* (London, 1906), pp. 85 *sqq.*, 91 *sqq.* The Ethnological Museum at Berlin possesses a number of rude images from

memory and stimulating the activity of a supernatural being is not confined to the negroes of Loango; it is practised also by French Catholics, as we learn from Sir John Rhys. "Some years ago," he writes, "when I was on a visit at the late Ernest Renan's house at Rosmapamon, near Perros-Guirec on the north coast of Brittany, our genial host took his friends one day to see some of the sights of that neighbourhood. Among other things which he showed us was a statue of St. Guirec standing at the head of an open creek. It was of wood, and altogether a very rude work of art, if such it might be called; but what attracted our attention most was the fact that it had innumerable pins stuck into it. We asked M. Renan what the pins meant, and his explanation was exceedingly quaint. He said that when any young woman in the neighbourhood made up her mind that she should marry, she came there and asked the saint to provide her with a husband, and to do so without undue delay. She had every confidence in the willingness and ability of the saint to oblige her, but she was haunted by the fear that he might be otherwise engaged and forget her request. So she would stick pins into him, and thus goad him, as she fancied, to exert himself on her behalf. This is why the saint's statue was full of pins."²³⁷ Similarly in Japan sufferers from toothache sometimes stick needles into a willow-tree, "believing that the pain caused

Loango and Congo, which are thickly studded with nails hammered into their bodies. The intention of the custom, as explained to me by Professor von Luschan, is to pain the fetish and so to refresh his memory, lest he should forget to do his duty.

²³⁷ Sir John Rhys, "Celtae and Galli," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, ii. (1905-1906) pp. 114 sq.

to the tree-spirit will force it to exercise its power to cure.”²³⁸

Two different spiritual applications of nails or pins.

Thus it would seem that we must distinguish at least two uses of nails or pins in their application to spirits and spiritual influences. In one set of cases the nails act as corks or bungs to bottle up and imprison a troublesome spirit; in the other set of cases they act as spurs or goads to refresh his memory and stimulate his activity. But so far as the evidence which I have cited allows us to judge, the use of nails as spiritual bungs appears to be commoner than their use as mental refreshers.

²³⁸ Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (London, 1894), ii. 598 *sq.*, note.

Chapter II. The Omnipresence of Demons

Attempts to get rid of the accumulated sorrows of a whole people.

In the foregoing chapter the primitive principle of the transference of ills to another person, animal, or thing was explained and illustrated. A consideration of the means taken, in accordance with this principle, to rid individuals of their troubles and distresses led us to believe that at Rome similar means had been adopted to free the whole community, at a single blow of the hammer, from diverse evils that afflicted it. I now propose to shew that such attempts to dismiss at once the accumulated sorrows of a people are by no means rare or exceptional, but that on the contrary they have been made in many lands, and that from being occasional they tend to become periodic and annual.

Sorrows conceived of as the work of demons.

It needs some effort on our part to realise the frame of mind which prompts these attempts. Bred in a philosophy which strips nature of personality and reduces it to the unknown cause of an orderly series of impressions on our senses, we find it hard to put ourselves in the place of the savage, to whom the same impressions appear in the guise of spirits or the handiwork of

spirits. For ages the army of spirits, once so near, has been receding further and further from us, banished by the magic wand of science from hearth and home, from ruined cell and ivied tower, from haunted glade and lonely mere, from the riven murky cloud that belches forth the lightning, and from those fairer clouds that pillow the silver moon or fret with flakes of burning red the golden eve. The spirits are gone even from their last stronghold in the sky, whose blue arch no longer passes, except with children, for the screen that hides from mortal eyes the glories of the celestial world. Only in poets' dreams or impassioned flights of oratory is it given to catch a glimpse of the last flutter of the standards of the retreating host, to hear the beat of their invisible wings, the sound of their mocking laughter, or the swell of angel music dying away in the distance. Far otherwise is it with the savage. To his imagination the world still teems with those motley beings whom a more sober philosophy has discarded. Fairies and goblins, ghosts and demons, still hover about him both waking and sleeping. They dog his footsteps, dazzle his senses, enter into him, harass and deceive and torment him in a thousand freakish and mischievous ways. The mishaps that befall him, the losses he sustains, the pains he has to endure, he commonly sets down, if not to the magic of his enemies, to the spite or anger or caprice of the spirits. Their constant presence wearies him, their sleepless malignity exasperates him; he longs with an unspeakable longing to be rid of them altogether, and from time to time, driven to bay, his patience utterly exhausted,

he turns fiercely on his persecutors and makes a desperate effort to chase the whole pack of them from the land, to clear the air of their swarming multitudes, that he may breathe more freely and go on his way unmolested, at least for a time. Thus it comes about that the endeavour of primitive people to make a clean sweep of all their troubles generally takes the form of a grand hunting out and expulsion of devils or ghosts. They think that if they can only shake off these their accursed tormentors, they will make a fresh start in life, happy and innocent; the tales of Eden and the old poetic golden age will come true again.

Primitive belief in the omnipresence of demons.

Hence, before we review some examples of these spirit-hunts, it may be well to adduce evidence of the deep hold which a belief in the omnipresence and malignity of spirits has upon the primitive mind. The reader will be better able to understand the savage remedy when he has an inkling of the nature of the evil which it is designed to combat. In citing the evidence I shall for the most part reproduce the exact words of my authorities lest I should incur the suspicion of deepening unduly the shadows in a gloomy picture.

Demons in Australia and West Africa.

Thus in regard to the aborigines of Australia we are told that "the number of supernatural beings, feared if not loved, that they acknowledge is exceedingly great; for not only are the heavens peopled with such, but the whole face of the country swarms

with them; every thicket, most watering-places, and all rocky places abound with evil spirits. In like manner, every natural phenomenon is believed to be the work of demons, none of which seem of a benign nature, one and all apparently striving to do all imaginable mischief to the poor blackfellow.”²³⁹ “The negro,” says another writer, “is wont to regard the whole world around him as peopled with invisible beings, to whom he imputes every misfortune that happens to him, and from whose harmful influence he seeks to protect himself by all kinds of magic means.”²⁴⁰ The Bantu negroes of Western Africa “regard their god as the creator of man, plants, animals, and the earth, and they hold that having made them, he takes no further interest in the affair. But not so the crowd of spirits with which the universe is peopled, they take only too much interest, and the Bantu wishes they would not and is perpetually saying so in his prayers, a large percentage whereof amounts to, ‘Go away, we don't want you.’ ‘Come not into this house, this village, or its plantations.’ ” Almost all these subordinate spirits are malevolent.²⁴¹ A similar but fuller account of the West African creed is given by a German writer, whose statements apply particularly to the Ewe-speaking negroes of the Slave Coast. He

²³⁹ A. Oldfield, “The Aborigines of Australia,” *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, N.S., iii. (1865) p. 228.

²⁴⁰ J. Büttikoffer, “Einiges über die Eingebornen von Liberia,” *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, i. (1888) p. 85.

²⁴¹ Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897) pp. 442 sq.

says: "Thus the term fetishism denotes the attitude of the Ewes, or of West African negro tribes in general, towards magic; it forms one of the principal constituents of their religion. The other main constituent is their attitude to the gods, which is properly demonolatry. The Ewe names the gods *drowo*, that is, intermediaries, namely, between a Supreme Being, whom he calls *Mawu* ('the Unsurpassable'), and mankind. The *drowo* with whom the Ewe has to do, to whom his offerings and his respects are paid, are thus subordinate deities, who according to the etymological meaning of the word *dro* are conceived as judging, composing disputes, and mediating among men. The existence of a Supreme Being is by no means unfamiliar to the Ewe; he has his *Mawu* often in his mouth, especially in talking with the missionary, and he willingly acknowledges that *Mawu* created him and the gods. But he can only conceive of this Supreme Being on the analogy of his own personality and not as omnipresent and so forth. It is impossible that this *Mawu* can trouble himself about details in the creation or even about every individual man and his petty affairs; what would be the use of the many higher and lower spirits with which the world is filled before his eyes? The West African perhaps conceives of God as transcendent, but not as immanent; a creation he possibly apprehends, but not an omnipresent government of the world by the Supreme Being. That government is carried on by *Mawu* at a distance by means of the many spirits or subordinate gods whom he has created for the purpose... A portion of the gods fills the

air, wherefore the forces and the phenomena of nature are deified as their manifestations. The elements are thought to be moved by the gods of the air. In the storm and the wind, in thunder and lightning the Ewe sees the manifestation of particularly powerful gods. In the mysterious roll and roar of the deep sea the Ewe, like the negro in general, beholds the sway of a very mighty god or of a whole host of gods. Further, the earth itself is also the abode of a multitude of spirits or gods, who have in it their sphere of activity. They inhabit certain great mountains, great hollow trees, caves, rivers, and especially woods. In such woods of the gods no timber may be felled. Thus the gods fill not only the air and the sea, they also walk on earth, on all paths; they lurk under the trees, they terrify the lonely wayfarer, they disquiet and plague even the sleeper. When the negro rises from the stool on which he has been sitting, he never fails to turn it upside down, to prevent a spirit from sitting down on it... The spirit-world falls into two main classes: there are good and kindly spirits, whose help is eagerly sought by offerings; but there are also gloomy and revengeful spirits, whose approach and influence people eagerly endeavour to avert, and against whom all possible means are employed to ban them from the houses and villages. The people are much more zealous in their devotion to the evil spirits than in their devotion to the good. The reason is that the feeling of fear and the consciousness of guilt are much stronger than the emotions of love and gratitude for benefits received. Hence the worship of the false gods or spirits among this people, and among

the West African negro tribes in general, is properly speaking a worship of demons or devils.”²⁴²

Demons on the Congo. Demons in South Africa.

Again, a missionary who spent fifteen years among the Boloki of the Upper Congo River tells us that “the religion of the Boloki has its basis in their fear of those numerous invisible spirits which surround them on every side, and are constantly trying to compass their sickness, misfortune and death; and the Boloki's sole object in practising their religion is to cajole, or appease, cheat, or conquer and kill those spirits that trouble them – hence their *nganga* [medicine-men], their rites, their ceremonies and their charms. If there were no evil spirits to be circumvented there would be no need of their medicine men and their charms.”²⁴³ “The Boloki folk believe they are surrounded by spirits which try to thwart them at every twist and turn, and to harm them every hour of the day and night. The rivers and creeks are crowded with the spirits of their ancestors, and the

²⁴² G. Zündel, “Land und Volk der Eweer auf der Scлавenküste in Westafrika,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, xii. (1877) pp. 412-414. Full details as to the religious creed of the Ewes, including their belief in a Supreme Being (*Mawu*), are given, to a great extent in the words of the natives themselves, by the German missionary Jakob Spieth in his elaborate and valuable works *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906) and *Die Religion der Eweer in Süd-Togo* (Leipsic, 1911). As to *Mawu* in particular, the meaning of whose name is somewhat uncertain, see J. Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme*, pp. 421 *sqq.*; *Die Religion der Eweer in Süd-Togo*, pp. 15 *sqq.*

²⁴³ Rev. J. H. Weeks, “Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo River,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xl. (1910) p. 377.

forests and bush are full also of spirits, ever seeking to injure the living who are overtaken by night when travelling by road or canoe. I never met among them a man daring enough to go at night through the forest that divided Monsembe from the upper villages, even though a large reward was offered. Their invariable reply was: 'There are too many spirits in the bush and forest.'²⁴⁴ The spirits which these people dread so much are the *mingoli* or disembodied souls of the dead; the life of the Boloki is described as "one long drawn out fear of what the *mingoli* may next do to them." These dangerous beings dwell everywhere, land and water are full of them; they are ever ready to pounce on the living and carry them away or to smite them with disease and kill them. Though they are invisible to common eyes, the medicine-man can see them, and can cork them up in calabashes or cover them up with saucapans; indeed, if it is made worth his while, he can even destroy them altogether.²⁴⁵ Again, of the Bantu tribes of

²⁴⁴ Rev. John H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals* (London, 1913), p. 261.

²⁴⁵ Rev. J. H. Weeks, "Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo River," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xl. (1910) pp. 368, 370. The singular form of *mingoli* is *mongoli*, "a disembodied spirit." Compare *id.*, *Among Congo Cannibals* (London, 1913), p. 252; and again *ibid.* p. 275. But great as is the fear of evil spirits among the natives of the Congo, their dread of witchcraft seems to be still more intense. See Rev. J. H. Weeks, "Notes on some Customs of the Lower Congo People," *Folk-lore*, xx. (1909) pp. 51 *sq.*: "The belief in witchcraft affects their lives in a vast number of ways, and touches them socially at a hundred different points. It regulates their actions, modifies their mode of thought and speech, controls their conduct towards each other, causes cruelty and callousness in a people not naturally cruel, and sets the various members of a family against each other. A man may believe any theory he likes about creation, about God, and about the abode of departed spirits,

South Africa we read that “nearer than the spirits of deceased chiefs or of their own ancestors was a whole host of hobgoblins, water sprites, and malevolent demons, who met the Bantu turn which way they would. There was no beautiful fairyland for them, for all the beings who haunted the mountains, the plains, and the rivers were ministers of evil. The most feared of these was a large bird that made love to women and incited those who returned its affection to cause the death of those who did not, and a little mischievous imp who was also amorously inclined. Many instances could be gathered from the records of magistrates' courts in recent years of demented women having admitted their acquaintance with these fabulous creatures, as well as of whole communities living in terror of them.”²⁴⁶ However, it would be no doubt a great mistake to imagine that the minds of the Bantu, or indeed of any savages, are perpetually occupied by a dread of evil spirits;²⁴⁷ the savage and indeed the civilized man is incapable,

but he must believe in witches and their influence for evil, and must in unmistakable terms give expression to that belief, or be accused of witchcraft himself... But for witchcraft no one would die, and the earnest longing of all right-minded men and women is to clear it out of the country by killing every discovered witch. It is an act of self-preservation... Belief in witches is interwoven into the very fibre of every Bantu-speaking man and woman, and the person who does not believe in them is a monster, a witch, to be killed as soon as possible.” Could we weigh against each other the two great terrors which beset the minds of savages all over the world, it seems probable that the dread of witches would be found far to outweigh the dread of evil spirits. However, it is the fear of evil spirits with which we are at present concerned.

²⁴⁶ G. McCall Theal, *Records of South-Eastern Africa*, vii. (1901) pp. 405 sq.

²⁴⁷ On this subject Mr. Dudley Kidd has made some judicious observations (*Savage Childhood*, London, 1906, pp. 131 sq.). He says: “The Kafirs certainly do not live in

at least in his normal state, of such excessive preoccupation with a single idea, which, if prolonged, could hardly fail to end in insanity.

Demons in South America.

Speaking of the spirits which the Indians of Guiana attribute to all objects in nature, Sir Everard F. im Thurn observes that “the whole world of the Indian swarms with these beings. If by a mighty mental effort we could for a moment revert to a similar mental position, we should find ourselves everywhere surrounded by a host of possibly hurtful beings, so many in number that to describe them as innumerable would fall ridiculously short of the truth. It is not therefore wonderful that the Indian fears to move beyond the light of his camp-fire after dark, or, if he is obliged to do so, carries a fire-brand with him that he may at least see among what enemies he walks; nor is it wonderful that occasionally the air round the settlement seems to the Indian to grow so full of beings, that a peaiman [sorcerer], who is supposed to have the power of temporarily driving them away, is employed to effect a general clearance of these beings, if only for a time. That is the main belief, of the kind that is generally called religious, of the Indians of Guiana.”²⁴⁸ The Lengua Indians of

everlasting dread of spirits, for the chief part of their life is not spent in thinking at all. A merrier set of people it would be hard to find. They are so easy-going that it would seem to them too much burden to be for ever thinking of spirits.”

²⁴⁸ (Sir) E. F. im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*. (London, 1883), pp. 356 sq. As to the dread which the Brazilian Indians entertain of demons, see J. B. von Spix and C. F. Ph. von Martius, *Reise in Brasilien* (Munich, 1823-1831), iii. 1108-1111.

the Paraguayan Chaco believe in certain demons which they call *kilyikhama*. “The *kilyikhama* are confined to no particular place. Time and distance do not seem to affect them in the least. They are held in great awe by the Indian, and whithersoever he turns, whether by day or night, but particularly at night, he is subject to their malign influences... They live in constant dread of these supernatural beings, and if nothing else contributed to make their life miserable, this ever-present dread of the *kilyikhama* would be in itself quite sufficient to rob it of most of its joy.”²⁴⁹

Demons in Labrador.

Very different from the life of these Indians of the South American forests and prairies is the life of the Esquimaux on the desolate shores of Labrador; yet they too live in like bondage to the evil creatures of their own imagination. “All the affairs of life are supposed to be under the control of spirits, each of which rules over a certain element, and all of which are under the direction of a greater spirit. Each person is supposed to be attended by a special guardian who is malignant in character, ever ready to seize upon the least occasion to work harm upon the individual whom it accompanies. As this is an evil spirit, its good offices and assistance can be obtained by propitiation only. The person strives to keep the good-will of the evil spirit by offerings of food, water, and clothing.” “Besides this class of spirits, there are the spirits of the sea, the land, the sky (for be it

²⁴⁹ W. Barbrooke Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1911), pp. 118, 119.

understood that the Eskimo know nothing of the air), the winds, the clouds, and everything in nature. Every cove of the sea-shore, every point, island, and prominent rock has its guardian spirit. All are of the malignant type, and to be propitiated only by acceptable offerings from persons who desire to visit the locality where it is supposed to reside. Of course some of the spirits are more powerful than others, and these are more to be dreaded than those able to inflict less harm. These minor spirits are under the control of the great spirit, whose name is Tung ak. This one great spirit is more powerful than all the rest besides. The lesser spirits are immediately under his control and ever ready to obey his command. The shaman (or conjuror) alone is supposed to be able to deal with the Tung ak. While the shaman does not profess to be superior to the Tung ak, he is able to enlist his assistance and thus be able to control all the undertakings his profession may call for. This Tung ak is nothing more or less than death, which ever seeks to torment and harass the lives of people that their spirits may go to dwell with him.”²⁵⁰

Demons in Polynesia. Demons in New Zealand.

Brighter at first sight and more pleasing is the mythology of the islanders of the Pacific, as the picture of it is drawn for us by one who seems to have felt the charm of those beliefs which it was his mission to destroy. “By their rude mythology,” he says, “each lovely island was made a sort of fairy-land, and the spells of

²⁵⁰ L. M. Turner, “Ethnology of the Ungava District, Hudson Bay Territory,” *Eleventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, 1894), pp. 193 sq.

enchantment were thrown over its varied scenes. The sentiment of the poet that

‘Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep,’

was one familiar to their minds; and it is impossible not to feel interested in a people who were accustomed to consider themselves surrounded by invisible intelligences, and who recognized in the rising sun – the mild and silver moon – the shooting star – the meteor's transient flame – the ocean's roar – the tempest's blast, or the evening breeze – the movements of mighty spirits. The mountain's summit, and the fleecy mists that hang upon its brows – the rocky defile – the foaming cataract – and the lonely dell – were all regarded as the abode or resort of these invisible beings.”²⁵¹ Yet the spiritual powers which compassed the life of the islanders on every side appear to have been far from friendly to man. Speaking of their beliefs touching the souls of the dead, the same writer says that the Polynesians “imagined they lived in a world of spirits, which surrounded them night and day, watching every action of their lives, and ready to avenge the slightest neglect or the least disobedience to their injunctions, as proclaimed by their priests. These dreaded beings were seldom thought to resort to the habitations of men

²⁵¹ W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832-1836), i. 331.

on errands of benevolence.”²⁵² The Tahitians, when they were visited by Captain Cook, believed that “sudden deaths and all other accidents are effected by the immediate action of some divinity. If a man only stumble against a stone and hurt his toe, they impute it to an *Eatooa*; so that they may be literally said, agreeably to their system, to tread enchanted ground.”²⁵³ “The Maori gods,” says a well-informed writer, “were demons, whose evil designs could only be counteracted by powerful spells and charms; these proving effectual, sacrifices and offerings were made to soothe the vanquished spirits and appease their wrath.” “The gods in general appeared in the whirlwind and lightning, answering their votaries in the clap of thunder. The inferior beings made themselves visible in the form of lizards, moths, butterflies, spiders, and even flies; when they spoke it was in a low whistling tone. They were supposed to be so numerous as to surround the living in crowds, *kei te muia nga wairua penei nga wairoa*, ‘the spirits throng like mosquitoes,’ ever watching to inflict evil.”²⁵⁴

Demons in the Pelew Islands.

Again, we are informed that the popular religion of the Pelew Islanders “has reference to the gods (*kaliths*) who may be useful or harmful to men in all their doings. Their imagination peoples

²⁵² W. Ellis, *op. cit.* i. 406.

²⁵³ *The Voyages of Captain James Cook round the World* (London, 1809), vi. 152.

²⁵⁴ R. Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), p. 104.

the sea, the wood, the earth with numerous gods, and whatever a man undertakes, be it to catch fish or fell a tree, he must first propitiate the deities, or rather guard himself against their spiteful anger, which can only be done by means of certain spells and incantations. The knowledge of these incantations is limited to a very few persons, and forms in fact the secret of the arts and industries which are plied in the islands. A master of his craft is not he who can build a good house or a faultless canoe, but he who possesses the *golay* or magic power to ban the tree-gods, that they may not prove hurtful to the workmen and to the people who afterwards use the things. All these gods of the earth, the woods, the mountains, the brooks are very mischievous and dangerous, and most diseases are caused by them. Hence the persons who possess the magic power are dreaded, frequently employed, and well paid; but in extreme cases they are regarded as sorcerers and treated accordingly. If one of them builds a house for somebody and is dissatisfied with his remuneration, he stirs up the tree-god to avenge him. So the inhabitants of the house he has built fall sick, and if help is not forthcoming they die.”²⁵⁵ Of the Mortlock Islanders we are told that “their imagination peopled the whole of nature with spirits and deities, of whom the number was past finding out.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ J. Kubary, “Die Religion der Pelauer,” in A. Bastian's *Allerlei aus Volks- und Menschenkunde* (Berlin, 1888), i. 46.

²⁵⁶ J. Kubary, “Die Bewohner der Mortlock-Inseln,” *Mittheilungen der geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg*, 1878-79, p. 36.

Demons in the Philippines and in Melanesia.

Speaking of the natives of the Philippine Islands a writer observes that “the basis of all the superstitious beliefs of the Negritos, what might else be termed their religion, is the constant presence of the spirits of the dead near where they lived when alive. All places are inhabited by the spirits. All adverse circumstances, sickness, failure of crops, unsuccessful hunts, are attributed to them.”²⁵⁷ As to the Melanesians of New Britain we read that “another deeply rooted belief which exercises an extraordinary influence on the life and customs of these people is a belief in demons. To their thinking the demons, *tambaran* (a word synonymous with ‘poor wretch,’ ‘sufferer’) are spirits entirely perverse, deceitful, maleficent, and ceaselessly occupied in injuring us. Diseases, death, the perturbations of nature, all unfortunate events are imputed to them. The demons exist in legions; they live everywhere, especially in the forests, desert places, and the depths of the sea.”²⁵⁸ The beliefs and customs of one particular tribe of this great island – the Livuans, who occupy the eastern coast of the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain – have been described by a Catholic missionary in similar terms. “The distrustful natives,” he tells us, “have not attained to a belief in a beneficent, compassionate deity. All the more numerous,

²⁵⁷ W. A. Reed, *Negritos of Zambales* (Manilla, 1904), p. 65 (*Ethnological Survey Publications*, vol. ii. Part i.).

²⁵⁸ Mgr. Couppé “En Nouvelle-Poméranie,” *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxiii. (1891) pp. 355 sq.

however, are the evil spirits with which they people the universe. These are legion. The power which the natives ascribe to these spirits extends not merely to the property of mankind but also to life and death. The Livuan always believes that he can trace the pernicious influence of these *tambaran* (devils) on his actions. In his conviction, the whole thoughts and endeavours of the evil spirits have no other object than to injure men in every possible way. This dismal, comfortless superstition weighs heavy on the native.”²⁵⁹ Again, another writer who lived for thirty years among the Melanesians of the Bismarck Archipelago, of which New Britain forms part, observes that “we often find the view expressed that the native is a being who lives only for the day, without cares of any kind. The view is very erroneous, for in fact he leads a life which is plagued by cares of all sorts. Amongst the greatest plagues of his life is his bottomless superstition. He sees himself surrounded at every step by evil spirits and their influences. He trusts nobody, for who knows whether his nearest neighbour, his professedly best friend, is not plotting to bring trouble, sickness, and even death on him by means of magic? Everywhere he sees snares set for him, everywhere he scents treachery and guile. We need not wonder, therefore, that mistrust is a leading feature in the character not only of the New Britons, but of the Melanesians generally... The native is simply not

²⁵⁹ P. A. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel* (Hiltrup bei Münster, preface dated 1906), pp. 336 sq. Compare Joachim Graf Pfeil, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee* (Brunswick, 1899), p. 159; *id.*, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxvii. (1898) pp. 183 sq.

accessible to rational motives. The only motive he understands is sorcery on the part of malicious men or the influence of evil spirits.”²⁶⁰

Demons in Dutch New Guinea and German New Guinea.

A Dutch missionary, who spent twenty-five years among the natives of Dutch New Guinea, tells us that “in their ignorance of a living God the Papuans people earth and air, land and sea with mysterious malignant powers, which take up their abode in stones and trees or in men and cause all kinds of misfortunes, especially sickness and death.”²⁶¹ Again, speaking of the Bukaua, a tribe of German New Guinea, a German missionary writes that “the Bukaua knows himself to be surrounded by spirits (*balum*) at every step. An insight into the life and mode of thought of the natives, as the latter is expressed especially in their stories, confirms this view completely. What wonder that the fear of spirits dominates the whole existence of the Bukaua and causes him to tremble even in the hour of death? There are spirits of the beach, the water, the fields, the forests, spirits that reside in the villages and particular places, and a sort of vagabonds, who can take up their abode even in lifeless things.” Then after describing the demons of the beach, the water, and the field,

²⁶⁰ R. Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (Stuttgart, 1907), pp. 120, 121.

²⁶¹ J. L. van Hasselt, “Die Papuastämme an der Geelvinkbai (Neu-guinea),” *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft zu Jena*, ix. (1891) p. 98. As to Mr. van Hasselt's twenty-five years' residence among these savages, see *id.*, p. 22.

the writer proceeds as follows: “Of forest spirits the number is infinite; for it is above all in the mysterious darkness, the tangled wildernesses of the virgin forest that the spirits love to dwell. They hold their meetings in what are called evil places. They are never bent on good. Especially at nightfall the native fancies he hears the voice of the spirits in the hum and chirping of the insects in the forest. They lure hunting dogs from the trail. They make wild boars rabid; in the form of snakes they make inroads into human dwellings; they drive men crazy or into fits; they play roguish tricks of all sorts.”²⁶²

Demons in British New Guinea.

Among the tribes who inhabit the south-eastern coasts of New Guinea “a death in a village is the occasion of bringing plenty of ghosts to escort their new companion, and perhaps fetch some one else. All night the friends of the deceased sit up and keep the drums going to drive away the spirits. When I was sleeping one night at Hood Bay, a party of young men and boys came round with sticks, striking the fences and posts of houses all through the village. This I found was always done when any one died, to drive back the spirits to their own quarters on the adjacent mountain tops. But it is the spirits of the inland tribes, the aborigines of the country, that the coast tribes most fear. The road from the interior to Port Moresby passed close to our house, and the natives told us that the barking of our English dog at night

²⁶² Stefan Lehner, “Bukaua,” in R. Neuhauss's *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, iii. (Berlin, 1911) pp. 414-416.

had frightened the evil spirits so effectually that they had had no ghostly visitors since we came. I was camping out one night in the bush with some coast natives, at a time when a number of the natives of the interior were hunting in the neighbourhood; noticing that the men with me did not go to sleep, I asked if they were afraid of the mountain men. 'No,' they replied, 'but the whole plain is full of the spirits who come with them.' All calamities are attributed to the power and malice of these evil spirits. Drought and famine, storm and flood, disease and death are all supposed to be brought by 'Vata' and his hosts."²⁶³

Demons in Timor and Celebes.

The inhabitants of Timor, an island to the south-west of New Guinea, revere the lord of heaven, the sun, the mistress of the earth, and the spirits of the dead. "These last dwell, some with the mistress of the earth under ground, others on graves, others in stones and springs and woods, some on mountains and some in the habitations of their kinsfolk, where they take up their abode in the middle of the principal post of the house or in copper cymbals, in swords and pikes. Others again assume the shape of pigs and deer and bees; men who have fallen in battle love especially to turn into bees, that they may roam over the earth at will. The ghosts who reside with the mistress of the earth are male and female, and their offspring swarm by myriads in the air, so that the people think you cannot stir without striking against

²⁶³ W. G. Lawes, "Notes on New Guinea and its Inhabitants," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1880, p. 615.

one of them. According to their whim of the moment the ghosts are good or bad.” “All diseases which are not due to infection or transmitted by inheritance are ascribed to the mistress of the earth, to the ghosts, and to their wicked offspring, who inflict them as punishments for insults and injuries, for insufficient food, for the killing of deer and of wild pigs, in which the ghosts take up their abode temporarily, and also for the sale of cymbals, swords and pikes, in which a ghost had settled.”²⁶⁴ The natives of Amboyna think that “woods, mountains, trees, stones, indeed the whole universe, is inhabited by a multitude of spirits, of whom many are the souls of the dead.”²⁶⁵ In Bolang Mongondo, a district of Celebes, “all calamities, great and small, of whatever kind, and by whatever name they are called, that befall men and animals, villages, gardens and so forth, are attributed to evil or angry spirits. The superstition is indescribably great. The smallest wound, the least indisposition, the most trifling adversity in the field, at the fishing, on a journey or what not, is believed by the natives to be traceable to the anger of their ancestors. The superstition cripples every effort to remedy the calamities except by sacrifice. There is perhaps no country the inhabitants of which know so little about simples as Bolang Mongondo. What a native of Bolang Mongondo calls medicine is nothing but sacrifice,

²⁶⁴ J. G. F. Riedel, “Die Landschaft Dawan oder West-Timor,” *Deutsche geographische Blätter*, x. 278 sq.

²⁶⁵ G. W. W. C. Baron van Hoëvell, *Ambon en meer bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers* (Dordrecht, 1875), p. 148.

magic, and talismans. And the method of curing a sick man always consists in the use of magic, or in the propitiation of angry ancestral spirits by means of offerings, or in the banishment of evil spirits. The application of one or other of these three methods depends again on the decision of the sorcerer, who plays a great part in every case of sickness.”²⁶⁶

Demons in Bali and Java.

In the island of Bali “all the attention paid to the sick has its root solely in the excessive superstition of these islanders, which leads them to impute every unpleasantness in life, every adversity to the influence of evil spirits or of men who are in some way in league with them. The belief in witches and wizards is everywhere great in the Indies, but perhaps nowhere is it so universal and so strong as in Bali.”²⁶⁷ In Java, we are told, it is not merely great shady trees that are believed to be the abode of spirits. “In other places also, where the vital energy of nature manifests itself strikingly and impressively, a feeling of veneration is stirred, as on the sea-shore, in deep woods, on steep mountain sides. All such spots are supposed to be the abode of spirits of various kinds, whose mighty power is regarded with reverence and awe, whose anger is dreaded, and whose favour

²⁶⁶ N. P. Wilken en J. A. Schwarz, “Het heidendom en de Islam in Bolaang Mongondou,” *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, xi. (1867) p. 259.

²⁶⁷ R. van Eck, “Schetsen van het eiland Bali,” *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, August, 1880, p. 83.

is hoped for. But wherever they dwell, whether in scenes of loveliness that move the heart, or in spots that affect the mind with fright and horror, the nature and disposition of these spirits appear not to differ. They are a source of fear and anxiety in the one case just as much as in the other. To none of them did I ever hear moral qualities ascribed. They are mighty, they are potentates, and therefore it is well with him who has their favour and ill with him who has it not; this holds true of them all.” “The number of the spirits is innumerable and inconceivable. All the phenomena of nature, which we trace to fixed laws and constant forces, are supposed by the Javanese to be wrought by spirits.”²⁶⁸

Demons in Borneo and Sumatra.

The natives of the valley of the Barito in Borneo hold that “the air is filled with countless *hantoes* (spirits). Every object has such a spirit which watches over it and seeks to defend it from danger. It is these spirits especially that bring sickness and misfortune on men, and for that reason offerings are often made to them and also to the powerful *Sangsangs* (angels), whereas the supreme God, the original fountain of all good, is neglected.”²⁶⁹ Of the Battas or Bataks of Sumatra we are told that “the keynote of their religious mood is fear of the unknown powers,

²⁶⁸ S. E. Harthoorn, “De Zending op Java en meer bepaald die van Malang,” *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, iv. (1860) pp. 116 sq.

²⁶⁹ C. A. L. M. Schwaner, *Borneo, Beschrijving van het stroomgebied van den Barito* (Amsterdam, 1853-54), i. 176.

a childish feeling of dependence, the outcome of a belief in supernatural influences to which man is constantly exposed, in wonders and witchcraft, which hamper his free action. They feel themselves continually surrounded by unseen beings and dependent on them for everything.” “Every misfortune bespeaks the ill-will of the hostile spirits. The whole world is a meeting-place of demons, and most of the phenomena of nature are an expression of their power. The only means of remedying or counteracting their baleful influence is to drive away the spirits by means of certain words, as well as by the use of amulets and the offering of sacrifices to the guardian spirits.”²⁷⁰ To the same effect another authority on the religion of the Battas remarks that “the common man has only a very dim and misty notion of his triune god, and troubles himself far more about the legions of spirits which people the whole world around him, and against which he must always be protected by magic spells.”²⁷¹ Again, speaking of the same people, a Dutch missionary observes that “if there is still any adherent of Rousseau's superficial theories about the idyllically happy and careless life of people ‘in a state

²⁷⁰ J. B. Neumann, “Het Pane- en Bila-stroomgebied,” *Tijdschrift van het Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, iii. Afdeeling, meer uitgebreide artikelen, No. 2 (Amsterdam, 1886), p. 287.

²⁷¹ B. Hagen, “Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Battareligion,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xxviii. (1883) p. 508. The persons of the Batta Trinity are Bataraguru, Sori, and Balabulan. The most fundamental distinction between the persons of the Trinity appears to be that one of them is allowed to eat pork, while the others are not (*ibid.* p. 505).

of nature,' he ought to come and spend a little time among the Bataks and keep his eyes and ears open. He would soon be convinced of the hollowness and falsehood of these phrases and would learn to feel a deep compassion for human beings living in perpetual fear of evil spirits."²⁷²

Demons in the Nicobars, in the Malay Peninsula, and in
Kamtchatka..

The religion of the Nicobar Islanders "is an undisguised animism, and the whole of their very frequent and elaborate ceremonies and festivals are aimed at exorcising and scaring spirits ('devils,' as they have been taught to call them). Fear of spirits and ghosts (*iwi*) is the guide to all ceremonies, and the life of the people is *very* largely taken up with ceremonials and feasts of all kinds. These are usually held at night, and whether directly religious or merely convivial, seem all to have an origin in the overmastering fear of spirits that possesses the Nicobarese. It has so far proved ineradicable, for two centuries of varied and almost continuous missionary effort has had no appreciable effect on it."²⁷³ The Mantras, an aboriginal race of the Malay Peninsula, "find or put a spirit everywhere, in the air they breathe, in the land they cultivate, in the forests they inhabit, in the trees they cut down, in the caves of the rocks. According to them, the demon

²⁷² M. Joustra, "Het leven, de zeden en gewoonten der Bataks," *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, xlvii. (1902) p. 412.

²⁷³ *The Census of India, 1901*, vol. iii. *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by Lieut. – Colonel Sir Richard C. Temple (Calcutta, 1903), p. 206.

is the cause of everything that turns out ill. If they are sick, a demon is at the bottom of it; if an accident happens, it is still the spirit who is at work; thereupon the demon takes the name of the particular evil of which he is supposed to be the cause. Hence the demon being assumed as the author of every ill, all their superstitions resolve themselves into enchantments and spells to appease the evil spirit, to render mild and tractable the fiercest beasts.”²⁷⁴ To the mind of the Kamtchatkan every corner of earth and heaven seemed full of spirits, whom he revered and dreaded more than God.²⁷⁵

Demons in India. The high gods come and go, but demons remain.

In India from the earliest times down to the present day the real religion of the common folk appears always to have been a belief in a vast multitude of spirits, of whom many, if not most, are mischievous and harmful. As in Europe beneath a superficial layer of Christianity a faith in magic and witchcraft, in ghosts and goblins has always survived and even flourished among the weak and ignorant, so it has been and so it is in the East. Brahmanism, Buddhism, Islam may come and go, but the belief in magic and demons remains unshaken through them all, and, if we may judge of the future from the past, is likely to survive the rise and fall

²⁷⁴ Borie, “Notice sur les Mantras, tribu sauvage de la péninsule Malaise,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, x. (1860) p. 434.

²⁷⁵ S. Krascheninnikow, *Beschreibung des Landes Kamtschatka* (Lemgo, 1766), p. 215.

of other historical religions. For the great faiths of the world, just in so far as they are the outcome of superior intelligence, of purer morality, of extraordinary fervour of aspiration after the ideal, fail to touch and move the common man. They make claims upon his intellect and his heart to which neither the one nor the other is capable of responding. The philosophy they teach is too abstract, the morality they inculcate too exalted for him. The keener minds embrace the new philosophy, the more generous spirits are fired by the new morality; and as the world is led by such men, their faith sooner or later becomes the professed faith of the multitude. Yet with the common herd, who compose the great bulk of every people, the new religion is accepted only in outward show, because it is impressed upon them by their natural leaders whom they cannot choose but follow. They yield a dull assent to it with their lips, but in their heart they never really abandon their old superstitions; in these they cherish a faith such as they cannot repose in the creed which they nominally profess; and to these, in the trials and emergencies of life, they have recourse as to infallible remedies, when the promises of the higher faith have failed them, as indeed such promises are apt to do.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ We may compare the instructive remarks made by Mr. W. E. Maxwell on the stratification of religious beliefs among the Malays (“The Folk-lore of the Malays,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 7, June, 1881, pp. 11 sq.). He says: “Two successive religious changes have taken place among them, and when we have succeeded in identifying the vestiges of Brahmanism which underly the external forms of the faith of Muhammed, long established in all Malay kingdoms, we

Demons in ancient India.

To establish for India in particular the truth of the propositions which I have just advanced, it may be enough to cite the evidence of two writers of high authority, one of whom deals with the most ancient form of Indian religion known to us, while the other describes the popular religion of the Hindoos at the present day. "According to the creed of the Vedic ages," says Professor Oldenberg, "the whole world in which man lives is animated. Sky and earth, mountain, forest, trees and beasts, the earthly water and the heavenly water of the clouds, – all is filled with living spiritual beings, who are either friendly or hostile to mankind. Unseen or embodied in visible form, hosts of spirits surround and hover about human habitations, – bestial or misshapen goblins, souls of dead friends and souls of foes, sometimes as kindly guardians, oftener as mischief-makers, bringing disease and misfortune, sucking the blood and strength of the living. A soul is attributed even to the object fashioned by human hands, whose functions are felt to be friendly or hostile. The warrior

are only half-way through our task. There yet remain the powerful influences of the still earlier indigenous faith to be noted and accounted for. Just as the Buddhists of Ceylon turn, in times of sickness and danger, not to the consolations offered by the creed of Buddha, but to the propitiation of the demons feared and revered by their early progenitors, and just as the Burmese and Talaings, though Buddhists, retain in full force the whole of the *Nat* superstition, so among the Malays, in spite of centuries which have passed since the establishment of an alien worship, the Muhammedan peasant may be found invoking the protection of Hindu gods against the spirits of evil with which his primitive faith has peopled all natural objects."

pays his devotion to the divine war-chariot, the divine arrow, the drum; the ploughman to the ploughshare; the gambler to the dice; the sacrificer, about whom naturally we have the most exact information, reveres the stone that presses out the juice of the Soma, the straw on which the gods recline, the post to which the sacrificial victim is bound, and the divine doors through which the gods come forth to enjoy the sacrifice. At one time the beings in whose presence man feels himself are regarded by him as really endowed with souls; at another time, in harmony with a more advanced conception of the world, they are imagined as substances or fluids invested with beneficent or maleficent properties: belief oscillates to and fro between the one mode of thought and the other. The art of turning to account the operations of these animated beings, the play of these substances and forces, is magic rather than worship in the proper sense of the word. The foundations of this faith and of this magic are an inheritance from the remotest past, from a period, to put it shortly, of shamanistic faith in spirits and souls, of shamanistic magic. Such a period has been passed through by the forefathers of the Indo-Germanic race as well as by other peoples.”²⁷⁷

Demons in modern India.

Coming down to the Hindoos of the present day, we find that their attitude towards the spiritual world is described as follows by Professor Monier Williams. “The plain fact undoubtedly is

²⁷⁷ H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 39 sq.

that the great majority of the inhabitants of India are, from the cradle to the burning-ground, victims of a form of mental disease which is best expressed by the term demonophobia. They are haunted and oppressed by a perpetual dread of demons. They are firmly convinced that evil spirits of all kinds, from malignant fiends to merely mischievous imps and elves, are ever on the watch to harm, harass, and torment them, to cause plague, sickness, famine, and disaster, to impede, injure, and mar every good work.”²⁷⁸ Elsewhere the same writer has expressed the same view somewhat more fully. “In fact,” he says, “a belief in every kind of demoniacal influence has always been from the earliest times an essential ingredient in Hindu religious thought. The idea probably had its origin in the supposed peopling of the air by spiritual beings – the personifications or companions of storm and tempest. Certainly no one who has ever been brought into close contact with the Hindus in their own country can doubt the fact that the worship of at least ninety per cent. of the people of India in the present day is a worship of fear. Not that the existence of good deities presided over by one Supreme Being is doubted; but that these deities are believed to be too absolutely good to need propitiation; just as in ancient histories of the Slav races, we are told that they believed in a white god and a black god, but paid adoration to the last alone, having, as they supposed, nothing to apprehend from the beneficence of

²⁷⁸ Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India* (London, 1883), pp. 210 sq.

the first or white deity. The simple truth is that evil of all kinds, difficulties, dangers and disasters, famines, diseases, pestilences and death, are thought by an ordinary Hindu to proceed from demons, or, more properly speaking, from devils, and from devils alone. These malignant beings are held, as we have seen, to possess varying degrees of rank, power, and malevolence. Some aim at destroying the entire world, and threaten the sovereignty of the gods themselves. Some delight in killing men, women, and children, out of a mere thirst for human blood. Some take a mere mischievous pleasure in tormenting, or revel in the infliction of sickness, injury, and misfortune. All make it their business to mar or impede the progress of good works and useful undertakings.”²⁷⁹

Demons in Bengal, Assam, the Chin Hills Sikkim, Tibet, and Travancore.

It would be easy but tedious to illustrate in detail this general account of the dread of demons which prevails among the inhabitants of India at the present day. A very few particular statements must suffice. Thus, we are told that the Oraons, a Dravidian race in Bengal, “acknowledge a Supreme God, adored as Dharmi or Dharmesh, the Holy One, who is manifest in the sun, and they regard Dharmesh as a perfectly pure, beneficent

²⁷⁹ Monier Williams, *op. cit.* pp. 230 *sq.* The views here expressed by the late Professor Monier Williams are confirmed from personal knowledge by Mr. E. T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, ii. (Allahabad, 1884) p. 840.

being, who created us and would in his goodness and mercy preserve us, but that his benevolent designs are thwarted by malignant spirits whom mortals must propitiate, as Dharmesh cannot or does not interfere, if the spirit of evil once fastens upon us. It is, therefore, of no use to pray to Dharmesh or to offer sacrifices to him; so though acknowledged, recognised, and revered, he is neglected, whilst the malignant spirits are adored.” Again, it is said of these Oraons that, “as the sole object of their religious ceremonies is the propitiation of the demons who are ever thwarting the benevolent intentions of Dharmesh, they have no notion of a service of thanksgiving.” Once more, after giving a list of Oraon demons, the same writer goes on: “Besides this superstitious dread of the spirits above named, the Oraon's imagination tremblingly wanders in a world of ghosts. Every rock, road, river, and grove is haunted.”²⁸⁰ Again, a missionary who spent many years among the Kacharis of Assam tells us that “the religion of the Kachári race is distinctly of the type commonly known as ‘animistic’ and its underlying principle is characteristically one of fear or dread. The statement *Timor fecit deos* certainly holds good of this people in its widest and strictest sense; and their religion thus stands in very marked, not to say violent, contrast with the teaching of the Faith in Christ. In the typical Kachári village as a rule neither idol nor place of worship is to be found; but to the Kachári mind and imagination earth, air, and sky are alike peopled with a vast

²⁸⁰ E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), pp. 256, 257, 258.

number of invisible spiritual beings, known usually as *Modai*, all possessing powers and faculties far greater than those of man, and almost invariably inclined to use these powers for malignant and malevolent, rather than benevolent, purposes. In a certain stage of moral and spiritual development men are undoubtedly influenced far more by what they fear than by what they love; and this truth certainly applies to the Kachári race in the most unqualified way.”²⁸¹ Again, the Siyins, who inhabit the Chin Hills of north-eastern India, on the borders of Burma, “say that there is no Supreme God and no other world save this, which is full of evil spirits who inhabit the fields, infest the houses, and haunt the jungles. These spirits must be propitiated or bribed to refrain from doing the particular harm of which each is capable, for one can destroy crops, another can make women barren, and a third cause a lizard to enter the stomach and devour the bowels.”²⁸² “Like most mountaineers, the people of Sikhim and the Tibetans are thorough-going demon-worshippers. In every nook, path, big tree, rock, spring, waterfall and lake there lurks a devil; for which reason few individuals will venture out alone after dark. The sky, the ground, the house, the field, the country have each their special demons, and sickness is always attributed to malign demoniacal influence.”²⁸³ “Even the purest of all the Lamaist

²⁸¹ Rev. S. Endle, *The Kacharis* (London, 1911), p. 33.

²⁸² Bertram S. Carey and H. N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills*, i. (Rangoon, 1896) p. 196.

²⁸³ L. A. Waddell, “Demonolatry in Sikhim Lamaism,” *The Indian Antiquary*, xxiii. (1894) p. 197.

sects – the Ge-lug-pa – are thorough-paced devil-worshippers, and value Buddhism chiefly because it gives them the whip-hand over the devils which everywhere vex humanity with disease and disaster, and whose ferocity weighs heavily on all.”²⁸⁴ The Lushais of Assam believe in a beneficent spirit named Pathian, who made everything but troubles himself very little about men. Far more important in ordinary life are the numerous demons (*huai*), who inhabit every stream, mountain, and forest, and are all malignant. To their agency are ascribed all the illnesses and misfortunes that afflict humanity, and a Lushai's whole life is spent in propitiating them. It is the sorcerer (*puithiam*) who knows what demon is causing any particular trouble, and it is he who can prescribe the sort of sacrifice which will appease the wrath of the fiend. Every form of sickness is set down to the influence of some demon or other, and all the tales about these spiritual foes begin or end with the recurrent phrase, “There was much sickness in our village.”²⁸⁵ In Travancore “the minor superstitions connected with demon-worship are well-nigh innumerable; they enter into all the feelings, and are associated with the whole life of these people. Every disease, accident, or misfortune is attributed to the agency of the devils, and great caution is exercised to avoid arousing their fury.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet* (London, 1895), p. 152.

²⁸⁵ Lt. – Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (London, 1912), pp. 61, 65 sq., 67.

²⁸⁶ Rev. S. Mateer, *The Land of Charity* (London, 1883), p. 207.

Demons in Ceylon.

With regard to the inhabitants of Ceylon we are told that “the fiends which they conceive to be hovering around them are without number. Every disease or trouble that assails them is produced by the immediate agency of the demons sent to punish them: while, on the other hand, every blessing or success comes directly from the hands of the beneficent and supreme God. To screen themselves from the power of the inferior deities, who are all represented as wicked spirits, and whose power is by no means irresistible, they wear amulets of various descriptions; and employ a variety of charms and spells to ward off the influence of witchcraft and enchantments by which they think themselves beset on all sides.” “It is probable that, by degrees, intercourse with Europeans will entirely do away these superstitious fears, as the Cinglese of the towns have already made considerable progress in subduing their gloomy apprehensions. Not so the poor wretched peasants who inhabit the more mountainous parts of the country, and live at a distance from our settlements. These unhappy people have never for a moment their minds free from the terror of those demons who seem perpetually to hover around them. Their imaginations are so disturbed by such ideas that it is not uncommon to see many driven to madness from this cause. Several Cinglese lunatics have fallen under my own observation; and upon inquiring into the circumstances which had deprived them of their reason, I universally found that their wretched state was to be traced solely to the excess of their superstitious

fears. The spirits of the wicked subordinate demons are the chief objects of fear among the Ceylonese; and impress their minds with much more awe than the more powerful divinities who dispense blessings among them. They indeed think that their country is in a particular manner delivered over to the dominion of evil spirits.”²⁸⁷

Demons in Burma.

In Eastern as well as Southern Asia the same view of nature as pervaded by a multitude of spirits, mostly mischievous and malignant, has survived the nominal establishment of a higher faith. “In spite of their long conversion, their sincere belief in, and their pure form of, Buddhism, which expressly repudiates and forbids such worship, the Burmans and Taleins (or Mons) have in a great measure kept their ancient spirit or demon worship. With the Taleins this is more especially the case. Indeed, with the country population of Pegu the worship, or it should rather be said the propitiation, of the ‘nats’ or spirits, enters into every act of their ordinary life, and Buddha's doctrine seems kept for sacred days and their visits to the kyoung (monastery) or to the pagoda.”²⁸⁸ Or, as another writer puts it, “the propitiating of the nats is a question of daily concern to the lower class Burman, while the worship at the pagoda is only thought of once a week. For the nat may prove destructive and hostile at any

²⁸⁷ R. Percival, *Account of the Island of Ceylon*, Second Edition (London, 1805), pp. 211-213.

²⁸⁸ C. J. F. S. Forbes, *British Burma* (London, 1878), pp. 221 *sq.*

time, whereas the acquisition of *koothoh* [merit] at the pagoda is a thing which may be set about in a business-like way, and at proper and convenient seasons.”²⁸⁹ But the term worship, we are informed, hardly conveys a proper notion of the attitude of the Burmese towards the nats or spirits. “Even the Karens and Kachins, who have no other form of belief, do not regard them otherwise than as malevolent beings who must be looked up to with fear, and propitiated by regular offerings. They do not want to have anything to do with the nats; all they seek is to be let alone. The bamboo pipes of spirit, the bones of sacrificial animals, the hatchets, swords, spears, bows and arrows that line the way to a Kachin village, are placed there not with the idea of attracting the spirits, but of preventing them from coming right among the houses in search of their requirements. If they want to drink, the rice spirit has been poured out, and the bamboo stoup is there in evidence of the libation; the blood-stained skulls of oxen, pigs, and the feathers of fowls show that there has been no stint of meat offerings; should the nats wax quarrelsome, and wish to fight, there are the axes and dahs with which to commence the fray. Only let them be grateful, and leave their trembling worshippers in peace and quietness.”²⁹⁰

Demons in Siam and Indo-China.

²⁸⁹ Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his Life and Notions* (London, 1882), i. 276 sq.

²⁹⁰ Shway Yoe, *op. cit.* i. 278. “To the Burman,” says A. Bastian, “the whole world is filled with nats. Mountains, rivers, waters, the earth, etc., have all their nat.” (*Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, ii. 497).

Similarly the Lao or Laosians of Siam, though they are nominally Buddhists, and have monks and pagodas with images of Buddha, are said to pay more respect to spirits or demons than to these idols.²⁹¹ “The desire to propitiate the good spirits and to exorcise the bad ones is the prevailing influence upon the life of a Laosian. With *phees* [evil spirits] to right of him, to left of him, in front of him, behind him, all round him, his mind is haunted with a perpetual desire to make terms with them, and to ensure the assistance of the great Buddha, so that he may preserve both body and soul from the hands of the spirits.”²⁹² “Independently of the demons who are in hell, the Siamese recognise another sort of devils diffused in the air: they call them *phi*; these are, they say, the demons who do harm to men and who appear sometimes in horrible shapes. They put down to the account of these malign spirits all the calamities which happen in the world. If a mother has lost a child, it is a *phi* who has done the ill turn; if a sick man is given over, it is a *phi* that is at the bottom of it. To appease him, they invoke him and make him offerings which they hang up in desert places.”²⁹³ As to the Thay, a widely spread race of Indo-China,²⁹⁴ a French missionary writes as follows: “It may be said that the Thay lives in constant intercourse with

²⁹¹ Mgr. Pallegoix, *Description du royaume Thai ou Siam* (Paris, 1854), i. 42.

²⁹² C. Bock, *Temples and Elephants* (London, 1884), p. 198.

²⁹³ Mgr. Bruguière, in *Annales de l'Association de la Propagation de la Foi*, v. (1831) p. 128.

²⁹⁴ J. Deniker, *The Races of Man* (London, 1900), pp. 400 *sqq.*

the invisible world. There is hardly an act of his life which is not regulated by some religious belief. There are two worships, the worship of the spirits and the worship of the dead, which, however, are scarcely distinguishable from each other, since the dead become spirits by the mere fact of their death. His simple imagination represents to him the world of spirits as a sort of double of the state of things here below. At the summit is Po Then, the father of the empyrean. Below him are the Then – Then Bun, Then Kum, Then Kom, of whom the chief is Then Luong, ‘the great Then.’ The dead go and cultivate his rice-fields in heaven and clear his mountains, just as they did their own in their life on earth. He has to wife a goddess Me Bau. Besides these heavenly spirits, the Thay reckons a multitude of others under the name of *phi*. His science being not very extensive, many things seem extraordinary to him. If he cannot explain a certain natural phenomenon, his perplexity does not last long. It is the work of a *phi*, he says, and his priests take care not to dissuade him. Hence he sees spirits everywhere. There are *phi* on the steep mountains, in the deep woods, the *phi bai* who, by night on the mountain, imitate the rain and the storms and leave no trace of their passage. If they shew themselves, they appear in the form of gigantic animals and cause terrible stomach troubles, such as diarrhoea, dysentery, and so on... The large animals of the forest, wild oxen and buffaloes, rhinoceroses, elephants, and so on, have their guardian spirits. Hence the prudent hunter learns at the outset to exorcise them in order that, when he has killed these

animals, he may be able to cut them up and eat their flesh without having to fear the vengeance of their invisible guardian. Spirits also guard the clearings whither the deer come by night to drink. The hunter should sacrifice a fowl to them from time to time, if he would bring down his game with ease. The gun itself has a spirit who looks to it that the powder explodes. In short, the Thay cannot take a single step without meeting a spirit on the path.”²⁹⁵ “Thus the life of the Thay seems regulated down to its smallest details by custom founded on his belief in the spirits. Spirits perpetually watch him, ready to punish his negligences, and he is afraid. Fear is not only for him the beginning of wisdom, it is the whole of his wisdom. Love has only a very moderate place in it. Even the respect in which he holds his dead, and the honours which he pays them on various occasions, seem to be dominated by a superstitious fear. It seems that the sacrifices which he offers to them aim rather at averting from himself the evils which he dreads than at honouring worthily the memory of his deceased kinsfolk and at paying them the tribute of his affection and gratitude. Once they sleep their last sleep yonder in the shadow of the great trees of the forest, none goes to shed a tear and murmur a prayer on their grave. Nothing but calamity suffices to rescue them from the oblivion into which they had fallen in the memory of the living.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ A. Bourlet, “Les Thay,” *Anthropos*, ii. (1907) p. 619.

²⁹⁶ A. Bourlet, *op. cit.* p. 632.

Demons in China.

“The dogma, prevailing in China from the earliest times, that the universe is filled in all its parts with *shen* and *kwei*, naturally implies that devils and demons must also swarm about the homes of men in numbers inestimable. It is, in fact, an axiom which constantly comes out in conversing with the people, that they haunt every frequented and lonely spot, and that no place exists where man is safe from them.”²⁹⁷ “The worship and propitiation of the gods, which is the main part of China's religion, has no higher purpose than that of inducing the gods to protect man against the world of evil, or, by descending among men, to drive spectres away by their intimidating presence. This cult implies invocation of happiness; but as happiness merely means absence of misfortune which the spectres cause, such a cult is tantamount to the disarming of spectres by means of the gods... Taoism may then actually be defined as Exorcising Polytheism, a cult of the gods with which Eastern Asiatic imagination has filled the universe, connected with a highly developed system of magic, consisting for a great part in exorcism. This cult and magic is, of course, principally in the hands of priests. But, besides, the lay world, enslaved to the intense belief in the perilous omnipresence of spectres, is engaged every day in a restless defensive and offensive war against those beings.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, v. (Leyden, 1907) p. 470.

²⁹⁸ J. J. M. de Groot, *op. cit.* vi. (Leyden, 1910) pp. 930-932. This sixth volume of Professor de Groot's great work is mainly devoted to an account of the ceaseless war

Demons in Corea.

In Corea, “among the reasons which render the shaman a necessity are these. In Korean belief, earth, air, and sea are peopled by demons. They haunt every umbrageous tree, shady ravine, crystal spring, and mountain crest. On green hill-slopes, in peaceful agricultural valleys, in grassy dells, on wooded uplands, by lake and stream, by road and river, in north, south, east, and west, they abound, making malignant sport of human destinies. They are on every roof, ceiling, fireplace, *kang* and beam. They fill the chimney, the shed, the living-room, the kitchen – they are on every shelf and jar. In thousands they waylay the traveller as he leaves his home, beside him, behind him, dancing in front of him, whirring over his head, crying out upon him from earth, air, and water. They are numbered by *thousands of billions*, and it has been well said that their ubiquity is an unholy travesty of the Divine Omnipresence. This belief, and it seems to be the only one he has, keeps the Korean in a perpetual state of nervous apprehension, it surrounds him with indefinite terrors, and it may truly be said of him that he ‘passes the time of his sojourning here in fear.’ Every Korean home is subject to demons, here, there, and everywhere. They touch the Korean at every point in life, making his well-being depend on a continual series of acts of propitiation, and they avenge every

waged by the Chinese people on demons or spectres (*kwei*). A more summary notice of this curious national delusion will be found in his work *The Religion of the Chinese* (New York, 1910), chapter ii., “The Struggle against Spectres,” pp. 33-61.

omission with merciless severity, keeping him under this yoke of bondage from birth to death.” “Koreans attribute every ill by which they are afflicted to demoniacal influence. Bad luck in any transaction, official malevolence, illness, whether sudden or prolonged, pecuniary misfortune, and loss of power or position, are due to the malignity of demons. It is over such evils that the *Pan-su* [shaman] is supposed to have power, and to be able to terminate them by magical rites, he being possessed by a powerful demon, whose strength he is able to wield.”²⁹⁹

Demons among the Koryaks.

Of the nomadic Koryaks of north-eastern Asia it is said that “all their religious customs have only reference to the evil spirits of the earth. Their religion is thus a cunning diplomacy or negotiation with these spirits in order, as far as possible, to deter them from actions which would be injurious to men. Everywhere, on every mountain, in the sea, by the rivers, in the forest, and on the plains their fancy sees demons lurking, whom they picture to themselves as purely malignant and very greedy. Hence the frequent offerings by which they seek to satisfy the greed of these insatiable beings, and to redeem that which they value and hold dear. Those of the people who are believed to be able to divine most easily the wishes of the evil ones and who enjoy their favour to a certain extent are called shamans, and the religious

²⁹⁹ Mrs. Bishop (Isabella L. Bird), *Korea and her Neighbours* (London, 1898), ii. 227 sq., 229. I have taken the liberty of changing the writer's “daemon” and “daemoniacal” into “demon” and “demoniacal.”

ceremonies which they perform are shamanism. In every case the shamans must give their advice as to how the devils are to be got rid of, and must reveal the wishes of the demons.”³⁰⁰ As to these demons of the earth, who infest the Koryaks, we are told that “when visiting the houses to cause diseases and to kill people, they enter from under ground, through the hearth-fire, and return the same way. It happens at times that they steal people, and carry them away. They are invisible to human beings, and are capable of changing their size. They are sometimes so numerous in houses, that they sit on the people, and fill up all corners. With hammers and axes they knock people over their heads, thus causing headaches. They bite, and cause swellings. They shoot invisible arrows, which stick in the body, causing death, if a shaman does not pull them out in time. The *kalau* [demons] tear out pieces of flesh from people, thus causing sores and wounds to form on their bodies.”³⁰¹

Demons among the Gilyaks.

The Gilyaks of the Amoor valley in eastern Asia believe that besides the gods “there are evil supernatural beings who do him harm. They are devils, called *mil'k*, *kinr*. These beings appear in the most varied forms and are distinguished according to the

³⁰⁰ C. von Dittmar, “Über die Koräken und die ihnen sehr nahe verwandten Tschuktschen,” *Bulletin de la Classe Historico-philologique de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg*, xiii. (1856) coll. 123 sq.

³⁰¹ W. Jochelson, *The Koryak* (Leyden and New York, 1908), p. 28 (*The Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History*).

degree of their harmfulness. They appear now in the form of a Gilyak, now in the form of an animal, from a bear down to a toad and a lizard. They exist on the land and in the sea, under the earth and in the sky. Some of them form special tribes of treacherous beings whose essential nature it is to be destructive. Others are isolated individuals, ruined beings, 'lost sons' of families of beneficent beings, who are exceptional in their hostility to man. The former class are naturally the most dangerous. Some are wholly occupied in robbing the Gilyak on the road (the spirits of loss —*gerniwuch-en*); others empty his barns, his traps, his pitfalls, and so on; lastly there are such also, the most dreadful of all, who lie in wait for his life and bring sickness and death. Were there no such beings, men would not die. A natural death is impossible. Death is the result of the wiles of these treacherous beings."³⁰²

Demons in ancient Babylonia and Assyria.

In the more westerly parts of the old world the same belief in the omnipresence and mischievous power of spirits has prevailed from antiquity to the present day. If we may judge from the fragments of their literature which have been deciphered, few people seem to have suffered more from the persistent assaults of demons than the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians, and the evil spirits that preyed on them were of a peculiarly cruel and malignant sort; even the gods themselves were not exempt from

³⁰² L. Sternberg, "Die Religion der Giljaken," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, viii. (1905) pp. 460 sq.

their attacks. These baleful beings lurked in solitary places, in graves, in the shadow of ruins and on the tops of mountains. They dwelt in the wilderness, in the holes and dens of the earth, they issued from the lower parts of the ground. Nothing could resist them in heaven above, nothing could withstand them on earth below. They roamed the streets, they leaped from house to house. The high and thick fences they penetrated like a flood, the door could not stay them, nor the bolt make them turn back. They glided through the door like a serpent, they pierced through the planks like the wind. There was no place, however small, which they could not invade, none so large that they could not fill. And their wickedness was equal to their power. "They are wicked, they are wicked," says an incantation. No prayers could move them, no supplications could make them relent; for they knew no pity, they hearkened not to reason, they knew no troth. To them all manner of evil was ascribed. Their presence was felt not only in the terrible winds that swept the land, in the fevers bred of the marshes, and in the diseases engendered by the damp heat of summer. All the petty annoyances of life – a sudden fall, an unlucky word, a headache, a paltry quarrel – were set down to the agency of fiends; and all the fierce emotions that rend the mind – love, hate, jealousy, and madness – were equally the work of these invisible tormentors. Men and women stood in constant danger of them. They tore the wife from the bosom of her husband, the son from the knees of his father. They ate the flesh and drank the blood of men, they prevented them from

sleeping or taking food, and to adopt a metaphor from one of the texts, “they ground the country like flour.” Almost every part of the human frame was menaced by a special fiend. One demon assailed the head, another the neck, another the hips, and so on. They bound a man's hands, they fettered his feet, they spat poison and gall on him. Day and night must he wander without rest; sighs and lamentations were his food. They attacked even the animals. They drove doves from their dovecotes, and swallows from their nests; they smote the bull and the ass. They pursued the cattle to their stalls: they lodged with the horses in the stable: they caused the she-ass to miscarry, and the young ass at its mother's dugs to pine away. Even lifeless things could be possessed by them; for there were demons that rushed against houses and took walls by storm, that shut themselves up in doors, and hid themselves under bolts. Indeed they threatened the whole world with destruction, and there was none that could deliver from them save only the mighty god Marduk.³⁰³

Demons in ancient and modern Egypt.

In the opinion of the ancient Egyptians “there were good spirits as well as bad, but the *Book of the Dead* practically ignores the former, and its magical formulae were directed

³⁰³ M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston, 1898), pp. 260 *sqq.*; *id.*, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, i. (Giessen, 1905) pp. 278 *sqq.*; C. Fossey, *La Magie Assyrienne* (Paris, 1902), pp. 27-30, 34; E. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, Dritte Auflage, neu bearbeitet von H. Zimmern und H. Winckler (Berlin, 1902), pp. 458 *sqq.*

entirely against the operations of evil spirits. Though naturally of a gay and light-hearted disposition, the Egyptian must have lived in a perpetual state of fear of spirits of all kinds, spirits of calamity, disease, and sickness, spirits of angry gods and ancestors, and above all the spirit of Death. His imagination filled the world with spirits, whose acts seemed to him to be generally malevolent, and his magical and religious literature and his amulets testify to the very real terror with which he regarded his future existence in the world of spirits. Escape from such spirits was impossible, for they could not die.”³⁰⁴ In modern Egypt the jinn, a class of spiritual beings intermediate between angels and men, are believed to pervade the solid matter of the earth as well as the firmament, and they inhabit rivers, ruined houses, wells, baths, ovens, and so forth. So thickly do they swarm that in pouring water or other liquids on the ground an Egyptian will commonly exclaim or mutter “*Destoor!*” thereby asking the permission or craving the pardon of any jinn who might chance to be there, and who might otherwise resent being suddenly soused with water or unsavoury fluids. So too when people light a fire, let down a bucket into a well, or perform other necessary functions, they will say “Permission!” or “Permission, ye blessed!”³⁰⁵ Again, in Egypt it is not considered proper to sweep out a house at night, lest in doing so you should knock

³⁰⁴ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (London, 1911), ii. 150.

³⁰⁵ E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Paisley and London, 1895), chap. x. pp. 231 sq.

against a jinnee, who might avenge the insult.³⁰⁶

Demons in ancient Greece and mediaeval Europe.

The earliest of the Greek philosophers, Thales, held that the world is full of gods or spirits;³⁰⁷ and the same primitive creed was expounded by one of the latest pagan thinkers of antiquity. Porphyry declared that demons appeared in the likeness of animals, that every house and every body was full of them, and that forms of ceremonial purification, such as beating the air and so forth, had no other object but that of driving away the importunate swarms of these invisible but dangerous beings. He explained that evil spirits delighted in food, especially in blood and impurities, that they settled like flies on us at meals, and that they could only be kept at a distance by ceremonial observances, which were directed, not to pleasing the gods, but simply and solely to beating off devils.³⁰⁸ His theory of religious purification seems faithfully to reflect the creed of the savage on this subject,³⁰⁹ but a philosopher is perhaps the last person whom we should expect to find acting as a mirror of savagery. It is less surprising to meet with the same venerable doctrine, the same

³⁰⁶ C. B. Klunzinger, *Bilder aus Oberägypten, der Wüste und dem Rothen Meere* (Stuttgart, 1877), p. 382; compare *ibid.* pp. 374 sq.

³⁰⁷ Aristotle, *De anima*, i. 5. 17; Diogenes Laertius, i. 1. 27.

³⁰⁸ Porphyry, quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelii*, iv. 23.

³⁰⁹ Elsewhere I have attempted to shew that a particular class of purifications – those observed by mourners – is intended to protect the living from the disembodied spirits of the dead (“On certain Burial Customs as illustrative of the Primitive Theory of the Soul,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv. (1886) pp. 64 sqq.).

world-wide superstition in the mouth of a mediaeval abbot; for we know that a belief in devils has the authority of the founder of Christianity and is sanctioned by the teaching of the church. No Esquimau on the frozen shores of Labrador, no Indian in the sweltering forests of Guiana, no cowering Hindoo in the jungles of Bengal, could well have a more constant and abiding sense of the presence of malignant demons everywhere about him than had Abbot Richalm, who ruled over the Cistercian monastery of Schönthal in the first half of the thirteenth century. In the curious work to which he gave the name of *Revelations*, he set forth how he was daily and hourly infested by devils, whom, though he could not see, he heard, and to whom he imputed all the ailments of his flesh and all the frailties of his spirit. If he felt squeamish, he was sure that the feeling was wrought in him by demoniacal agency. If puckers appeared on his nose, if his lower lip drooped, the devils had again to answer for it; a cough, a cold in the head, a hawking and spitting, could have none but a supernatural and devilish origin. If, pacing in his orchard on a sunny autumn morning, the portly abbot stooped to pick up the mellow fruit that had fallen in the night, the blood that mounted to his purple face was sent coursing thither by his invisible foes. If the abbot tossed on his sleepless couch, while the moonlight, streaming in at the window, cast the shadows of the stanchions like black bars on the floor of his cell, it was not the fleas and so forth that kept him awake – oh no! “Vermin,” said he sagely, “do not really bite”; they seem to bite indeed, but

it is all the work of devils. If a monk snored in the dormitory, the unseemly noise proceeded not from him, but from a demon lurking in his person. Especially dangerous were the demons of intoxication. These subtle fiends commonly lodged at the taverns in the neighbouring town, but on feast days they were apt to slip through the monastery gates and glide unseen among the monks seated at the refectory table, or gathered round the roaring fire on the hearth, while the bleak wind whistled in the abbey towers, and a more generous vintage than usual glowed and sparkled in the flagons. If at such times a jolly, rosy-faced brother appeared to the carnal eye and ear to grow obstreperous or maudlin, to speak thick or to reel and stagger in his gait, be sure it was not the fiery spirit of the grape that moved the holy man; it was a spirit of quite a different order. Holding such views on the source of all bodily and mental indisposition, it was natural enough that the abbot should prescribe remedies which are not to be found in the pharmacopœia, and which would be asked for in vain at an apothecary's. They consisted chiefly of holy water and the sign of the cross; this last he recommended particularly as a specific for flea-bites.³¹⁰

Demons in modern Europe.

It is easy to suggest that the abbot's wits were unsettled, that he suffered from hallucinations, and so forth. This may have been so; yet a mode of thought like his seems to be too common

³¹⁰ C. Meyer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters* (Bâle, 1884), pp. 109-111, 191 *sq.*

over a great part of the world to allow us to attribute it purely to mental derangement. In the Middle Ages, when the general level of knowledge was low, a state of mind like Richalm's may have been shared by multitudes even of educated people, who have not, however, like him, left a monument of their folly to posterity. At the present day, through the advance and spread of knowledge, it might be difficult to find any person of acknowledged sanity holding the abbot's opinions on the subject of demons; but in remote parts of Europe a little research might shew that the creed of Porphyry and Richalm is still held, with but little variation, by the mass of the people. Thus we are told that the Roumanians of Transylvania "believe themselves to be surrounded on all sides by whole legions of evil spirits. These devils are furthermore assisted by *ismejus* (another sort of dragon), witches, and goblins, and to each of these dangerous beings are ascribed particular powers on particular days and at certain places. Many and curious are therefore the means by which the Roumanians endeavour to counteract these baleful influences; and a whole complicated study, about as laborious as the mastering of an unknown language, is required in order to teach an unfortunate peasant to steer clear of the dangers by which he supposes himself to be beset on all sides."³¹¹

³¹¹ E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest* (Edinburgh and London, 1888), i. 328. The superstitions of the Roumanians of Transylvania have been collected by W. Schmidt in his tract *Das Jahr und seine Tage in Meinung und Brauch der Romänen Siebenbürgens* (Hermannstadt, 1866).

Demons in modern Armenia.

Similar beliefs are held to this day by the Armenians, who, though they are not a European people, have basked in the light of Christianity from a time when Central and Northern Europe was still plunged in heathen darkness. All the activities, we are told, of these professing Christians “are paralyzed after sunset, because at every step they quake with fear, believing that the evil demons are everywhere present in the air, in the water, on the earth. By day the evil ones are under the earth, therefore boiling hot water may not be poured on the ground, because it sinks into the earth and burns the feet of the children of the evil spirits. But in the evening the superstitious Armenian will pour no water at all on the earth, because the evil ones are everywhere present on the earth. Some of them are walking about, others are sitting at table and feasting, so that they might be disturbed by the pouring out of water, and they would take vengeance for it. Also by night you should not smite the ground with a stick, nor sweep out the house, nor remove the dung from the stable, because without knowing it you might hit the evil spirits. But if you are compelled to sweep by night, you singe the tip of the broom so as to frighten the evil ones away in time. You must not go out at night bareheaded, for the evil ones would smite you on the head. It is also dangerous to drink water out of a vessel in the dark, especially when the water is drawn from a brook or river; for the evil ones in the water hit out, or they pass with the water into a man. Therefore in drinking you should hold a knife with three blades or a piece of iron in

the water. The baleful influence of the nocturnal demons extends also to useful objects; hence after sunset people do not lend salt or fire and do not shake out the tablecloth, because thereby the salt would lose its savour and the welfare of the house would depart.”³¹²

³¹² Manuk Abeghian, *Der armenische Volksglaube* (Leipsic, 1899), pp. 31 sq.

Chapter III. The Public Expulsion of Evils

§ 1. The Occasional Expulsion of Evils

General clearances of evils take the form of expulsions of demons.

We can now understand why those general clearances of evil, to which from time to time the savage resorts, should commonly take the form of a forcible expulsion of devils. In these evil spirits primitive man sees the cause of many if not of most of his troubles, and he fancies that if he can only deliver himself from them, things will go better with him. The public attempts to expel the accumulated ills of a whole community may be divided into two classes, according as the expelled evils are immaterial and invisible or are embodied in a material vehicle or scapegoat. The former may be called the direct or immediate expulsion of evils; the latter the indirect or mediate expulsion, or the expulsion by scapegoat. We begin with examples of the former.

General expulsions of demons in Melanesia, Australia and South Africa.

In the island of Rook, between New Guinea and New Britain,

when any misfortune has happened, all the people run together, scream, curse, howl, and beat the air with sticks to drive away the devil (*Marsába*), who is supposed to be the author of the mishap. From the spot where the mishap took place they drive him step by step to the sea, and on reaching the shore they redouble their shouts and blows in order to expel him from the island. He generally retires to the sea or to the island of Lottin.³¹³ The natives of New Britain ascribe sickness, drought, the failure of crops, and in short all misfortunes, to the influence of wicked spirits. So at times when many people sicken and die, as at the beginning of the rainy season, all the inhabitants of a district, armed with branches and clubs, go out by moonlight to the fields, where they beat and stamp on the ground with wild howls till morning, believing that this drives away the devils; and for the same purpose they rush through the village with burning torches.³¹⁴ The natives of New Caledonia are said to believe that all evils are caused by a powerful and malignant spirit; hence in order to rid themselves of him they will from time to time dig a great pit, round which the whole tribe gathers. After cursing the demon, they fill up the pit with earth, and trample on the top with loud shouts. This they call burying the evil spirit.³¹⁵ Among the

³¹³ Paul Reina, "Über die Bewohner der Insel Rook," *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde*, N.F., iv. (1858) p. 356.

³¹⁴ R. Parkinson, *Im Bismarck-Archipel* (Leipsic, 1887), p. 142; *id.*, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (Stuttgart, 1907), p. 119.

³¹⁵ O. Opigez, "Aperçu général sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), VII. Série, vii. (1886) p. 443.

Dieri tribe of Central Australia, when a serious illness occurs, the medicine-men expel Cootchie or the devil by beating the ground in and outside of the camp with the stuffed tail of a kangaroo, until they have chased the demon away to some distance from the camp.³¹⁶ In some South African tribes it is a general rule that no common man may meddle with spirits, whether good or bad, except to offer the customary sacrifices. Demons may haunt him and make his life a burden to him, but he must submit to their machinations until the matter is taken up by the proper authorities. A baboon may be sent by evil spirits and perch on a tree within gunshot, or regale itself in his maize-field; but to fire at the beast would be worse than suicide. So long as a man remains a solitary sufferer, he has little chance of redress. It is supposed that he has committed some crime, and that the ancestors in their wrath have sent a demon to torment him. But should his neighbours also suffer; should the baboon from choice or necessity (for men do sometimes pluck up courage to scare the brutes) select a fresh field for its depredations, or the roof of another man's barn for its perch, the case begins to wear a different complexion. The magicians now deal with the matter seriously. One man may be haunted for his sins by a demon, but a whole community infested by devils is another matter. To shoot the baboon, however, would be useless; it would merely enrage the demon and increase the danger. The first thing to do is to ascertain the permanent abode of the devil. It is generally

³¹⁶ S. Gason, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxiv. (1895) p. 170.

a deep pool with overhanging banks and dark recesses. There the villagers assemble with the priests and magicians at their head, and set about pelting the demon with stones, men, women, and children all joining in the assault, while they load the object of their fear and hate with the foulest abuse. Drums too are beaten, and horns blown at intervals, and when everybody has been worked up to such a frenzy of excitement that some even fancy they see the imp dodging the missiles, he suddenly takes to flight, and the village is rid of him for a time. After that, the crops may be protected and baboons killed with impunity.³¹⁷

General expulsion of demons in Minahassa, Halmahera, and the Kei Islands.

When a village has been visited by a series of disasters or a severe epidemic, the inhabitants of Minahassa in Celebes lay the blame upon the devils who are infesting the village and who must be expelled from it. Accordingly, early one morning all the people, men, women, and children, quit their homes, carrying their household goods with them, and take up their quarters in temporary huts which have been erected outside the village. Here they spend several days, offering sacrifices and preparing for the final ceremony. At last the men, some wearing masks,

³¹⁷ Rev. James Macdonald, *Religion and Myth* (London, 1893), pp. 100-102. The writer, who describes the ceremony at first hand, remarks that "there is no periodic purging of devils, nor are more spirits than one expelled at a time." He adds: "I have noticed frequently a connection between the quantity of grain that could be spared for making beer, and the frequency of gatherings for the purging of evils."

others with their faces blackened, and so on, but all armed with swords, guns, pikes, or brooms, steal cautiously and silently back to the deserted village. Then, at a signal from the priest, they rush furiously up and down the streets and into and under the houses (which are raised on piles above the ground), yelling and striking on walls, doors, and windows, to drive away the devils. Next, the priests and the rest of the people come with the holy fire and march nine times round each house and thrice round the ladder that leads up to it, carrying the fire with them. Then they take the fire into the kitchen, where it must burn for three days continuously. The devils are now driven away, and great and general is the joy.³¹⁸ The Alfoors of Halmahera attribute epidemics to the devil who comes from other villages to carry them off. So, in order to rid the village of the disease, the sorcerer drives away the devil. From all the villagers he receives a costly garment and places it on four vessels, which he takes to the forest and leaves at the spot where the devil is supposed to be. Then with mocking words he bids the demon abandon the place.³¹⁹ In

³¹⁸ [P. N. Wilken], "De godsdienst en godsdienstplegtigheden der Alfoeren in de Menahassa op het eiland Celebes," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, December 1849, pp. 392-394; *id.*, "Bijdragen tot de kennis van de zeden en gewoonten der Alfoeren in de Minahassa," *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, vii. (1863) pp. 149 *sqq.*; J. G. F. Riedel, "De Minahasa in 1825," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xviii. (1872) pp. 521 *sq.* Wilken's first and fuller account is reprinted in N. Graafland's *De Minahassa* (Rotterdam, 1869), i. 117-120. A German translation of Wilken's earlier article is printed in *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde*, N.F., x. (1861) pp. 43-61.

³¹⁹ J. G. F. Riedel, "Galela und Tobeloresen," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xvii. (1885)

the Kei Islands to the south-west of New Guinea, the evil spirits, who are quite distinct from the souls of the dead, form a mighty host. Almost every tree and every cave is the lodging-place of one of these fiends, who are moreover extremely irascible and apt to fly out on the smallest provocation. To speak loudly in passing their abode, to ease nature near a haunted tree or cave, is enough to bring down their wrath on the offender, and he must either appease them by an offering or burn the scrapings of a buffalo's horn or the hair of a Papuan slave, in order that the smell may drive the foul fiends away. The spirits manifest their displeasure by sending sickness and other calamities. Hence in times of public misfortune, as when an epidemic is raging, and all other remedies have failed, the whole population go forth with the priest at their head to a place at some distance from the village. Here at sunset they erect a couple of poles with a cross-bar between them, to which they attach bags of rice, wooden models of pivot-guns, gongs, bracelets, and so on. Then, when everybody has taken his place at the poles and a death-like silence reigns, the priest lifts up his voice and addresses the spirits in their own language as follows: "Ho! ho! ho! ye evil spirits who

p. 82; G. A. Wilken, "Het Shamanisme bij de Volken van de Indischen Archipel," *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indie*, xxxvi. (1887) p. 484; *id.*, *Verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 383. When smallpox is raging, the Toradjas of Central Celebes abandon the village and live in the bush for seven days in order to make the spirit of smallpox believe that they are all dead. But it does not appear that they forcibly expel him from the village. See N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes*, i. (Batavia, 1912) p. 417.

dwelling in the trees, ye evil spirits who live in the grottoes, ye evil spirits who lodge in the earth, we give you these pivot-guns, these gongs, etc. Let the sickness cease and not so many people die of it.” Then everybody runs home as fast as their legs can carry them.³²⁰

Demons of sickness expelled in Nias.

In the island of Nias, when a man is seriously ill and other remedies have been tried in vain, the sorcerer proceeds to exorcise the devil who is causing the illness. A pole is set up in front of the house, and from the top of the pole a rope of palm-leaves is stretched to the roof of the house. Then the sorcerer mounts the roof with a pig, which he kills and allows to roll from the roof to the ground. The devil, anxious to get the pig, lets himself down hastily from the roof by the rope of palm-leaves, and a good spirit, invoked by the sorcerer, prevents him from climbing up again. If this remedy fails, it is believed that other devils must still be lurking in the house. So a general hunt is made after them. All the doors and windows in the house are closed, except a single dormer-window in the roof. The men, shut up in the house, hew and slash with their swords right and left to the clash of gongs and the rub-a-dub of drums. Terrified at this onslaught, the devils escape by the dormer-window, and sliding

³²⁰ C. M. Pleyte, “Ethnographische Beschrijving der Kei-eilanden,” *Tijdschrift van het Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, x. (1893) pp. 834 sq. A briefer account of the custom had previously been given by J. G. F. Riedel (*De sluik-en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*, The Hague, 1886, p. 239).

down the rope of palm-leaves take themselves off. As all the doors and windows, except the one in the roof, are shut, the devils cannot get into the house again. In the case of an epidemic, the proceedings are similar. All the gates of the village, except one, are closed; every voice is raised, every gong and drum beaten, every sword brandished. Thus the devils are driven out and the last gate is shut behind them. For eight days thereafter the village is in a state of siege, no one being allowed to enter it.³²¹

Spiritual quarantine against demons of sickness in Nias.

The means adopted in Nias to exclude an epidemic from a village which has not yet been infected by it are somewhat similar; but as they exhibit an interesting combination of religious ritual with the purely magical ceremony of exorcism, it may be worth while to describe them. When it is known that a village is suffering from the ravages of a dangerous malady, the other villages in the neighbourhood take what they regard as effective measures for securing immunity from the disease. Some of these measures commend themselves to us as rational

³²¹ J. T. Nieuwenhuisen en H. C. B. von Rosenberg, "Verslag omtrent het eiland Nias," *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, xxx. (Batavia, 1863) pp. 116 *sq.*; H. von Rosenberg, *Der Malayische Archipel* (Leipsic, 1878), pp. 174 *sq.* Compare L. N. H. A. Chatelin, "Godsdienst en Bijgeloof der Niassers," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xxvi. (1880) p. 139; E. Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias* (Milan, 1890), pp. 195, 382. The Dyaks also drive the devil at the point of the sword from a house where there is sickness. See C. Hupe, "Korte verhandeling over de godsdienst, zeden, enz. der Dajakkers," *Tijdschrift voor Neêrlands Indië*, 1846, dl. iii. p. 149.

and others do not. In the first place, quarantine is established in each village, not only against the inhabitants of the infected village, but against all strangers; no person from outside is allowed to enter. In the second place, a feast is made by the people for one of their idols who goes by the name of *Fangeroe wōchō*, or Protector from sickness. All the people of the village must participate in the sacrifice and bear a share of the cost. The principal idol, crowned with palm-leaves, is set up in front of the chief's house, and all the inhabitants who can do so gather about it. The names of those who cannot attend are mentioned, apparently as a substitute for their attendance in person. While the priest is reciting the spells for the banishment of the evil spirits, all persons present come forward and touch the image. A pig is then killed and its flesh furnishes a common meal. The mouth of the idol is smeared with the bloody heart of the pig, and a dishful of the cooked pork is set before him. Of the flesh thus consecrated to the idol none but priests and chiefs may partake. Idols called *daha*, or branches of the principal idol, are also set up in front of all the other houses in the village. Moreover, bogies made of black wood with white eyes, to which the broken crockery of the inhabitants has freely contributed, are placed at the entrances of the village to scare the demon and prevent him from entering. All sorts of objects whitened with chalk are also hung up in front of the houses to keep the devil out. When eight days have elapsed, it is thought that the sacrifice has taken effect, and the priest puts an end to the quarantine. All boys and men

now assemble for the purpose of expelling the evil spirit. Led by the priest, they march four times, with a prodigious noise and uproar, from one end of the village to the other, slashing the air with their knives and stabbing it with their spears to frighten the devil away. If all these efforts prove vain, and the dreaded sickness breaks out, the people think it must be because they have departed from the ways of their fathers by raising the price of victuals and pigs too high or by enriching themselves with unjust gain. Accordingly a new idol is made and set up in front of the chief's house; and while the priest engages in prayer, the chief and the magnates of the village touch the image, vowing as they do so to return to the old ways and cursing all such as may refuse their consent or violate the new law thus solemnly enacted. Then all present betake themselves to the river and erect another idol on the bank. In presence of this latter idol the weights and measures are compared, and any that exceed the lawful standard are at once reduced to it. When this has been done, they rock the image to and fro to signify, or perhaps rather to ensure, thereby that he who does not keep the new law shall suffer misfortune, or fall sick, or be thwarted in some way or other. Then a pig is killed and eaten on the bank of the river. The feast being over, each family contributes a certain sum in token that they make restitution of their unlawful gains. The money thus collected is tied in a bundle, and the priest holds the bundle up towards the sky and down towards the earth to satisfy the god of the upper and the god of the nether world that justice has now been done.

After that he either flings the bag of money into the river or buries it in the ground beside the idol. In the latter case the money naturally disappears, and the people explain its disappearance by saying that the evil spirit has come and fetched it.³²² A method like that which at the present day the people of Nias adopt for the sake of conjuring the demon of disease was employed in antiquity by the Caunians of Asia Minor to banish certain foreign gods whom they had imprudently established in their country. All the men of military age assembled under arms, and with spear-thrusts in the air drove the strange gods step by step from the land and across the boundaries.³²³

Demons of sickness expelled in the Solomon Islands,
Burma, India, China.

The Solomon Islanders of Bougainville Straits believe that epidemics are always, or nearly always, caused by evil spirits; and accordingly when the people of a village have been suffering generally from colds, they have been known to blow conch-shells, beat tins, shout, and knock on the houses for the purpose of expelling the demons and so curing their colds.³²⁴ When cholera has broken out in a Burmese village the able-bodied

³²² Fr. Kramer, "Der Götzendienst der Niasser," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- en Volkenkunde*, xxxiii. (1890) pp. 486-488.

³²³ Herodotus, i. 172.

³²⁴ G. C. Wheeler, "Sketch of the Totemism and Religion of the People of the Islands in the Bougainville Straits (Western Solomon Islands)," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, xv. (1912) pp. 49, 51 sq.

men scramble on the roofs and lay about them with bamboos and billets of wood, while all the rest of the population, old and young, stand below and thump drums, blow trumpets, yell, scream, beat floors, walls, tin pans, everything to make a din. This uproar, repeated on three successive nights, is thought to be very effective in driving away the cholera demons.³²⁵ The Shans of Kengtung, a province of Upper Burma, imagine that epidemics are brought about by the prowling ghosts of wicked men, such as thieves and murderers, who cannot rest but go about doing all the harm they can to the living. Hence when sickness is rife, the people take steps to expel these dangerous spirits. The Buddhist priests exert themselves actively in the beneficent enterprise. They assemble in a body at the Town Court and read the scriptures. Guns are fired and processions march to the city gates, by which the fiends are supposed to take their departure. There small trays of food are left for them, but the larger offerings are deposited in the middle of the town.³²⁶ When smallpox first appeared amongst the Kumis of South-Eastern India, they thought it was a devil come from Aracan. The villages were placed in a state of siege, no one being allowed to leave or enter them. A monkey was killed by being dashed on the

³²⁵ C. J. F. S. Forbes, *British Burma* (London, 1878), p. 233; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his Life and Notions* (London, 1882), i. 282, ii. 105 *sqq.*; A. Bastian, *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, ii. 98; Max and Bertha Ferrars, *Burma* (London, 1900), p. 128.

³²⁶ (Sir) J. George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part ii. vol. i. (Rangoon, 1901) p. 440.

ground, and its body was hung at the village gate. Its blood, mixed with small river pebbles, was sprinkled on the houses, the threshold of every house was swept with the monkey's tail, and the fiend was adjured to depart.³²⁷ During the hot summer cholera is endemic in Southern China, and from time to time, when the mortality is great, vigorous attempts are made to expel the demons who do all the mischief. For this salutary purpose processions parade the streets by night; images of the gods are borne in them, torches waved, gongs beaten, guns fired, crackers popped, swords brandished, demon-dispelling trumpets blown, and priests in full canonicals trot up and down jingling hand-bells, winding blasts on buffalo horns, and reciting exorcisms. Sometimes the deities are represented in these processions by living men, who are believed to be possessed by the divine spirit. Such a man-god may be seen naked to the waist with his dishevelled hair streaming down his back; long daggers are stuck in his cheeks and arms, so that the blood drips from them. In his hand he carries a two-edged sword, with which he deals doughty blows at the invisible foes in the air; but sometimes he inflicts bloody wounds on his own back with the weapon or with a ball which is studded with long sharp nails. Other inspired men are carried in armchairs, of which the seat, back, arms, and foot-rest are set with nails or composed of rows of parallel sword-blades, that cut into the flesh of the wretches seated on them: others are stretched at full length on beds of nails. For hours these bleeding

³²⁷ T. H. Lewin, *Wild Tribes of South-Eastern India* (London, 1870), p. 226.

votaries are carried about the city. Again, it is not uncommon to see in the procession a medium or man-god with a thick needle thrust through his tongue. His bloody spittle drips on sheets of paper, which the crowd eagerly scrambles for, knowing that with the blood they have absorbed the devil-dispelling power inherent in the man-god. The bloody papers, pasted on the lintel, walls, or beds of a house or on the bodies of the family, are supposed to afford complete protection against cholera. Such are the methods by which in Southern China the demons of disease are banished the city.³²⁸

Demons of sickness expelled in Japan, Corea and
Tonquin.

In Japan the old-fashioned method of staying an epidemic is to expel the demon of the plague from every house into which he has entered. The treatment begins with the house in which the malady has appeared in the mildest form. First of all a Shinto priest makes a preliminary visit to the sick-room and extracts from the demon a promise that he will depart with him at his next visit. The day after he comes again, and, seating himself near the patient, beseeches the evil spirit to come away with him. Meanwhile red rice, which is used only on special occasions, has been placed at the sufferer's head, a closed litter made of pine boughs has been brought in, and four men equipped with flags or weapons have taken post in the four corners of the room to

³²⁸ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, vi. (Leyden, 1910) pp. 981 *sqq.*; *id.*, *The Religion of the Chinese* (New York, 1910), pp. 40 *sqq.*

prevent the demon from seeking refuge there. All are silent but the priest. The prayer being over, the sick man's pillow is hastily thrown into the litter, and the priest cries, "All right now!" At that the bearers double with it into the street, the people within and without beat the air with swords, sticks, or anything that comes to hand, while others assist in the cure by banging away at drums and gongs. A procession is now formed in which only men take part, some of them carrying banners, others provided with a drum, a bell, a flute, a horn, and all of them wearing fillets and horns of twisted straw to keep the demon away from themselves. As the procession starts an old man chants, "What god are you bearing away?" To which the others respond in chorus, "The god of the pest we are bearing away!" Then to the music of the drum, the bell, the flute, and the horn the litter is borne through the streets. During its passage all the people in the town who are not taking part in the ceremony remain indoors, every house along the route of the procession is carefully closed, and at the cross-roads swordsmen are stationed, who guard the street by hewing the air to right and left with their blades, lest the demon should escape by that way. The litter is thus carried to a retired spot between two towns and left there, while all who escorted it thither run away. Only the priest remains behind for half an hour to complete the exorcism and the cure. The bearers of the litter spend the night praying in a temple. Next day they return home, but not until they have plunged into a cold bath in the open air to prevent the demon from following

them. The same litter serves to convey the evil spirit from every house in the town.³²⁹ In Corea, when a patient is recovering from the smallpox, a farewell dinner is given in honour of the departing spirit of the disease. Friends and relations are invited, and the spirit's share of the good things is packed on the back of a hobby-horse and despatched to the boundary of the town or village, while respectful farewells are spoken and hearty good wishes uttered for his prosperous journey to his own place.³³⁰ In Tonquin also a banquet is sometimes given to the demon of sickness to induce him to go quietly away from the house. The most honourable place at the festive board is reserved for the fiend; prayers, caresses, and presents are lavished on him; but if he proves obdurate, they assail him with coarse abuse and drive him from the house with musket-shots.³³¹

³²⁹ This description is taken from a newspaper-cutting, which was sent to me from the west of Scotland in October 1890, but without the name or date of the paper. The account, which is headed "Exorcism of the Pest Demon in Japan," purports to be derived from a series of notes on medical customs of the Japanese, which were contributed by Dr. C. H. H. Hall, of the U.S. Navy, to the *Sei-I Kwai Medical Journal*. Compare Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (London, 1894), i. 147.

³³⁰ Masanao Koike, "Zwei Jahren in Korea," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, iv. (1891) p. 10; Mrs. Bishop, *Korea and her Neighbours* (London, 1898), ii. 240.

³³¹ *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Nouvelle Édition (Paris, 1780-1783), xvi. 206. It will be noticed that in this and the preceding case the principle of expulsion is applied for the benefit of an individual, not of a whole community. Yet the method of procedure in both is so similar to that adopted in the cases under consideration that I have allowed myself to cite them.

Demons of sickness expelled in Africa, America.

When an epidemic is raging on the Gold Coast of West Africa, the people will sometimes turn out, armed with clubs and torches, to drive the evil spirits away. At a given signal the whole population begin with frightful yells to beat in every corner of the houses, then rush like mad into the streets waving torches and striking frantically in the empty air. The uproar goes on till somebody reports that the cowed and daunted demons have made good their escape by a gate of the town or village; the people stream out after them, pursue them for some distance into the forest, and warn them never to return. The expulsion of the devils is followed by a general massacre of all the cocks in the village or town, lest by their unseasonable crowing they should betray to the banished demons the direction they must take to return to their old homes. For in that country the forest grows so thick or the grass so high that you can seldom see a village till you are close upon it; and the first warning of your approach to human habitations is the crowing of the cocks.³³² At Great Bassam, in Guinea, the French traveller Hecquard witnessed the exorcism of the evil spirit who was believed to make women barren. The women who wished to become mothers offered to the fetish wine-vessels or statuettes representing women suckling children. Then being assembled in the fetish hut, they were sprinkled with rum by the priest, while young men fired guns and brandished

³³² G. Zündel, "Land und Volk der Eweer auf der Schlawenküste in Westafrika," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, xii. (1877) pp. 414 sq.

swords to drive away the demon.³³³ When smallpox breaks out in a village of the Cameroons, in West Africa, the spirit of the disease is driven out of the village by a “bushman” or member of the oppressed Bassa tribe, the members of which are reputed to possess high magical powers. The mode of expulsion consists in drumming and dancing for several days. Then the village is enclosed by ropes made of creepers in order that the disease may not return. Over the principal paths arches of bent poles are made, and fowls are buried as sacrifices. Plants of various sorts and the mushroom-shaped nests of termite ants are hung from the arches, and a dog, freshly killed, is suspended over the middle of the entrance.³³⁴ The Gallas try to drive away fever by firing guns, shouting, and lighting great fires.³³⁵ When sickness was prevalent in a Huron village, and all other remedies had been tried in vain, the Indians had recourse to the ceremony called *Lonouyroya*, “which is the principal invention and most proper means, so they say, to expel from the town or village the devils and evil spirits which cause, induce, and import all the maladies and infirmities which they suffer in body and mind.” Accordingly, one evening the men would begin to rush like madmen about the village, breaking and upsetting whatever they

³³³ H. Hecquard, *Reise an die Küste und in das Innere von West-Afrika* (Leipsic, 1854), p. 43.

³³⁴ Dr. A. Plehn, “Beobachtungen in Kamerun, über die Anschauungen und Gebräuche einiger Negerstämme,” *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxvi. (1904) pp. 717 sq.

³³⁵ Ph. Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas: die materielle Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1893), p. 177.

came across in the wigwams. They threw fire and burning brands about the streets, and all night long they ran howling and singing without cessation. Then they all dreamed of something, a knife, dog, skin, or whatever it might be, and when morning came they went from wigwam to wigwam asking for presents. These they received silently, till the particular thing was given them which they had dreamed about. On receiving it they uttered a cry of joy and rushed from the hut, amid the congratulations of all present. The health of those who received what they had dreamed of was believed to be assured; whereas those who did not get what they had set their hearts upon regarded their fate as sealed.³³⁶

³³⁶ F. Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons*, pp. 279 sqq. (195 sq. of the reprint, Paris, Libraire Tross, 1865). Compare *Relations des Jésuites*, 1639, pp. 88-92 (Canadian reprint, Quebec, 1858), from which it appears that each man demanded the subject of his dream in the form of a riddle, which the hearers tried to solve. The custom of asking riddles at certain seasons or on certain special occasions is curious and has not yet, so far as I know, been explained. Perhaps enigmas were originally circumlocutions adopted at times when for certain reasons the speaker was forbidden the use of direct terms. They appear to be especially employed in the neighbourhood of a dead body. Thus in Bolang Mongondo (Celebes) riddles may never be asked except when there is a corpse in the village. See N. P. Wilken en J. A. Schwarz, "Allerlei over het land en volk van Bolaäng Mongondou," *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, xi. (1867) p. 357. In the Aru archipelago, while a corpse is uncoffined, the watchers propound riddles to each other, or rather they think of things which the others have to guess. See J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik- en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*, pp. 267 sq. In Brittany after a burial, when the rest have gone to partake of the funeral banquet, old men remain behind in the graveyard, and having seated themselves on mallows, ask each other riddles. See A. de Nore, *Coutumes, Mythes et Traditions des Provinces de France* (Paris and Lyons, 1846), p. 199. Among the Akamba of British East Africa boys and girls at circumcision have to interpret certain pictographs cut on sticks: these

Flight from the demons of sickness.

Sometimes, instead of chasing the demon of disease from their homes, savages prefer to leave him in peaceable possession, while they themselves take to flight and attempt to prevent him from following in their tracks. Thus when the Patagonians were attacked by smallpox, which they attributed to the machinations of an evil spirit, they used to abandon their sick and flee, slashing the air with their weapons and throwing water about in order

pictographs are called "riddles." See C. W. Hobley, *Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African Tribes* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 71 *sq.* In Vedic times the priests proposed enigmas to each other at the great sacrifice of a horse. See *The Satapatha Brahmana*, translated by J. Eggeling, Part v. (Oxford, 1900), pp. 314-316 (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlv.); H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Berlin, 1894), p. 475. Compare O. Schrader, *Reallexikon der indogermanischen Altertumskunde* (Strasburg, 1901), pp. 647 *sq.* Among Turkish tribes of Central Asia girls publicly propound riddles to their wooers, who are punished if they cannot read them. See H. Vambery, *Das Türkenvolk* (Leipzig, 1885), pp. 232 *sq.* Among the Alfoors of Central Celebes riddles may only be asked during the season when the fields are being tilled and the crops are growing. People meeting together at this time occupy themselves with asking riddles and telling stories. As soon as some one has found the answer to a riddle, they all cry out, "Make our rice to grow, make fat ears to grow both in the valleys and on the heights." But during the months which elapse between harvest and the preparation of new land for tillage the propounding of enigmas is strictly forbidden. The writer who reports the custom conjectures that the cry "Make our rice to grow" is addressed to the souls of the ancestors. See A. C. Kruijt, "Een en ander aangaande het geestelijk en maatschappelijk leven van den Poso-Alfoer," *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, xxxix. (1895) pp. 142 *sq.* Amongst the Toboongkoo of Central Celebes riddles are propounded at harvest and by watchers over a corpse. See A. C. Kruijt, "Eenige ethnografische aantekeningen omtrent de Toboengkoe en de Tomori," *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, xlv. (1900) pp. 223, 228.

to keep off the dreadful pursuer; and when after several days' march they reached a place where they hoped to be beyond his reach, they used by way of precaution to plant all their cutting weapons with the sharp edges turned towards the quarter from which they had come, as if they were repelling a charge of cavalry.³³⁷ Similarly, when the Lules or Tonocotes Indians of the Gran Chaco were attacked by an epidemic, they regularly sought to evade it by flight, but in so doing they always followed a sinuous, not a straight, course; because they said that when the disease made after them he would be so exhausted by the turnings and windings of the route that he would never be able to come up with them.³³⁸ When the Indians of New Mexico were decimated by smallpox or other infectious disease, they used to shift their quarters every day, retreating into the most sequestered parts of the mountains and choosing the thorniest thickets they could find, in the hope that the smallpox would be too afraid of scratching himself on the thorns to follow them.³³⁹ When some Chins on a visit to Rangoon were attacked by cholera, they went about with drawn swords to scare away the demon, and they spent the day hiding under bushes so that he might not be able to find

³³⁷ A. d'Orbigny, *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale*, ii. (Paris and Strasburg, 1839-1843) p. 190.

³³⁸ Pedro Lozano, *Description Chorographica del Terreno, Rios, Arboles, y Animales de las dilatadissimas Provincias del Gran Chaco, Gualamba, etc.* (Cordova, 1733) p. 100.

³³⁹ H. H. Bancroft, *Natives Races of the Pacific States* (London, 1875-1876), i. 589 note 259, quoting Arlegui, *Chrón. de Zacatecas*, pp. 152-3, 182.

them.³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ Bertram S. Carey and H. N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills*, i. (Rangoon, 1896) p. 198.

§ 2. The Periodic Expulsion of Evils

The periodic expulsion of evils. Annual expulsion of ghosts in Australia.

The expulsion of evils, from being occasional, tends to become periodic. It comes to be thought desirable to have a general riddance of evil spirits at fixed times, usually once a year, in order that the people may make a fresh start in life, freed from all the malignant influences which have been long accumulating about them. Some of the Australian blacks annually expelled the ghosts of the dead from their territory. The ceremony was witnessed by the Rev. W. Ridley on the banks of the River Barwan. "A chorus of twenty, old and young, were singing and beating time with boomerangs... Suddenly, from under a sheet of bark darted a man with his body whitened by pipeclay, his head and face coloured with lines of red and yellow, and a tuft of feathers fixed by means of a stick two feet above the crown of his head. He stood twenty minutes perfectly still, gazing upwards. An aboriginal who stood by told me he was looking for the ghosts of dead men. At last he began to move very slowly, and soon rushed to and fro at full speed, flourishing a branch as if to drive away some foes invisible to us. When I thought this pantomime must be almost over, ten more, similarly adorned, suddenly appeared from behind the trees, and the whole party joined in a brisk conflict with their mysterious assailants... At

last, after some rapid evolutions in which they put forth all their strength, they rested from the exciting toil which they had kept up all night and for some hours after sunrise; they seemed satisfied that the ghosts were driven away for twelve months. They were performing the same ceremony at every station along the river, and I am told it is an annual custom.”³⁴¹

Annual expulsion of Tuña among the Esquimaux of Alaska.

Certain seasons of the year mark themselves naturally out as appropriate moments for a general expulsion of devils. Such a moment occurs towards the close of an Arctic winter, when the sun reappears on the horizon after an absence of weeks or months. Accordingly, at Point Barrow, the most northerly extremity of Alaska, and nearly of America, the Esquimaux choose the moment of the sun's reappearance to hunt the mischievous spirit Tuña from every house. The ceremony was witnessed by the members of the United States Polar Expedition, who wintered at Point Barrow. A fire was built in front of the council-house, and an old woman was posted at the entrance to every house. The men gathered round the council-house, while the young women and girls drove the spirits out of every house with their knives, stabbing viciously under the bunk and deer-skins, and calling upon Tuña to be gone. When they thought he had been driven out of every hole and corner, they thrust

³⁴¹ Rev. W. Ridley, in J. D. Lang's *Queensland* (London, 1861), p. 441. Compare Rev. W. Ridley, *Kamilaroi* (Sydney, 1875), p. 149.

him down through the hole in the floor and chased him into the open air with loud cries and frantic gestures. Meanwhile the old woman at the entrance of the house made passes with a long knife in the air to keep him from returning. Each party drove the spirit towards the fire and invited him to go into it. All were by this time drawn up in a semicircle round the fire, when several of the leading men made specific charges against the spirit; and each after his speech brushed his clothes violently, calling on the spirit to leave him and go into the fire. Two men now stepped forward with rifles loaded with blank cartridges, while a third brought a vessel of urine and flung it on the flames. At the same time one of the men fired a shot into the fire; and as the cloud of steam rose it received the other shot, which was supposed to finish Tuña for the time being.³⁴²

Annual expulsion of Sedna among the Esquimaux of Baffin Land.

In late autumn, when storms rage over the land and break the icy fetters by which the frozen sea is as yet but slightly bound, when the loosened floes are driven against each other and break with loud crashes, and when the cakes of ice are piled in wild disorder one upon another, the Esquimaux of Baffin Land fancy

³⁴² *Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska* (Washington, 1885), pp. 42 sq. It is said that in Thule, where the sun disappeared below the horizon for forty days every winter, the greatest festival of the year was held when the luminary reappeared. "It seems to me," says Procopius, who records the fact, "that though the same thing happens every year, these islanders are very much afraid lest the sun should fail them altogether." See Procopius, *De bello Gothico*, ii. 15.

they hear the voices of the spirits who people the mischief-laden air. Then the ghosts of the dead knock wildly at the huts, which they cannot enter, and woe to the hapless wight whom they catch; he soon sickens and dies. Then the phantom of a huge hairless dog pursues the real dogs, which expire in convulsions and cramps at sight of him. All the countless spirits of evil are abroad, striving to bring sickness and death, foul weather and failure in hunting on the Esquimaux. Most dreaded of all these spectral visitants are Sedna, mistress of the nether world, and her father, to whose share dead Esquimaux fall. While the other spirits fill the air and the water, she rises from under ground. It is then a busy season for the wizards. In every house you may hear them singing and praying, while they conjure the spirits, seated in a mystic gloom at the back of the hut, which is dimly lit by a lamp burning low. The hardest task of all is to drive away Sedna, and this is reserved for the most powerful enchanter. A rope is coiled on the floor of a large hut in such a way as to leave a small opening at the top, which represents the breathing hole of a seal. Two enchanters stand beside it, one of them grasping a spear as if he were watching a seal-hole in winter, the other holding the harpoon-line. A third sorcerer sits at the back of the hut chanting a magic song to lure Sedna to the spot. Now she is heard approaching under the floor of the hut, breathing heavily; now she emerges at the hole; now she is harpooned and sinks away in angry haste, dragging the harpoon with her, while the two men hold on to the line with all their might. The struggle is

severe, but at last by a desperate wrench she tears herself away and returns to her dwelling in Adlivun. When the harpoon is drawn up out of the hole it is found to be splashed with blood, which the enchanters proudly exhibit as a proof of their prowess. Thus Sedna and the other evil spirits are at last driven away, and next day a great festival is celebrated by old and young in honour of the event. But they must still be cautious, for the wounded Sedna is furious and will seize any one she may find outside of his hut; so they all wear amulets on the top of their hoods to protect themselves against her. These amulets consist of pieces of the first garments that they wore after birth.³⁴³

Annual expulsion of demons among the Koryaks.

The Koryaks of the Taigonos Peninsula, in north-eastern Asia, celebrate annually a festival after the winter solstice. Rich men invite all their neighbours to the festival, offer a sacrifice to “The-One-on-High,” and slaughter many reindeer for their guests. If

³⁴³ Fr. Boas, “The Eskimo,” *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada for 1887*, vol. v. (Montreal, 1888) sect. ii. 36 sq.; *id.*, “The Central Eskimo,” *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, 1888), pp. 603 sq. Elsewhere, however, the writer mentions a different explanation of the custom of harpooning Sedna. He says: “Sedna feels kindly towards the people if they have succeeded in cutting her. If there is no blood on the knife, it is an ill omen. As to the reason why Sedna must be cut, the people say that it is an old custom, and that it makes her feel better, that it is the same as giving a thirsty person drink.” See Fr. Boas, “The Eskimo of Baffin Land and Hudson Bay,” *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, xv. (New York, 1901) p. 139. However, this explanation may well be an afterthought devised to throw light on an old custom of which the original meaning had been forgotten.

there is a shaman present he goes all round the interior of the house, beating the drum and driving away the demons (*kalau*). He searches all the people in the house, and if he finds a demon's arrow sticking in the body of one of them, he pulls it out, though naturally the arrow is invisible to common eyes. In this way he protects them against disease and death. If there is no shaman present, the demons may be expelled by the host or by a woman skilled in incantations.³⁴⁴

Annual expulsion of demons among the Iroquois and the
Cherokees..

The Iroquois inaugurated the new year in January, February, or March (the time varied) with a “festival of dreams” like that which the Hurons observed on special occasions.³⁴⁵ The whole ceremonies lasted several days, or even weeks, and formed a kind of saturnalia. Men and women, variously disguised, went from wigwam to wigwam smashing and throwing down whatever they came across. It was a time of general license; the people were supposed to be out of their senses, and therefore not to be responsible for what they did. Accordingly, many seized the opportunity of paying off old scores by belabouring obnoxious persons, drenching them with ice-cold water, and covering them with filth or hot ashes. Others seized burning brands or coals and flung them at the heads of the first persons they met. The

³⁴⁴ W. Jochelson, *The Koryak* (Leyden and New York, 1908), p. 88 (*The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. vi., *Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History*).

³⁴⁵ Above, p. [121](#).

only way of escaping from these persecutors was to guess what they had dreamed of. On one day of the festival the ceremony of driving away evil spirits from the village took place. Men clothed in the skins of wild beasts, their faces covered with hideous masks, and their hands with the shell of the tortoise, went from hut to hut making frightful noises; in every hut they took the fuel from the fire and scattered the embers and ashes about the floor with their hands. The general confession of sins which preceded the festival was probably a preparation for the public expulsion of evil influences; it was a way of stripping the people of their moral burdens, that these might be collected and cast out. This New Year festival is still celebrated by some of the heathen Iroquois, though it has been shorn of its former turbulence. A conspicuous feature in the ceremony is now the sacrifice of the White Dog, but this appears to have been added to the festival in comparatively modern times, and does not figure in the oldest descriptions of the ceremonies. We shall return to it later on.³⁴⁶ A great annual festival of the Cherokee Indians

³⁴⁶ *Relations des Jésuites*, 1656, pp. 26-28 (Canadian reprint, Quebec, 1858); J. F. Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages Américains* (Paris, 1724), i. 367-369; Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vi. 82 *sqq.*; Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (London, 1823), iv. 201 *sq.*; L. H. Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (Rochester, 1851), pp. 207 *sqq.*; Mrs. E. A. Smith, "Myths of the Iroquois," *Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, 1883), pp. 112 *sqq.*; Horatio Hale, "Iroquois Sacrifice of the White Dog," *American Antiquarian*, vii. (1885) pp. 7 *sqq.*; W. M. Beauchamp, "Iroquois White Dog Feast," *ibid.* pp. 235 *sqq.* "They had one day in the year which might be called the Festival of Fools; for in fact they pretended to be mad, rushing from hut to hut, so that if they ill-treated any one or carried

was the Propitiation, “Cementation,” or Purification festival. “It was celebrated shortly after the first new moon of autumn, and consisted of a multiplicity of rigorous rites, fastings, ablutions, and purifications. Among the most important functionaries on the occasion were seven exorcisers or cleansers, whose duty it was, at a certain stage of the proceedings, to drive away evil and purify the town. Each one bore in his hand a white rod of sycamore. ‘The leader, followed by the others, walked around the national heptagon, and coming to the treasure or store-house to the west of it, they lashed the eaves of the roofs with their rods. The leader then went to another house, followed by the others, singing, and repeated the same ceremony until every house was purified.’ This ceremony was repeated daily during the continuance of the festival. In performing their ablutions they went into the water, and allowed their old clothes to be carried away by the stream, by which means they supposed their impurities removed.”³⁴⁷

Annual expulsion of evils among the Incas of Peru.

In September the Incas of Peru celebrated a festival called Situa, the object of which was to banish from the capital and its vicinity all disease and trouble. The festival fell in September

off anything, they would say next day, ‘I was mad; I had not my senses about me.’ And the others would accept this explanation and exact no vengeance” (L. Hennepin, *Description de la Louisiane*, Paris, 1683, pp. 71 sq.).

³⁴⁷ J. H. Payne, quoted in “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians, by W. Bartram, 1789, with prefatory and supplementary notes by E. G. Squier,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, vol. iii. Part i. (1853) p. 78.

because the rains begin about this time, and with the first rains there was generally much sickness. And the melancholy begotten by the inclemency of the weather and the sickliness of the season may well have been heightened by the sternness of a landscape which at all times is fitted to oppress the mind with a sense of desolation and gloom. For Cuzco, the capital of the Incas and the scene of the ceremony, lies in a high upland valley, bare and treeless, shut in on every side by the most arid and forbidding mountains.³⁴⁸ As a preparation for the festival the people fasted on the first day of the moon after the autumnal equinox. Having fasted during the day, and the night being come, they baked a coarse paste of maize. This paste was made of two sorts. One was kneaded with the blood of children aged from five to ten years, the blood being obtained by bleeding the children between the eyebrows. These two kinds of paste were baked separately, because they were for different uses. Each family assembled at the house of the eldest brother to celebrate the feast; and those who had no elder brother went to the house of their next relation of greater age. On the same night all who had fasted during the day washed their bodies, and taking a little of the blood-kneaded paste, rubbed it over their head, face, breast, shoulders, arms, and legs. They did this in order that the paste might take away all their infirmities. After this the head of the family anointed the threshold with the same paste, and left it there as a token

³⁴⁸ C. Gay, "Fragment d'un voyage dans le Chili et au Cusco patrie des anciens Incas," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), ii. Série, xix. (1843) pp. 29 *sq.*

that the inmates of the house had performed their ablutions and cleansed their bodies. Meantime the High Priest performed the same ceremonies in the temple of the Sun. As soon as the Sun rose, all the people worshipped and besought him to drive all evils out of the city, and then they broke their fast with the paste that had been kneaded without blood. When they had paid their worship and broken their fast, which they did at a stated hour, in order that all might adore the Sun as one man, an Inca of the blood royal came forth from the fortress, as a messenger of the Sun, richly dressed, with his mantle girded round his body, and a lance in his hand. The lance was decked with feathers of many hues, extending from the blade to the socket, and fastened with rings of gold. He ran down the hill from the fortress brandishing his lance, till he reached the centre of the great square, where stood the golden urn, like a fountain, that was used for the sacrifice of the fermented juice of the maize. Here four other Incas of the blood royal awaited him, each with a lance in his hand, and his mantle girded up to run. The messenger touched their four lances with his lance, and told them that the Sun bade them, as his messengers, drive the evils out of the city. The four Incas then separated and ran down the four royal roads which led out of the city to the four quarters of the world. While they ran, all the people, great and small, came to the doors of their houses, and with great shouts of joy and gladness shook their clothes, as if they were shaking off dust, while they cried, "Let the evils be gone. How greatly desired has this festival been by

us. O Creator of all things, permit us to reach another year, that we may see another feast like this.” After they had shaken their clothes, they passed their hands over their heads, faces, arms, and legs, as if in the act of washing. All this was done to drive the evils out of their houses, that the messengers of the Sun might banish them from the city; and it was done not only in the streets through which the Incas ran, but generally in all quarters of the city. Moreover, they all danced, the Inca himself amongst them, and bathed in the rivers and fountains, saying that their maladies would come out of them. Then they took great torches of straw, bound round with cords. These they lighted, and passed from one to the other, striking each other with them, and saying, “Let all harm go away.” Meanwhile the runners ran with their lances for a quarter of a league outside the city, where they found four other Incas ready, who received the lances from their hands and ran with them. Thus the lances were carried by relays of runners for a distance of five or six leagues, at the end of which the runners washed themselves and their weapons in rivers, and set up the lances, in sign of a boundary within which the banished evils might not return.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Garcilasso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Yncas*, translated by (Sir) Clements R. Markham (Hakluyt Society, London, 1869-1871), Part i. bk. vii. ch. 6, vol. ii. pp. 228 *sqq.*; Molina, “Fables and Rites of the Yncas,” in *Rites and Laws of the Yncas* (Hakluyt Society, 1873), pp. 20 *sqq.*; J. de Acosta, *History of the Indies*, bk. v. ch. 28, vol. ii. pp. 375 *sq.* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1880). The accounts of Garcilasso and Molina are somewhat discrepant, but this may be explained by the statement of the latter that “in one year they added, and in another they reduced the number of ceremonies, according to circumstances.” Molina places the festival in

Annual expulsion of demons among the negroes of Guinea.

The negroes of Guinea annually banish the devil from all their towns with much ceremony at a time set apart for the purpose. At Axim, on the Gold Coast, this annual expulsion is preceded by a feast of eight days, during which mirth and jollity, skipping, dancing, and singing prevail, and “a perfect lampooning liberty is allowed, and scandal so highly exalted, that they may freely sing of all the faults, villanies, and frauds of their superiors as well as inferiors, without punishment, or so much as the least interruption.” On the eighth day they hunt out the devil with a dismal cry, running after him and pelting him with sticks, stones, and whatever comes to hand. When they have driven him far enough out of the town, they all return. In this way he is expelled from more than a hundred towns at the same time. To make sure that he does not return to their houses, the women wash and scour all their wooden and earthen vessels, “to free them from all uncleanness and the devil.”³⁵⁰ A later writer tells us that “on the Gold Coast there are stated occasions, when the people turn out *en masse* (generally at night) with clubs and torches to

August, Garcilasso and Acosta in September. According to Garcilasso there were only four runners in Cuzco; according to Molina there were four hundred. Acosta's account is very brief. In the description given in the text features have been borrowed from all three accounts, where these seemed consistent with each other.

³⁵⁰ W. Bosman, “Description of the Coast of Guinea,” in J. Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. (London, 1814) p. 402; Pierre Bouche, *La Côte des Esclaves* (Paris, 1885), p. 395.

drive away the evil spirits from their towns. At a given signal, the whole community start up, commence a most hideous howling, beat about in every nook and corner of their dwellings, then rush into the streets, with their torches and clubs, like so many frantic maniacs, beat the air, and scream at the top of their voices, until some one announces the departure of the spirits through some gate of the town, when they are pursued several miles into the woods, and warned not to come back. After this the people breathe easier, sleep more quietly, have better health, and the town is once more cheered by an abundance of food.”³⁵¹

Annual expulsion of demons in Benin.

The ceremony as it is practised at Gatto, in Benin, has been described by an English traveller. He says: “It was about this time that I witnessed a strange ceremony, peculiar to this people, called the time of the ‘grand devils.’ Eight men were dressed in a most curious manner, having a dress made of bamboo about their bodies, and a cap on the head, of various colours and ornamented with red feathers taken from the parrot's tail; round the legs were twisted strings of shells, which made a clattering noise as they walked, and the face and hands of each individual were covered with a net. These strange beings go about the town, by day and by night, for the term of one month, uttering the most discordant and frightful noises; no one durst venture out at night for fear of being killed or seriously maltreated by these fellows, who are

³⁵¹ Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa* (London, 1856), p. 217.

then especially engaged in driving the evil spirits from the town. They go round to all the chief's houses, and in addition to the noise they make, perform some extraordinary feats in tumbling and gymnastics, for which they receive a few cowries.”³⁵²

Annual expulsion of demons at Cape Coast Castle.

At Cape Coast Castle, on the Gold Coast, the ceremony was witnessed on the ninth of October 1844 by an Englishman, who has described it as follows: “To-night the annual custom of driving the evil spirit, Abonsam, out of the town has taken place. As soon as the eight o'clock gun fired in the fort the people began firing muskets in their houses, turning all their furniture out of doors, beating about in every corner of the rooms with sticks, etc., and screaming as loudly as possible, in order to frighten the devil. Being driven out of the houses, as they imagine, they sallied forth into the streets, throwing lighted torches about, shouting, screaming, beating sticks together, rattling old pans, making the most horrid noise, in order to drive him out of the town into the sea. The custom is preceded by four weeks' dead silence; no gun is allowed to be fired, no drum to be beaten, no palaver to be made between man and man. If, during these weeks, two natives should disagree and make a noise in the town, they are immediately taken before the king and fined heavily. If a dog or pig, sheep or goat be found at large in the street, it may be killed, or taken by anyone, the former owner not being allowed

³⁵² *Narrative of Captain James Fawcckner's Travels on the Coast of Benin, West Africa* (London, 1837), pp. 102 sq.

to demand any compensation. This silence is designed to deceive Abonsam, that, being off his guard, he may be taken by surprise, and frightened out of the place. If anyone die during the silence, his relatives are not allowed to weep until the four weeks have been completed.”³⁵³

Annual expulsion of evils on the Niger and in Abyssinia.

At Onitsha, on the Niger, Mr. J. C. Taylor witnessed the celebration of New Year's Day by the negroes. It fell on the twentieth of December 1858. Every family brought a firebrand out into the street, threw it away, and exclaimed as they returned, “The gods of the new year! New Year has come round again.” Mr. Taylor adds, “The meaning of the custom seems to be that the fire is to drive away the old year with its sorrows and evils, and to embrace the new year with hearty reception.”³⁵⁴ Of all Abyssinian festivals that of Mascal or the Cross is celebrated with the greatest pomp. During the whole of the interval between St. John's day and the feast a desultory warfare is waged betwixt the youth of opposite sexes in the towns. They all sally out in the evenings, the boys armed with nettles or thistles and the girls with gourds containing a filthy solution of all sorts of abominations. When any of the hostile parties meet, they begin

³⁵³ “Extracts from Diary of the late Rev. John Martin, Wesleyan Missionary in West Africa, 1843-1848,” *Man*, xii. (1912) pp. 138 sq. Compare Major A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-hunters of Nigeria* (London, 1912), pp. 202 sq.

³⁵⁴ S. Crowther and J. C. Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger* (London, 1859), p. 320.

by reviling each other in the foulest language, from which they proceed to personal violence, the boys stinging the girls with their nettles, while the girls discharge their stink-pots in the faces of their adversaries. These hostilities may perhaps be regarded as a preparation for the festival of the Cross. The eve of the festival witnesses a ceremony which doubtless belongs to the world-wide class of customs we are dealing with. At sunset a discharge of firearms takes place from all the principal houses. "Then every one provides himself with a torch, and during the early part of the night bonfires are kindled, and the people parade the town, carrying their lighted torches in their hands. They go through their houses, too, poking a light into every dark corner in the hall, under the couches, in the stables, kitchen, etc., as if looking for something lost, and calling out, 'Akho, akhoky! turn out the spinage, and bring in the porridge; Mascal is come!'... After this they play, and poke fun and torches at each other." Next morning, while it is still dark, bonfires are kindled on the heights near the towns, and people rise early to see them. The rising sun of Mascal finds the whole population of Abyssinia awake.³⁵⁵

Annual expulsion of spirits at the yam harvest in New Guinea. Annual expulsion of demons among the Hos of West Africa before eating the new yams.

Sometimes the date of the annual expulsion of devils is fixed with reference to the agricultural seasons. Thus at Kiriwina,

³⁵⁵ Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia*, Second Edition (London, 1868), pp. 285 sq.

in South-Eastern New Guinea, when the new yams had been harvested, the people feasted and danced for many days, and a great deal of property, such as armlets, native money, and so forth, was displayed conspicuously on a platform erected for the purpose. When the festivities were over, all the people gathered together and expelled the spirits from the village by shouting, beating the posts of the houses, and overturning everything under which a wily spirit might be supposed to lurk. The explanation which the people gave to a missionary was that they had entertained and feasted the spirits and provided them with riches, and it was now time for them to take their departure. Had they not seen the dances, and heard the songs, and gorged themselves on the souls of the yams, and appropriated the souls of the money and all the other fine things set out on the platform? What more could the spirits want? So out they must go.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ George Brown, D.D., *Melanesians and Polynesian* (London, 1910), pp. 413 sq.

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