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THE LITERATURE OF WITCHCRAFT

BY

PROF. GEORGE L. BURR

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

[REPRINTED FROM THE PAPERS OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION]

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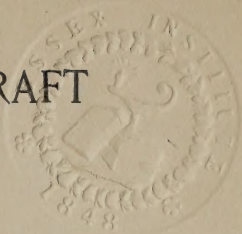
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THE LITERATURE OF WITCHCRAFT.

By PROF. GEORGE L. BURR, Cornell University.

The literature of witchcraft is not the literature of magic. Magic is world-wide. Wherever, from the first, men have found themselves face to face with the awful powers of nature and of fate which shut in their little lives, some have disdained either to bow to them in reverent submission or to seek by bribes and wheedling to win them to their side. They have tried to outwit mystery with speculation, and to outmatch force with cunning. With spell and incantation they have dared to face the grim demons of storm and fire and flood, to bid begone the lurking fiends of disease, to dip into the dread secret of the future, to call back from the shadows the loved figures of the dead, to make the gods themselves their servants. And if, at last, they have been fain to own to themselves that their lore is, after all, but vanity and their powers a delusion, they have meanwhile found in the eager credulity of their fellows, to whom they no longer dare to confess their impotence, a treasure scarcely less tempting than the favor of the gods. Over against what they deemed the hocus-pocus of worship they have set up the hocus-pocus of magic; and, as the prophet is followed by the priest, the magician is followed by the sorcerer. Under the peaceful stars of Akkadian Chaldæa, centuries before Terah wandered westward with his son, or in the tornado-torn jungles of the last-found South Sea island, the impulse and its outcome have been ever the same.

Compared with the potent share of magic in human history, its literature is indeed but scant. Its choicest secrets have always gone by word of mouth. Yet it is a literature

of all times and lands. From the clay volumes of Assyrian kings and the papyrus rolls of Egypt to the latest utterance of the spirits through Mr. Slade or of the mystic sages of the Orient through Mr. Sinnett, it is as perennial as human folly itself. Its faith may be feigned, its miracles sham; but magic itself is actual and universal.

But witchcraft never was. It was but a shadow, a nightmare: the nightmare of a religion, the shadow of a dogma. Less than five centuries saw its birth, its vigor, its decay. And this birth, this vigor, this decay, were—to a degree perhaps else unknown in history—caused by and mirrored in a literature. Of that literature it has during the last decade been mine, as librarian of the President White Library at Cornell University, to aid in building up a collection. In the last few months I have had in hand the making ready of its catalogue for the press. My task is by no means finished, and I have much to learn; but it has seemed to me that even such a hurried survey of the literature of witchcraft as I may presume to attempt may not be without interest to the American Historical Association. And this the more, since no adequate bibliography of it has ever yet been published, and no historian has thoroughly known and exploited it.

The literature of witchcraft, indeed, if under the name be included all the books which touch upon that dark subject, is something enormous. For at least four centuries no comprehensive work on theology, on philosophy, on history, on law, on medicine, on natural science, could wholly ignore it; and to lighter literature it afforded the most telling illustrations for the pulpit, the most absorbing gossip for the newsletter, the most edifying tales for the fireside. But the works devoted wholly or mainly to witchcraft are much fewer. Roundly and rudely estimated, this monographic literature includes perhaps a thousand or fifteen hundred titles.¹

¹ I need not say that the President White Library does not possess them all; its lacunæ are many, and not unimportant. It has, however, the largest collection, private or public, with which I am acquainted. My estimate is a guess, based partly upon it, partly upon the "Bibliotheca magica" of Grässe, partly upon my notes as to the gaps in each; but it is hard to discriminate between books treating mainly of witchcraft and those treating only largely or ostensibly of it.

The earliest of the books on witchcraft were written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Their writers were Dominicans of the Inquisition. Not that Brother Nicolas Eymeric or Brother Nicolas Jaquier or Brother John Vineti or Brother Jerome Visconti knew that he was writing on a new theme. On the contrary, they wrote to prove that this witchcraft whereof they spoke was as old as mankind. And they cited not only Thomas Aquinas and Vincent of Beauvais, but Isidore and Gregory and Cassian and Augustine, and, above all, the Bible,—nay, even Josephus and the ancient poets, Horace and Virgil and Ovid. Wherein, then, was it really new, and how did they come to write on it at all? Bear with me while I try very briefly to answer.

Magic, in truth, the Christian Church had always known. Even the ancient faiths of Greece and Rome had, like all faiths, fought magic sternly; and, like all faiths, had counted magic much that was not so. But their polytheistic tolerance had reckoned it more a crime than a sin, and had not stigmatized as magical other faiths, save when, as in the case of Christianity, their own exclusiveness seemed to stamp their votaries as foes to the rest of mankind. Less indifferent was Christianity itself. Whatever the conceptions of her founder and of his immediate disciples, it was inevitable that, from the associations of the words in which they must express themselves, from the other preconceptions of the taught, from the influence of the Jewish scriptures, from the daily contact with Hebrew or Greek or Roman neighbors, there should early creep into the Church a touch of the superstition about her. She had inherited, indeed, the monotheism of the Jews. But, at the rise of Christianity, the day was long past when the stern logic of that monotheism saw in Jehovah the sole supernatural power, and in other worships only a fruitless idolatry. From the Persian captivity the Jews had brought back an obstinate belief in a horde of minor intelligences—the angels and demons of the New Testament period; and their teachers, seeking to justify this by one or two obscure passages in their sacred books, had

built up out of them a complete science of demonology.¹ To the ranks of the demons the early Christians seem at once to have assigned the deities of their heathen neighbors.² And the consciences of their Gentile converts, who found it far easier to believe the new God supreme than the old gods powerless, took most kindly to this solution. But, if the gods were devils, their worship was not mere idolatry—it was magic; and the two terms became for the Christian interchangeable.

Still stranger and darker grew the conception of magic under the influence of another Christian idea—the new idea that religion and ethics are one. Henceforth not only is there but one true God, there is but one good God. All others are fiends, hating men because God loves them, and winning their trust only to cheat and ruin them. He who willingly becomes their accomplice or their victim is utterly evil—an enemy to his kind, to be visited by the Church

¹ Notably out of the poetic opening verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis, which always remained the proof-passage for the demonologic system of the Church. On it had been based that mystical "book of Enoch," which exercised so striking an influence upon Jewish thought during the centuries just before and just after the Christian era, and indeed upon the writers of the New Testament themselves (Jude, for example, cites it largely and by name), and which was treated by the early Christians as wholly canonical. Hence came the legend of the fall of the angels, so familiar to us through Milton, and a commonplace in the older day. Of even more lasting influence was the demonologic romance of Tobias, or Tobit, which is now classed by Protestants as apocryphal, but which was cited by the earliest Christian writers with the same freedom as any part of the Old Testament, and still retains its place in the Catholic Bible. No book was so largely quoted by the later Christian writers on diabolism and witchcraft. The whole theory of exorcism indeed is mainly based on it; and, still more, the horrible belief in *incubi*. Of importance also (besides all that could be found in the books of our canon) were the demonologic passages of the apocryphal "Wisdom of Solomon" and "Ecclesiasticus." Tertullian cites the latter, like any other book of Scripture, with the solemn "as it is written" (*sicut scriptum est*). See Diestel, "Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche"; Reuss, "Geschichte des Alten Testaments"; and Emanuel Deutsch, "The Talmud" (in his "Literary remains").

² This impulse must have been powerfully aided by the current translation of a familiar passage in the Psalms. Where we read (Ps. xcvi, 5): "All the gods of the nations are idols," the early Church read: "All the gods of the nations are devils." The passage is constantly cited by the Fathers in this sense. Even Wiclif translates: "Alle the goddis of hethene men ben feendis [fiends]."

with her severest penances, by the state with death itself. It matters no longer with what spirit one seeks the aid of the gods, or for what ends: all but Christian worship is devil-worship,—magic,—mortal sin.

Here were indeed the germs of the later idea of witchcraft. Yet only the germs; for there was much to stay their growth. Though the world swarmed with demons, though the majority of mankind were devoted to their service, the Christian had little or nothing to fear from them.¹ A prayer, an exorcism, the sign of the cross, the mere name of Christ, could put legions of them to instant flight. It was the Christian's glory to baffle and set them at naught. Moreover, the whole theory was aimed at paganism, and paganism was passing away. Even the inundation of Christendom by the Germanic nations could not long retard its disappearance. Their host of deities, great and small—Asa and Jotun and troll and nix and kobold—swelled for a moment almost to bursting the ranks of the devils. But these, too, soon fell back into the ghostly twilight. Here and there some canny old mother might still gather by stealth the mystic herbs with which she trenched so vexatiously upon the monkish trade of healing,—might still haunt sacred spring or tree or rock, muttering the meaningless formulas of a forgotten faith. But such, though scholars were long prone to count them so, were not the witches of the later day. The Church grew wisely less stern toward them, rather than more so. As the spirit of Christianity took a more exclusive hold upon the minds of men, the grandeur of the monotheistic idea once more asserted itself. Resort to the old heathen rites was magic indeed; but it was magical superstition. Its marvels were not real marvels. Only God had power over nature. In this, though with much wavering and self-contradiction, the teachers of western Christendom in the ninth, the tenth, and the eleventh centuries

¹ What could be more vivid than the story of the old hermit who prayed God that he might see the demons, and would not be denied; "and God opened his eyes, and he saw them, for just like bees do they surround man, grating their teeth over him."—"Verba Seniorum," lib. vi., libel. i., c. 11 ("Vita Patrum," ii.).

agree¹; and the earliest codes of the crystallizing Canon Law, from Regino of Prüm to Gratian, punish as superstition alike the resort to the aid of demons and the belief that such aid can be given. "Let it be publicly announced to all," ran the famous canon *Episcopi*, which formed the nucleus of the Church's teaching on this point, "that whoso believeth such fables [as that women may ride through the air] and things like this, has lost the faith; and whoso has not faith in God is none of his, but is his in whom he believes, to wit, the Devil's. Whoever, therefore, believes it to be possible that any creature can be changed into a worse or a better, or transformed into any other shape or likeness, except by the Creator himself, who made all things and by whom all things were made, is beyond doubt an infidel and worse than a pagan."² Under such handling the hold of the older faiths upon the popular imagination had, by the

¹ Only Archbishop Agobard, of Lyons (779-c.841), a man in many ways before his time, went so far as to write a book—what we should call a pamphlet—upon the absurdity of the popular superstitions: his "Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis." The essay "De magicis artibus" (perhaps the first Christian monograph on the subject) by his learned contemporary and colleague, Archbishop Hrabanus Maurus, of Mainz, is far more credulous, and, like most of that great teacher's work, mainly a compilation. Not forgotten by him are the Scripture texts against witchcraft, beginning with the terrible "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." He treats the same theme in similar fashion in his encyclopædic "De universo" and in his "Penitentiale." It was later in the same century that another great Frankish archbishop, Hincmar of Rheims, found himself brought face to face with the problem of magic, in his legal response on the divorce of King Lothaire ("De divortio Lotharii regis et Tetbergæ reginæ"), three of the thirty questions asked him involving it. He discussed the subject at much length, and, though credulously enough, in the main sensibly.

² The source of the canon is, indeed, now a riddle. Its ascription to the synod of Ancyra, which the Middle Age never questioned, is now known to be a mere blunder. But, from its first appearance, in the collection of Regino at the close of the ninth century, it became the recognized dictum of the Canon Law upon this subject, and remained unimpeached, even by those who devoted chapters to explaining it away, until after the Reformation. It surely was no accident that it came to light at the end of the same century in which Agobard wrote. Bishop Burchard, of Worms (d. 1025), who followed Regino as a collector of ecclesiastical law, and gave a whole book of his "Decreta" to decisions "De incantatoribus et auguribus," sets the canon *Episcopi* at its head. But this prominence in order it lost in the later compositions.

close of the twelfth century, well nigh passed away. The magic the Church had so long fought was virtually dead.

But the wording of the canon *Episcopi* itself suggests that a new cloud was already fast overspreading the horizon of Christianity—the fear, not of devils, but of the Devil. By a tendency natural to monotheism, the intenser the conception of the oneness and the goodness of God, the stronger the impulse to conceive of that which is opposed to him and to his purposes as also one and as absolutely evil. Even the earliest of the Christians seem to have understood their master to speak of such a principle as of a personal being. And, as the westward-moving faith waxed in literalness and in sternness,—as, beneath the flood of Roman ideas and ideals, the figure of God grew more majestic and imperious,—his awful shadow loomed ever more awful in the darkening background. The rise of asceticism lent a finishing touch, and metaphysics became mythology. To the tortured brain and sense of the hermit-monk the Devil was the most real being in the universe—his personal antagonist at every turn, seen and felt and grappled with. And no Christian doubted. Athanasius, the father of orthodoxy, himself gave to the world, in his life of Antony, a household book of diabolism—the “Robinson Crusoe” of the Middle Ages, with Satan (an odd man-Friday) its most vivid figure.¹ And Augustine, the great theologian of Latin Christianity—a Manichæan in spite of himself—in his “City of God,” that first Christian philosophy of history, which lorded the field for a thousand years (if, indeed, it does not lord it still), raised him to colleagueship with God himself by setting over against the *civitas Dei*, the kingdom of Heaven, a

¹ It is true that the long discourse, put into Antony's mouth (c. 15-20), on the power and wiles of the Devil and the way to resist him, which may almost be called the first Christian monograph on diabolism, may possibly be an interpolation; but it breathes the very spirit of the Fathers, and the whole narrative is full of the Devil's doings. The popularity of the book throughout the Christian world is attested by what Augustine tells us in his “Confessions,” and the part there ascribed to it in his own conversion must have tended to increase its influence. What a favorite its story was with the sculptors and painters of the later Middle Ages we all know.

civitas Diaboli, the kingdom of this world, whose prince was Satan. Christianity grew ever more a dualism.¹

His place in theology thus made sure, the literature of the Devil seems to have taken a long pause.² In the Lives of the Saints he still played a large and favorite part—the villain of the plot in these lesser comedies, as in the grand historical drama of the Gospels.³ But it was probably not until the ninth century that there began to find their way into the West certain Byzantine traditions which seemed to throw a fresh light upon the methods of his dealing with men: legends of written compacts through which men had won the aid of Satan in this world by making over to him their souls for the next. Versified and dramatized by bishop and nun, these legends became widely popular and stirred to a fever European curiosity.⁴ And when, a little later, the Crusades threw open wide the door to the fables of the East, and kindled that love of anecdote which made

¹ True, Augustine taught, and the Church after him, that Satan could do nothing save by the tacit consent of God; but the limitation was scarcely more than nominal, since against sinners he was believed to be given free hand, and only the immediate and incessant protection of the Church could ensure safety. The carnal mind was powerless to recognize him: did not the Scripture itself say that he could appear as an angel of light? Nay, he often took the form of Christ himself, as more than one hermit had testified.

² Chrysostom's monograph, "De imbecillitate Diaboli," is too metaphysical to be reckoned here at all, as likewise is Anselm's "Dialogus de casu Diaboli" of a half-dozen centuries later.

³ For illustration of this, one has but to open the "Vitae Patrum" at random. Of the "Collationes" of Cassian, a book of the greatest influence throughout the Middle Ages, especially in the monasteries, "Collatio VII.," "quae est prima abbatis Sereni," and "Collatio VIII.," "quae est secunda abbatis Sereni," deal mainly with diabolism and are full of anecdote.

⁴ Notably, of course, the famous one of Theophilus, ostensibly written by one Eutychianus in the sixth century, but known to the West through a Latin version made by a Naples deacon named Paulus, probably toward the close of the ninth century. (It may be found, with the metrical paraphrase ascribed to Bishop Marbod, in the Bollandist "Acta Sanctorum" for 4th February. Better known in our day, though not in hers, is its dramatization by the nun Hroswitha—one of many.) Another, scarcely less popular in the Middle Ages, though strangely overlooked by later writers, was the tale (first told in the "Life of Basil" ascribed apocryphally to his contemporary, Bishop Amphilocheus of Iconium) of the senator's valet who fell in love with his master's daughter, won her by signing away his soul to the Devil, and was saved only through the aid

every friar a newsmonger and every preacher a story-teller, there was scarce another domain in which the monkish imagination proved so fertile as in that of diabolism. Stephen of Bourbon gave the subject a section,¹ Caesarius of Heisterbach a whole book,² Thomas of Cantimpré dwelt on it in his latest and longest chapters,³ the Abbot Richalmus found it enough for a monograph.⁴ Hardly less prolific in such stories than the moralizers were the gossiping chroniclers.⁵ And the encyclopedists, like Vincent of Beauvais, whatever else they might fail to glean, overlooked no interference of the Devil in the affairs of men.⁶

It was, perhaps, through the channel of the Crusades that there became known to Western theologians certain abstruser speculations of Byzantine thinkers: a treatise "On flying demons of the night,"⁷ which gained much vogue from its ascription to the formulator of Eastern orthodoxy, John of Damascus, and a dialogue "On the doings of demons,"⁸ by

of St. Basil, who forced the fiend to surrender the contract. I find the story (it is a long one) first told in the West by Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882) in his response "De divortio Lotharii," who credits it to Amphilochius. Its influence in the Occident would seem, therefore, to be of about the same age as that of the Theophilus legend, which, in several respects, is less like the later witch-stories. After Hincmar the anecdote appears often. Of modern writers on witchcraft, Roskoff alone mentions it, on the basis of a vague allusion of Schwager's; and Schwager had evidently sought for it in vain, misunderstanding it to be in Basil's "Dialogues." Amphilochius' "Vita Basilii" may be found in the "Vitae Patrum," and in the Bollandist "Acta Sanctorum" (June, vol. iii.).

¹ In his "De septem donis," tit. vii., cap. 34, sp. 5.

² In his "Dialogus miraculorum," distinctio v.

³ In his "Bonum universale de apibus," cap. 54-56. The first of these chapters is "De diabolo transfigurantis se in angelum lucis"; the last, "De demonibus aërem perturbantibus." Thomas was a Dominican, and wrote, as he himself here tells us, in 1258.

⁴ His "Liber revelationum de insidiis et versutiis daemonum adversus homines" (in Pez, "Thesaurus," I., ii.).

⁵ *E.g.*, Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, or John of Winterthur (Vitoduranus).

⁶ Of Vincent it is especially the "Speculum Historiale" that thus abounds. To this great compilation the earliest writers on witchcraft owed their precedents almost as largely as they owed their arguments to Thomas Aquinas.

⁷ "De draconibus" is the usual, but misleading, form of its Latin title.

⁸ "De operatione daemonum" it is entitled in the Latin translation of Gaulmin (1615) and in the edition of the Greek original by Boissonade (1837).

Michael Psellus, the most prolific author of the mediæval Greek Church. Both of these discussed in minute and unblushing detail the relations of devils with mortals.

They came opportunely. The great structure of the scholastic philosophy, which, resting on the sure basis of Scripture and compassing all knowledge, was to put an end forever to the restless speculations of the human mind, was just in the making. Already the dualism of Augustine had been made its corner-stone. And now, resting perhaps on these Greek suggestions, as on the earlier Byzantine vagaries of the pseudo-Dionysius, with that relentless logic which made their system (possibly excepting the harder Protestant scholasticism of Calvin) the baldest rationalism the world has known, its builders wrought out, in this atmosphere of the thirteenth century, and buttressed on every side with text and canon, the scheme of diabolism of which the whole literature of witchcraft is but a broken reflection. Into the details of that scheme I need not go. The Devil and his demons become in all points the conscious parody of God and his angels.¹

As fallen angels, they still have power over storm, and lightning, and pestilence, and "whatsoever"—to use the schoolmen's phrase—"has local motion alone." And just as God has his human servants, his church, on earth, so also the Devil has his—men and women sworn to his service and true to his bidding. To win such followers he can appear to men in any form he pleases, can deceive them, seduce them, enter into compact with them, initiate them into his worship, make them his allies for the ruin of their fellows. Now, it is these human allies and servants of Satan, thus postulated into existence by the brain of a monkish logician,² whom history knows as "witches."

¹ "*Diabolus simia Dei est*," is the startling formula in which the Middle Age embodied this doctrine and betrayed its source.

² For, strictly speaking, it is only to Thomas of Aquino that this theory can be attributed; but Thomas Aquinas was *par excellence* the creator of the scholastic theology. It is he who was sainted for his wisdom, who has been raised by the Popes to the rank of a fifth Teacher of the Church (*Doctor ecclesiae*), the only successor of Athanasius and Ambrose and Jerome and Augustine. How

At first, indeed, the dictum of the schoolmen seemed little to affect the current of popular thought. The Devil played only an ever merrier part in the travel-quickened fancy of Europe; and one can almost catch the twinkle in the eye of the monkish story-tellers who pretend to shudder at his pranks.

But the Church was in earnest. Scholasticism, alas, had not put an end to thought. The minds it had trained to think kept on thinking; and, with them, others who would not even start from the safe premises of the Church. What, then, should a good mother-church do who had expounded the universe, yet still found herself vexed by questioners more numerous and troublesome than before? What if they contaminate even the faithful? She preached a crusade against them, and wiped the plague-spot from her sight. But the disease only struck in. How should she inspect men's hearts? She made stated confession necessary to

thoroughly he is alone responsible may be seen by comparing his dicta on this topic with those of his great master, Albert of Bollstädt (Albertus Magnus), who still stands fully on the ground of the canon *Episcopi*. These dicta of Thomas are scattered throughout his works, but were carefully gleaned by all the earlier writers on witchcraft, and may be found bodily in their pages; they cite him more than all other authorities together, save the Bible. Thus, in the midst of his discussion of impediments to matrimony (in his "Quodlibeta," x., questio 10, "De maleficiatis"), he bursts out: "Of witchcraft, however, be it known: that certain have said that there is no such thing, and that this [idea] proceeded from infidelity, because they would have it that there are no demons, save by the imagination of men—inasmuch, that is, as men imagined them, and, terrified by that imagining, were distressed. But the Catholic faith teaches, both that there are demons and that by their doings they can distress men." . . . ("Fides autem catholica vult: et quod daemones sint et possint eorum operationibus laedere et impedire carnalem copulam." I quote from the edition of Nuremberg, 1474.) Of the dogmas that cluster about the terrible word *incubus*,—not to be uttered without a blush or heard without a shudder,—let me not speak.

His fellow-Dominicans followed him at once, and gradually brought the Church to their side, but not without opposition. The Franciscans, especially, long stood out. Their great summist, Astexanus de Ast, writing in 1317, will go no whit beyond the canon *Episcopi*. Even Alfonso de Spina, in 1459, refused to believe in the witch-flight; and men like Samuel de Cassinis and Franciscus à Victoria carried the Franciscan protest far into the sixteenth century. But this, of course, only intensified the Dominican championship of the dogma.

salvation. But the heretics would not confess. Then, in her desperation, she hit upon that last expedient for the detection of wrong thinking: she devised the Holy Inquisition and put in its hand the torture. How supremely effective that was I need not tell you: it is not its dealing with the heretics that concerns us. But when, in the lands where the Inquisition had found entrance, heresy was at last utterly rooted out,—when the souls of the faithful were safe and the hands of the inquisitors idle,—then, as was natural, the hungry organization cast its eyes about for other victims. Had not the prince of the schoolmen, the oracle of the Dominican order, taught that there were among men other servants of the Devil, more subtle, more dangerous, than the heretics: the men and women devoted altogether to his service—the witches? Already, as early as 1257, the Inquisition had asked the Pope “whether it ought not to take cognizance of divination and sorcery.” He had refused, unless manifest heresy were involved. But, if St. Thomas is right, said the inquisitors, witchcraft itself *is* heresy. Their victims were forced to confess to a renunciation of God and an actual pact with Satan, express or tacit, and the Inquisition rapidly extended its jurisdiction in the matter. In 1320, the panic-stricken Pope, John XXII., trembling lest he himself be bewitched by his multiplying foes, begged the inquisitors, in a formal brief, to extirpate utterly the Devil-worshippers.¹ The Church was now fully committed. The rules for the direction of the inquisitors became ever more explicit,² *Summa* and *Confessionale* for

¹ A little later the same Pope issued a general bull (an *extravagans*) “contra magos magicasque superstitiones.” It may be found in Eymeric’s “Directorium inquisitorum” (pars ii., qu. 43) or in Binsfeld’s “De confessionibus malefactorum. It is undated, but Janus (Döllinger and Huber) puts it “about 1330.”

² It was about 1350 when the inquisitors fortified themselves by taking the advice of the most eminent jurist of the day, the Italian professor Bartolo, as to the punishment to be inflicted on the witches. His opinion is still extant (in Ziletti, “Consilia selecta,” 1577, i., 8). On the strength of the words of Jesus, “If a man abide not in me [*i. e.*, said Bartolo and the inquisitors, in the Church], he is cast forth as a branch, . . . and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned;” he approved their burning alive. (See Janus, *i. e.*, Döllinger and Huber, “The Pope and the Council,” London, 1869, pp. 254, 255.)

priest and sinner ever more diffuse, as to this blackest of the sins—"treason against Heaven."

But hindrance came from a more obstinate quarter. Even though the Church were convinced, the world had yet to be reasoned with. What was, then, this new crime, of which such myriads were suddenly guilty? Even the great state trials of the Templars, in the early years of the fourteenth century, with all the stir they made throughout Europe, and with all the stress they sought to lay on the charge of witchcraft, had not left the conception clear. The thing must be explained by the inquisitors themselves. And so it happened that the beginnings of the literature of witchcraft were made by Dominicans of the Inquisition.

Clever was their argument and portentous their array of authorities. First of all, the Bible. And let the historian frankly admit that, but for what they found here, the world would never have come to their side. That strange sixth chapter of Genesis,—the terrible verdict of the Mosaic code, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,"—the story of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, which seemed to a literal age to set a divine seal on the most startling of the witch-doctrines: had not the Devil personally appeared to Jesus?—had he not miraculously transported him through the air?—had he not shown himself the lord of the kingdoms of this world?—had he not sought to make a pact with the Christ himself by offering him all?—were it not dishonor to the Son of God to suppose that all men could resist as he had done? These passages, and a host of others which we have learned to forget, or obscure, or explain away, made the Bible, from first to last, the great corner-stone of the literature of witchcraft.¹ Yet this was but the inquisitor's starting-point. He knew how to press into his service poet and philosopher, the apologists of the early Church, her liturgies with their exorcisms and renunciations of the Devil, the canons of synods and councils, the laws of Christ-

¹ And what wonder, when even a reformer like John Wesley, late in the enlightened eighteenth century, still thought that "the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible"? (In his "Journal," 1768,—cited by Mr. Lecky.)

ian emperors, the great works of the Fathers and of the Schoolmen, the lives of the saints, the tales of the chroniclers, the utterances of the popes.

The earliest known to me of these inquisitorial treatises on witchcraft is from the pen of the great compiler of the code of the Inquisition, the author of the "Directorium inquisitorium," the Aragonese Inquisitor-General, Nicolas Eymeric. As early as 1359, only three years after entering on his duties, he produced his "Tractatus contra daemonum invocatores,"¹ to prove that witchcraft was heresy, and that its punishment belonged to the Inquisition. But the world was still hard of faith. The Inquisition in France having shown itself too active, the Parlement of Paris in 1390 assumed to the secular courts all jurisdiction in cases of witchcraft.

But, in 1431, the trial and condemnation of Jeanne d'Arc, at Rouen, by an ecclesiastical court under English

¹ The book, though existing in sundry MSS. (see Quétif and Échard, "Script. Ord. Pred.," and Antonio, "Bibl. Script. Hispan."), has never been printed, and I have not seen it; but its attitude may be guessed from Eymeric's treatment of the subject in the "Directorium." The statement (made by Antonio and others) that he was led to write it by the denial of his jurisdiction in the case of a certain Barcelonese Jew, can hardly be true, since the "Directorium" (pars ii., qu. 46) puts this episode "in the time of Pope Urban V.," whose papacy began in 1362. A better explanation is suggested by Mr. Lea, when he tells us ("The Inquisition of the Middle Ages," ii., 175) that "the sum of Eymeric's activity during his long career is so small that it shows how little was left of heresy by this time. Occasional Fraticelli and Waldenses and renegade Jews or Saracens were all that rewarded the inquisitor, with every now and then some harmless lunatic whose extravagance unfortunately took a religious turn, or some over-subtle speculator on the intricacies of dogmatic theology."

A Paris MS. of Eymeric's book begins (according to Quétif): "Incipit prologus in tractatum super daemonum invocatione, an scilicet daemones invocare sapiat haeresim manifeste, editum et confectum a F. Nicolas Eymerici ord. FF. Prædic.," and bears at end its date: "perfectus anno D[omi]ni MCCCLIX." The latter may refer only to the MS.; but the book must of course be at least as old. The title of the work is elsewhere given as "Contra adoratores et advocatores daemonum"; and the Escorial catalogue (cited by Antonio) calls it: "De jurisdictione Inquisitorum in et contra Christianos daemones invocantes." Eymeric would seem to have completed or supplemented this by another: "De jurisdictione ecclesiae et inquisitorum contra infideles daemones invocantes" (see Quétif and Échard), and it is perhaps the latter that was called forth by the case of the Barcelona Jew.

protection, drew the eyes of all Europe; and, though in it the charge of witchcraft had taken but a subordinate place, and had been used with an awkwardness at which the judges of the following century would have blushed, it was this charge that struck the popular mind. In 1437 Pope Eugene ventured again to urge the inquisitors everywhere to greater diligence against witchcraft; and in the same year the German Dominican, Johannes Nider, put forth, as the fifth and culminating book of his "Formicarius," or "Ant-Hill," the first popular essay on the witches.¹ Of their horrible depravity he heaps up anecdote upon anecdote; and it is soon clear that he has found a new and exhaustless source—the testimony of the witches themselves.

Who need longer doubt the reality of the crime when its perpetrators confess to all, and more than all, that the inquisitors have told? Torture was a new thing in procedure, as yet unknown outside the ecclesiastical courts; and two centuries of horrors must pass before men should learn that its victims may confess more than the truth.² No

¹ "De maleficis et eorum deceptionibus." This essay was early detached from the rest of the book and appended to the editions of the "Witch-Hammer," and it became an inseparable addition to that work. The title-page of these reprints always calls Nider an inquisitor, and the statement has also the high authority of Trithemius. His latest German biographers deny (as do Quétif and Échard) that there is any evidence of his having been one. Mr. Lea, however, still thinks that he "seems sometimes to have acted as inquisitor"; and, in any case, all his sympathies were with this work of his order. Nider (according to Quétif and Échard) kept his book in hand for several years, and its various MSS. are of different dates; but that of 1437 seems to have been its last revision.

² How powerful this argument was to the men of that time may be inferred from the words of the eminent Italian theological professor Isolani, who in 1506 published an argument ("Libellus adversus magos," etc.) to prove that men cannot be bewitched into taking religious vows, and who, though a Dominican, was not an inquisitor, and was by no means prone to superstition. "Querant qui haec vana fictaque judicaverint processus totis Christiani imperii finibus apprime notos, quos virieruditissimi, omnium virtutum genere preclarissimi, reis narrantibus composuere. His minime assentiant, qui Demonas . . . esse nequaquam opinantur."

There are not wanting still good people who marvel at what they call the "agreement" in the testimony of the witches. To such may be commended the prescribed lists of interrogatories, which from more than one "Instruction

wonder that Nider's book was popular! The literature of witchcraft was fairly launched.

No rival appeared, however, till in 1452 the French inquisitor, Nicolas Jaquier,¹ wrote his treatise, "De calcatione daemonum,"² and in 1458 produced his monograph on witchcraft proper—his "Flagellum haereticorum fascianarium."³ Jaquier expressly tells us that his book is written because of the hindrances thrown in the way of the inquisitors by skeptics. His whole work is but one long refutation of the canon *Episcopi*; and, while drawing as largely as his predecessors from the Bible and from Thomas Aquinas, he, too, finds his most irrefutable arguments in the fresh confessions of tortured witches. In the following year—1459—the Spanish Franciscan, Alonso (or Alfonso) de Spina,⁴ brought out his "Fortalitium fidei," and lent a

to Judges" are now making their way to light. And, even where these were not used, leading questions were the rule, and the victim had little more to do than answer yes or no. Only here and there in the trials do we find some poor quivering woman begging her judges to tell her what she must confess. The confession was a criterion, not of the guilt of the witch, but of the learning of her inquisitors. It is rather a marvel that there should ever be disagreement, when the victim not only had such prompters, but must herself time and again have heard just such confessions read, as the custom was, to the crowd gathered about the stake.

And if any are puzzled that the confessions should be persisted in after the torture and in the face of death (which, in countless cases, they were *not*), they should remember that persistence in confession was long a condition of that "forbearance of the Court" which suffered the prisoner to be first strangled or beheaded, instead of being burned alive. Only the Church *always* burned alive.

¹ Or Jacquier (Latin, *Jaquierius* or *Jacquierius*).

² *I.e.*, On the treading-under-foot of demons. (*Calcatio*, a mediæval word, means usually threshing, *i.e.*, by treading out; but Jaquier must have had in view its literal sense.) The book has never been printed, but exists in MS. (according to Quétif and Échard) at Louvain and elsewhere. A copy at St. Omer is entitled: "De calcatione malignorum spirituum." The book begins: "Duo magna incommoda inter caetera incurrit genus humanum."

³ The rod (*flagellum*) was meant to scourge out of God's temple, the Church, certain "perverse dogmas and stolid assertions," to wit: that witches are victims of delusion. Jaquier tells us himself (pp. 39, 56, of the first printed ed., of 1581) the year in which he writes.

⁴ Mr. Lea writes "Alonso," and I defer to his high authority, though I have not else met that form. As "Alphonsus à Spina" he is known to his Latin-writing contemporaries.

climax to its refutation of Jewish and Saracen errors by making its fifth and last book treat "Of the war of the demons"—"De bello daemonum."

But the diffusion of the literature of witchcraft was no longer to wait on the slow work of the copyist. The new art of printing soon availed itself of so tempting a topic. Before 1470, Mentelin, of Strasburg, turned out from his exquisite press a fine edition of the "Fortalitiū fidei"; and, about 1476, Anton Sorg, of Augsburg, followed it with the "Formicarius" of Nider. Not all of their fellow-treatises were so fortunate. A "Tractatus contra daemonum invocatores," by the Carcassonne inquisitor Joannes Vineti,¹ got itself printed; and a lecture on the subject delivered at Paris, in 1482, by the Saragossa canon Bernard Basin,² was given to the press in the same or the following year. But the book of Jaquier had yet a century to wait; and fresh monographs by the Poitou theological professor Petrus Mamoris³ and the Italian inquisitor Girolamo Visconti⁴ must lie in

¹ In his book itself the name is spelled *Viveti*; but Quétif and Échard, who know of him from other sources, write Vineti, and the other may well be a misprint, though Viveti has been adopted by the few bibliographers who know of the book. The impression is undated; but Quétif and Échard ascribe it to 1483. V. was inquisitor at Carcassonne from 1450 to about 1475.

² His "Tractatus de magicis artibus ac magorum maleficiis." According to the title of an edition described by Hain, it was written by Basin in 1482 "in suis vesperis," and the first dated impression is of Paris, 1483; but it is quite clear from his opening words that it was an address, on some formal occasion, before a theological faculty—doubtless at Paris, where Basin was a doctor of theology,—and there is an undated Paris impression (put first by Hain), which was very probably printed at once. Basin was a speaker of some note, for we find him in 1481 (according to Burchard's "Diarium") preaching before the cardinals at Rome.

³ His "Flagellum maleficorum," written probably soon after the middle of the century (he mentions nothing later than 1453), but not printed till about 1490.

⁴ His "Lamiarum sive strigarum opusculum," printed in 1490. Quétif and Échard, who know it only in MS., give its title as "De lamiis et strigibus ad Franciscum Sfortiam Vicecomitem," which would seem to prove it written before 1465, since Francesco Sforza died in that year. I hold in my hand a manuscript of what is perhaps the same, but is quite as possibly a different treatise by the same author. It is entitled: "Opusculum Magistri Hieronymi Vicecomitis [*i. e.*, Visconti—the inquisitor is said to have been a member of the great Milanese family of that name] ordinis prædicatorum in

manuscript for a decade or two, while more than one other has never been printed at all.¹ For there now appeared a work which made all such trifles needless: the terrible book which has been said, and perhaps truly, to have caused more suffering than any other written by human pen—the “*Malleus maleficarum*,” or “Witch-Hammer.”

The inquisitors charged with the spread of the persecution in Germany had found no easy task. Not only had they the obstinacy of the secular courts to contend with, but, still more, the jealousy of the bishops, who till now, in the Empire, had succeeded in keeping the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in their own hands. In vain, from pulpit and professor's chair, did the Dominican brotherhood promulgate the theories of Thomas Aquinas and of Eymeric. The German bishops declared that there were no witches in their territories.² In despair the baffled inquisitors of Germany, Heinrich Krämer³ and Jacob Sprenger, at last turned their steps toward Rome. There, on December 5, 1484, they won from Pope Innocent VIII. the famous bull *Summis desiderantes*. Portraying in the most startling colors, and at much length, the calamities to man and beast, vineyard and

quo probatur Lamias esse haereticas et non laborare humore melancholico.” It is apparently contemporary, and may be the autograph of its author, though the marginal corrections and annotations are in differing hands of the same period. It is directed mainly against the canon *Episcopi*, and shows no knowledge either of witch-bull or of “Witch-Hammer.” Date it has none. The White Library is indebted for it to Dr. Hennen, of Düsseldorf, to whom it came from the collection of the musician Tosi.

¹ Of these I have already mentioned the books of Eymeric and Jaquier. Mr. Lea (“The Inquisition of the Middle Ages,” iii., 533) says that when (about 1460) certain witches were arrested at Tournay, Jean Taincture, a clerk, “wrote an elaborate treatise to prove their guilt,” which still exists in MS. in the National Library at Brussels. Mr. Lecky's statement that the famous Spanish inquisitor-general Thomas of Torquemada wrote a book on witchcraft must, however, be a confusion of him with his namesake Antonio, who lived a century later. Still in MS. is also the “Buch von allerhand verbotenen Künsten, Unglauben und Zauberey” written about 1455, in a very different spirit—doubtless for the amusement of his ducal patrons—by the versatile Dr. Hartlieb, of Munich.

² So, at least, (according to Soldan-Heppe) replied Archbishop Johann of Trier.

³ Better known by his Latin name of Institor, or Institoris.

harvest, brought by the witches, who, he is grieved to learn, swarm throughout Germany, the head of the Church enjoins all the faithful, on pain of the indignation of Almighty God and of the apostles Peter and Paul, to lend aid to the inquisitors in the extirpation of such monsters. Thus armed, the two Dominicans turned homeward; but their preparation was not yet complete. Men must be taught not only what to do, but how to do it. So Sprenger and Krämer set themselves at the compilation of a hand-book of arguments, rules, and procedure for the detection and punishment of witches which should henceforth make every man his own inquisitor. Completed in 1486, the book was probably given to the press in the same year.¹ As motto, it bore on its title-page the menacing sentence: "Not to believe in witchcraft is the greatest of heresies."² Edition

¹ The statement, made by nearly all authorities on this subject, that the "Witch-Hammer" was first printed in 1489, is a manifest error. True, its first *dated* edition is of that year. But Hain ("Repertorium Bibliographicum," Nos. 9238-9241) chronicles no less than four undated (and presumably earlier) editions. All of these I have examined. One alone—that to which Hain wisely gives the first place—lacks both the Cologne theological faculty's approval of May, 1487, and the commendatory letters of Maximilian of Austria, of 6 Nov., 1486, both of which appear in all other editions, and were not likely to be omitted when once obtained. The first impression can hardly, therefore, be of later date than 1486. That it is not earlier is clear from the evidence of the book itself. It begins with a commentary on the bull of 5 Dec., 1484 (the bull itself is not printed in this first edition), which must have required a little time to make. That the book was not completed in the year of its beginning may perhaps be inferred from the phrase "anno eodem quo hic liber est inchoatus," used to date a certain anecdote. That at least a part of it was written in 1486 is sure from the fact that an incident (the burning of forty-one witches in a single year by the inquisitor Cumanus) is in one place (pars I., qu. 11) said to have happened "last year," in another (pars II., qu. I, cap. ii.) "in the year 1485," and still again (pars III., qu. 15) "anno elapso, qui fuit 1485." 1486, then, was almost unquestionably the year of its publication. The suggestion of Stanonik ("Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie," s. v. Krämer) that it may have appeared in the same year with the bull is therefore untenable (the edition mentioned by Quéfif and Échard, following Fontana, as of "Lugduni, Juntarum, 1484," was probably printed in 1584); and 1486 was, almost unquestionably, the year of its publication. The copy of the *editio princeps* examined by me is in the City Library of Trier; the White Library has what seems the second (Hain, 9239).

² "Haeresis est maxima, opera maleficarum non credere."

followed edition with striking rapidity, and with the issue of the "Witch-Hammer" began a new era in the history of witchcraft and of its literature.

It is not my purpose to discuss book by book the literature whose beginnings I have tried with some fulness to describe. The barest mention of only its epoch-making titles would more than fill the space remaining to me. Many of them are familiar to all English readers, through the classical chapter of Mr. Lecky¹; and the story of their influence may be studied in more detail in the great German works of Soldan-Heppe,² of Roskoff,³ and of Längin.⁴ I can now but briefly characterize what seem to me the main epochs in its development. But let me, in passing, remark that the opponents of the persecution seem to me neither so few nor so feeble as one might infer from the pages of Mr. Lecky. Its defenders are never weary of complaining of the numbers and influence of the skeptics; and, though most found it wiser to hold their tongues, or preferred to speak out only in private, the open assaults upon the delusion are more numerous than the historians of witchcraft have known.

The "Malleus maleficarum" appealed to readers of every class. The question could no longer be ignored. The book's appearance began a period of controversy, which lasted till the outbreak of the Reformation distracted all attention to itself. Jurists like Ulrich Molitor,⁵ Alciati,⁶ and Ponzinibio,⁷ philosophers and men of letters like Cor-

¹ In his "History of the rise and influence of the spirit of rationalism in Europe," i. It is by all odds the best survey of the field in English. Admirable in its insight, though less ambitious in its scope, is also Mr. Lowell's essay on witchcraft (first published in the *North American Review*, then reprinted in the first series of his "Among my books").

² Soldan's "Geschichte der Hexenprozesse, neu bearbeitet von Heinrich Heppe," Stuttgart, 1880.

³ "Geschichte des Teufels," Leipzig, 1869.

⁴ "Religion und Hexenprozess," Leipzig, 1888.

⁵ Or Molitoris (Müller's Ulrich?). In his "De lamiis et phthonicis [pythonicis] mulieribus," Cologne, 1489.

⁶ In his "Parerga juris" (to be found in his "Opera").

⁷ In his "De lamiis" (to be found in Ziletti).

nelius Agrippa¹ and Hans Sachs,² dared to oppose the superstition³; and a cohort of theologians like the inquisitors Bernard of Como⁴ and Hoogstraten,⁵ their fellow-Dominicans Dodo and Theatinus,⁶ the historian and scholar Trithemius,⁷ the Spanish mathematician Ciruelo,⁸ the papal masters of the palace Prierias⁹ and Spina,¹⁰ even a half-monkish layman like the younger Pico della Mirandola,¹¹ appeared in its defence. The briefs of Leo X. and of Adrian VI., in 1521 and 1523, seemed to close the dispute in favor of the witch-hunters.

¹ In his "De vanitate scientiarum"; but even more boldly in his fiery defence and rescue of a witch indicted by the Dominicans at Metz in 1519.

² Notably in his "Ein wunderlich gesprech von fünff unholden," 1531.

³ Erasmus, alas, is hardly to be reckoned among them. The letter, of the year 1500, to Abbot Antonius à Bergis, in which he gives an account of a witch prosecution, and which has been too hastily cited by Soldan (and by so many on his authority) as showing his skepticism, is rather an evidence of his credulity. The "novum et inauditum portentum" at which he pretends to shudder is not the witch-trial, but the alleged crime itself. Nor is there any thing in his "Praise of Folly" that can prove him incredulous on this point. Yet, is Mr. Lecky quite right in thinking that "Erasmus was an equally firm believer in witchcraft" with Luther? Even in his letter to the Abbot he scores the meanness, the duplicity, and the vanity of the Dominican tale-bearer; if he does not share, he certainly does not censure, the hesitation of his friend the Official to believe the astounding things revealed under the torture; and the holy horror which he displays to his clerical patron has a factitious ring. Certainly he was as far from defending as from denying the inquisitorial theory; and the whole tenor of his pen toward monkish superstitions must have strengthened the courage of those who questioned this one also.

⁴ In his "De strigiis," written about 1510.

⁵ In his "Tractatus declarans quam graviter peccent quaerentes auxilium a maleficiis," Cologne, 1510.

⁶ I know of these only through Quétif and Échard. Were their treatises ever printed?

⁷ In his "Liber octo quaestionum ad Maximilianum Caesarem" (it was very probably his powerful advocacy that won the persecution the support of that prince, his pupil and friend), Oppenheim, 1515; and in his "Antipalus maleficiorum," not printed till 1555.

⁸ In his "Opus de magica superstitione," Alcalá, 1521, better known in its later Spanish version.

⁹ *I. e.*, Silvestro Mazolini, of Prierio. In his "De strigimagorum daemonumque mirandis," Rome, 1521.

¹⁰ In his "Quaestio de strigibus," 1523; and in his "In Ponzinibium de lamiis apologia," 1525.

¹¹ In his "Strix, seu de ludificatione daemonum," Bologna, 1523.

The forty years of lull¹ that followed marked no decline of faith in this field. Whatever else Catholic and Protestant, Lutheran and Calvinist, might wrangle over, there remained the most edifying unanimity as to the activity of the Devil; and each party vied with the others in showing its innocence of complicity with him by hatred toward his peculiar servants, the witches. From the close of the previous century, the growing influence of the Roman law, the spread of written procedure, the substitution of public for private prosecution in criminal cases, and the introduction of torture from the ecclesiastical into the secular courts had been quietly smoothing the way for the persecution; and the written codes, which one by one embodied the new juristic attitude, gave ever fresh emphasis to witchcraft as a crime.² Quietly but steadily, as the religious fever waned and the zeal of revolution gave place to the timorous lassitude of reaction, the witchcraft panic and the horrors of the attendant persecution spread through the lands which had been torn by the struggle.

The first voice raised against it was that of the Rhenish physician Johann Weyer,³ whose noble book "*De praeiugis daemonum*" saw the light in 1563. It ushered in a second era of controversy. Slowly, here and there, the burning words of Weyer stirred up a disciple, more or less ardent: Ewich⁴ and Neuwaldt⁵ and Witekind⁶ and

¹ Not, of course, that there were in this time *no* new books on witchcraft; but they were few and unimportant.

² As a crime in itself, independently of the material injury alleged to be caused by it. Thus, notably, the "*Carolina*" (the great new criminal code of the Empire, 1532), which became a model for all Europe. The first English statute (in 1541), more conservative, took cognizance of the intent of the witch, and the "*Carolina*" required proof of actual damage before inflicting death. But the courts were not fastidious as to sort or amount.

³ Or Weier, Wier (Latin, Wierus or Piscinarius). As to Weyer, his opponents, and his followers, the scholarly and admirable biography by Professor Binz ("*Doctor Johann Weyer*," Bonn, 1885), a model for others of its kind, has opened a whole new field.

⁴ "*De sagarum natura*," Bremen, 1584.

⁵ "*Exegesis expurgationis sagarum super aquam frigidam*," Helmstadt, 1584.

⁶ "*Christlich Bedencken und Erinnerung von Zauberey*," Heidelberg, 1585. He was a professor at Heidelberg, but wrote under the pseudonym of "*Au-*

Loos¹ and Godelmann² and Anten³ in Germany, Reginald Scot⁴ and Gifford⁵ and Harsnet⁶ and Cotta⁷ in England. But they stirred up adversaries tenfold more numerous and influential: Daneau⁸ in Switzerland, Bodin⁹ and Crespet¹⁰

gustin Lercheimer of Steinfeld"; and so carefully was his secret kept that it has but just been ferreted out. A critically edited reprint of his book was last year published by Professors Binz and Birlinger, of Bonn.

¹ "De vera et falsa magia," partially printed at Cologne, 1592. Loos's book, long supposed to have been destroyed by the Inquisition at the time of his forced recantation, I had the good fortune, in 1886, to find in MS. (apparently his own copy) on the shelves of the City Library at Trier (see the *Nation* for 11 Nov., 1886), and brought away a *fac-simile*. Since that time printed pages of it (so much as had been completed before its seizure) have been unearthed at the City Library of Cologne (see the *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 1888, p. 455). The minutes of the trial of Loos's compatriot and fellow-martyr, Dr. Dietrich Flade, of Trier, the most eminent victim of the persecution in Germany, which had also long been thought lost, are in the President White Library.

² "De magis, veneficis et lamiis," Frankfurt a. M., 1591.

³ "Γυναικόλουσις, seu mulierum lavatio, quam purgationem per aquam frigidam vocant; item vulgaris de potentia lamiarum opinio, quod utraque Deo, naturae omni juri et probatae consuetudini sit contraria. Candida, brevis et dilucida oratio," Lubeck, 1590. The book is overlooked even by Binz.

⁴ "The discoverie of witchcraft," London, 1584. This first edition is so rare that the British Museum itself has not a perfect copy (our own collection is more fortunate); but there is now an admirable reprint (edited by Brinsley Nicholson, London, 1886). Scot is bolder and more rational than Weyer himself.

⁵ "A discourse of the subtil practises of devilles by witches," London, 1557. "A dialogue concerning witches and witchcrafts," London, 1603.

⁶ "A declaration of egregious popish impostures," London, 1603. Harsnet, who at the time of writing this was only chaplain to the Bishop of London, but who became successively Master of Pembroke Hall, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, Bishop of Chichester, Bishop of Norwich, and Archbishop of York, was one of the most rational and outspoken men of his time. It was in 1599, as it seems, that he first took ground against the belief in demoniacal possession, in his book against the Anglican exorcist, John Darrell, whom he virtually drove from the realm. His "Declaration of popish impostures," written against the Jesuit Edmunds, or Weston, and his exorcisms, appeared in 1603. In it Harsnet shows himself a thorough-going disciple of Reginald Scot (whom he cites), and scoffs openly at the whole body of witchcraft superstition, declaring it delusion and humbug.

⁷ "The triall of witchcraft," London, 1616.

⁸ "Les sorciers," 1574. In Latin, as "De veneficis," in 1575.

⁹ "De la démonomanie des sorciers," Paris, 1580. More widely read in its Latin translation of the following year.

¹⁰ "De la haine de Satan et malins esprits contre l'homme," Paris, 1590.

and De l'Ancre¹ in France, Erastus² and Bishop Binsfeld³ and Scribonius⁴ in Germany, Remy⁵ in Lorraine, Boguet⁶ in Franche-Comté, Delrio⁷ in the Netherlands, Torreblanca⁸ in Spain, and in Great Britain Bishop Jewell and Perkins⁹ and the royal inquisitor, James of Scotland and of England,¹⁰ with a multitude everywhere of lesser note or later date. It was the golden age of the witchcraft literature, as of witchcraft itself. Enterprising publishers sought in vain to sate the public appetite by throwing together, in awkward folios or fat duodecimos, all the books they could find on the subject.¹¹ The news-letters and *Neue Zeitungen*, printed or written, which had taken the place of the sermons and satires of the Reformation, as the newspaper was soon in

¹ Or Lancre. "Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons, où il est. . . traicté des sorciers," Paris, 1612. "L'incrédulité et mescréance du sortilège," Paris, 1622.

² "De lamiis, seu strigibus," Basel, 1577.

³ "De confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum," Trier, 1589. "Commentarius in Tit. de Maleficis et Mathematicis," Trier, 1592.

⁴ "De examine et purgatione sagarum per aquam frigidam epistola," [1583]. "De sagarum natura et potestate," Marburg, 1588. "Responsio ad examen ignoti patroni veritatis de purgatione sagarum," Frankfurt a. M., 1590.

⁵ Latin, Remigius. "Daemonolatreia," Lyons, 1595.

⁶ "Discours exécration des sorciers," Paris, 1602.

⁷ Or del Rio. "Disquisitiones magicæ," Louvain, 1599-1601. The edition ascribed by Grässe (and by others following him) to 1593 is a myth. If this were not abundantly proved by Delrio's own prefaces and by the approbations of the censors, we have in the correspondence of Justus Lipsius (in his letters to Delrio) conclusive testimony. Lipsius himself suggested the title of the book, in whose progress he took the liveliest interest. In the National Library at Brussels (where I have examined it) is an earlier and much briefer draft of Delrio's book, dated 1596 and bearing the title "De superstitione et malis artibus."

⁸ Or Villalpando. In his "Epitome delictorum, sive De magia," Seville, 1618, and in his "Daemonologia," Mainz, 1623.

⁹ "A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft," Cambridge, 1610.

¹⁰ "Daemonologie," Edinburgh, 1597. James was undoubtedly the prime author of the new and harsher English statute against witchcraft, which, with a fresh edition of his "Daemonologie," appeared in the year (1603) of his accession to the English throne.

¹¹ It was the day of the "Theatrum diabolorum," of the "Theatrum de veneficis," of the "Mallei maleficarum"—now swollen by supplements to thrice the bulk of the original "Malleus," and growing every year.

turn to take their own, carried to every fireside, in rude rhyme and ruder wood-cut, the tale of the countless burnings which planted charred stakes like shade-trees before city and hamlet of the Continent, or of the prickings and swimings and wakings with which English and Scottish procedure consoled themselves for the want of the rack. The murmur of protest, ever fainter, had all but died out.¹ In France, where alone doubt throve, skeptics like Montaigne and Charron were far too wise in their generation to embody their incredulity in monographs; and even Gabriel Naudé, who in 1625 dealt the superstition a sharp blow by the publication of his "*Apologie pour les grands personnages qui ont été faussement soupçonnés de magie*," had the prudence to confine himself strictly to times at a safe distance from

¹ True, there was still, in many quarters, an unreconciled public sentiment, and even now and then an open though unpublished deprecation. It has long struck the attention of historians that, even in witch-ridden Germany, the great imperial city of Nuremberg seems free from the persecution. Its criminal code was the Carolina; yet a contemporary manuscript copy of its executioner's records, from 1600 to 1692, in the possession of the President White Library, shows not a single execution for witchcraft proper. I hold in my hand a document—so far as I know unprinted, and certainly unknown to the historians of witchcraft—which may partially explain this. It is a manuscript, in a sixteenth century hand, on whose cover I read, "*Der Nürnbergschen Theologen Ainhellige Antwort, über etliche Puncten, die Unhulden betreffent*"; and at the head of its first page, more explicitly, "*Ainhellige Antwort der Hochgelerten Theologi unnd Predicanten zu Nürnberg: auff die Suplication des Rathes zu Weisenburg an die Eltern herren dess geheimen Rathes alhie zu Nürnberg: umb unterichtung: Wie sie sich mit iren Hexen undt Unhulden verhalten sollen, unnd wass in Göttlicher heiliger Schrift darvon gegründet sey.*" At the end are the signatures of the six pastors of Nuremberg; and the date—1590. Through thirty weary pages the city clergy wrestle with the problem set them; and superstitious enough seems their answer. They believe fully in witchcraft and in its punishment—nay, they establish both in all their horrible detail out of Holy Writ. And yet (the influence of the canon *Episcopi* is clearly not dead, even for Protestants) they deny that the witches can transform themselves, or ride through the air, or cause wind or hail-storm; all this is mere illusion. And so do they fence about the prescribed procedure with their cautions against trusting the testimony of the witches themselves or the word of the executioner or charges against persons of else unblemished reputation; that, seeing the most prolific sources of the spread of the persecution thus cut off, one no longer wonders, if such were the spirit of even her theologians, at Nuremberg's own immunity.

the present. But, in 1631, the brave young Jesuit poet, Friedrich von Spee—saint and martyr by a higher canonization than that of the Church—dared to publish, though without his name and unknown to his superiors, the eloquent “*Cautio criminalis*” which once more gave the persecution pause. Based on his own experience as a confessor to the witches, and attacking not the theory but only the procedure, it won attention in quarters unreachable by polemic.

There followed an age of better omen. Steadily, but almost as quietly as it had gathered strength during the Reformation, the delusion now faded before the advance of that more Christian spirit of mingled science and humanity which the world has too long stigmatized as rationalism. In one territory after another the flames died out. Jurists and theologians remained conservative, and such literature, of sermon and opinion, as was devoted to witchcraft, was mainly on the side of the superstition. From the universities a host of academic dissertations, in law and theology, echoed the orthodox tenets of the teachers—if, indeed, they were not the product of their pens. But it was apparent that they were now on the defensive. Not less significant as a symptom was the rapid growth of that literature which found in the superstition only a means of selfish profit or amusement: the collections of witch stories and devil stories which pandered to popular curiosity and love of horror. In 1657 even the older church herself, which had steadily put on her index of forbidden books the works written against the persecution, found herself constrained to issue a tardy *Instructio*¹ urging her inquisitors to circumspection. In England alone, where Puritan bibliolatry had ensured the dogma a longer tenure, and had found it an unexpected advocate in Joseph Glanvill,² was the struggle for a moment

¹ “*Instructio pro formandis processibus in causis strigum, sortilegiorum, et maleficiorum,*” Rome, 1657.

² In his “*Philosophical considerations touching witches and witchcraft,*” 1666, which, enlarged, was reprinted (1668) as “*A blow at modern sadducism,*” and (1681) as “*Sadducismus triumphatus.*”

serious and the result doubtful ; but the assaults of a Gaule,¹ a Filmer,² an Ady,³ a Wagstaffe,⁴ a Webster,⁵ were fast letting in the purer daylight ; and even Presbyterian Scotland was sure, however slowly, to wake to it in due time. The New England panic at Salem was but a last bright flicker of the ghastly glare which had so long made hideous the European night.⁶ Already, even before Spee, the Dutchman Grève⁷ had struck a blow at the root of the superstition on the Continent by attacking the use of the torture, and now, in 1691, his countryman, Balthasar Bekker, aimed one yet more deadly at its very heart by denying, in his "Betoo-verde Wereld," the personal agency of the Devil in human affairs. And its period of silent decay came sharply to an end, just at the close of the century, when, in 1701, the free-thinking Halle professor, Christian Thomas (or Thomasius, as his Latin-writing contemporaries preferred to call him), published in the name of a student his pungent "Theses de crimine magiæ."⁸

¹ In his "Select cases of conscience touching witches and witchcraft," 1646. I have not seen the book, and copy its title from Wright ("Narratives of sorcery and witchcraft").

² In his "An advertisement to the jurymen of England, touching witches," London, 1653.

³ In his "A candle in the dark ; or, A treatise concerning the nature of witches and witchcraft," London, 1656.

⁴ In his "The question of witchcraft debated ; or, A discourse against their opinion that affirm witches," London, 1669.

⁵ In his "The displaying of supposed witchcraft," London, 1677.

⁶ And if it surprise any that, in a paper before the American Historical Association, I say nothing of the literature of American witchcraft, I can reply only that it seemed to me a work of supererogation, if not an impertinence, to treat that literature in this presence with the brevity its place in the history of the delusion would demand.

⁷ In his "Tribunal reformatum," Hamburg, 1624.

⁸ That Thomasius was himself their author was, indeed, clearly stated in a letter appended to the "Theses," wherein he says to the respondent : . . . "*In chartam conieci breves has Theses, quae in perfectione prolixioris dissertationis Tuae in mentem venerunt.*" . . . They were published the next year (and often thereafter) in German translation, under his own name, as "Kurtze Lehr-Sätze von dem Laster der Zauberey." But this was only a beginning of Thomasius' share in the crusade. He gathered, or led his students to gather, all that could be found written against the persecution (among the rest Spee's

So began for witchcraft the age of the "Aufklärung." For a moment its defenders, thus brought to bay, fought with tooth and nail. But, as the taunts and jeers of its assailants grew ever louder and more confident, they slunk back into obscurity. Only now and then, as the century advanced, did some stranded theologian mutter in print his grouchy protest, or some over-hasty reformer stir up a buzz of pamphlets by obtruding his rationalism into a last snoozing-place of orthodoxy. The witch burnings and hangings grew fewer and fewer and disappeared altogether, and with them the need of their justification. The publishers of the witch stories learned to appeal to readers of ever lower grades of intelligence or to throw into their tone a banter which flattered the vanity of the class that gloats over the errors of its fellows. A mass of lesser superstitions, galvanized into fresh life by scribbling adventurers, gave refuge to those enlightened before their time. And at last the storm of the French Revolution, destroying torture-chamber and code as it swept over Europe, buried in their ruins the witch-persecution and its literature, and did somewhat to clear the air for that new scientific study of its psychology and history which was to be the task of the nineteenth century.

Already, in 1712, Thomasius had devoted a thesis to the origin of the persecution,¹ and before his death he was able

book) and issued it afresh in German; he translated, with preface of his own, every new book upon it that appeared abroad; he encouraged his pupils to discuss it in their dissertations, or did so in their names; he assailed it in lecture and review and editorial; and he kept up the warfare till his death. An utterance of his even earlier than the "Theses" I find in his "Dissertatio ad Petri Poretii libros de Eruditione," 1694 (reprinted in his "Programmata Thomasiانا," 1724), where he already takes strong ground against the persecution, though not wholly against the superstition.

¹"Disputatio juris canonici de origine ac progressu processus inquisitorii contra sagas, quam . . . praeside Dn. Christiano Thomasio . . . subjicit . . . Johannes Paulus Ipsen." That Thomasius, and not Ipsen, is its author, is abundantly clear from internal evidence; and Thomasius himself claims it as his own in subsequent writings. We have, by the way, from Thomasius's own lips (in his "Programma invitatorium" to "Dodecas quaestionum promiscuarum," Halle, 1694—cited by A. Roquette in the *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 1887), an ironical discussion of this prevalent fashion of writing for one's pupils dissertations which one afterward collected

to welcome the more elaborate history by the English clergyman, Hutchinson,¹ whose retrospect was, however, almost wholly confined to his own land and her colonies. Before the middle of the eighteenth century, the Lutheran divine, Hauber, had gathered what still remains the richest body of materials for the study of the subject,² and in 1784 another German pastor, Schwager, published the first volume of a general history of the witch-trials.³ Yet these were but beginnings. I could have wished to close this hasty survey of the growth of the literature of witchcraft with a more careful discussion of what our own century has done towards its study; but my paper is already too long. I may barely mention the bibliography of Grässe, which, with all its omissions and inaccuracies, is still the best we have; the comprehensive narratives attempted by Horst, and Scheltema, and Scott, and Scholtz, and Soldan, and Wright, and Michellet, and Heppé; the more partisan contributions of Görres, and Scherr, and Diefenbach, and Längin; the light thrown upon it by the brilliant work in neighboring fields of Wächter, and Maury, and Roskoff, and Buchmann, and Rydberg, and Conway, and Baissac, and Meyer, and Lea. But of the histories of its career in single lands, districts, towns, by a myriad of patient students, whose researches will furnish the most precious of all stores for the future historian,—of the biographies, all too few, of the heroes of the struggle,—of the valuable chapters scattered through periodicals, and proceedings, and local histories, and histories of civilization or theology or law or medicine or literature or natural science, I cannot so much as speak.

and published under one's own name. "Neque falsum committitur," he thinks, "dum quis se auctorem scribit disputationis, cujus nec lineam saepius elaboravit, saepius nec intelligit."

¹ "An historical essay concerning witchcraft," London, 1718.

² "Bibliotheca, acta et scripta magica: Gründliche Nachrichten und Urtheile von solchen Büchern und Handlungen, welche die Macht des Teufels in leiblichen Dingen betreffen," Lemgo, 1739-45.

³ "Versuch einer Geschichte der Hexenprozesse," i., Berlin, 1784. It unfortunately remained a fragment—in fact, as the author himself calls it, only an introduction.

Yet, much as has been written on the subject, it is amazing how small a proportion of it has been serious in aim or in method. Perhaps no province of history has been so largely the domain of the sciolist and the charlatan. From the "Formicarius" of Nider to the just-published hodge-podge of Davenport Adams, it has been the prey of writers who have sought to entertain more than to enlighten. As was pointed out more than a decade ago by Friedrich Nippold,¹ there has been as yet not an attempt at an exhaustive investigation of the history of the witch-persecution. Even the noble book of Soldan-Heppe, which is still beyond question the most thorough, makes little effort to utilize other than printed sources, and of the latter it is for German lands alone that the author's^s material approached completeness. Of the origin and nature of the delusion, we know perhaps enough; but of the causes and paths of its spread, of the extent of its ravages, of its exact bearing upon the intellectual and religious freedom of its times, of the soul-stirring details of the costly struggle by which it was overborne, we are lamentably ill-informed. The archives and libraries of Europe—aye, and of many parts of America as well—abound in still unpublished documents which would throw light upon these problems. The labors of local antiquaries are every day opening fresh mines for a more exhaustive history of witchcraft. When that history comes to be written, may the collection which has suggested my paper be not without its use; and may it aid in making clear to future generations why the literature of witchcraft belongs not to folk-lore, but to theology.

¹ In the "literarisch-kritischer Anhang über die Quellen und Bearbeitungen der Hexenprozesse," appended to his little study on "Die gegenwärtige Wiederbelebung des Hexenglaubens" (Berlin, 1875).

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