FAMOUS IMPOSTORS

QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A YOUNG WOMAN

FAMOUS IMPOSTORS

BY

BRAM STOKER
AUTHOR OF “DRACULA,” “PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF HENRY IRVING,” ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE

The subject of imposture is always an interesting one, and impostors in one shape or another are likely to flourish as long as human nature remains what it is, and society shows itself ready to be gulled. The histories of famous cases of imposture in this book have been grouped together to show that the art has been practised in many forms—impersonators, pretenders, swindlers, and humbugs of all kinds; those who have masqueraded in order to acquire wealth, position, or fame, and those who have done so merely for the love of the art. So numerous are instances, indeed, that the book cannot profess to exhaust a theme which might easily fill a dozen volumes; its purpose is simply to collect and record a number of the best known instances. The author, nevertheless, whose largest experience has lain in the field of fiction, has aimed at dealing with his material as with the material for a novel, except that all the facts given are real and authentic. He has made no attempt to treat the subject ethically; yet from a study of these impostors, the objects they had in view, the means they adopted, the risks they ran, and the punishments which attended exposure, any reader can draw his own conclusions.

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Impostors of royalty are placed first on account of the fascinating glamour of the throne which has allured so many to the attempt. Perkin Warbeck began a life of royal imposture at the age of seventeen and yet got an army round him and dared to make war on Harry Hotspur before ending his short and stormy life on the gallows. With a crown for stake, it is not surprising that men have been found willing to run even such

risks as those taken by the impostors of Sebastian of Portugal and Louis XVII of France. That imposture, even if unsuccessful, may be very difficult to detect, is shown in the cases of Princess Olive and Cagliostro, and in those of Hannah Snell, Mary East, and the many women who in military and naval, as well as in civil, life assumed and maintained even in the din of battle the simulation of men.

One of the most extraordinary and notorious impostures ever known was that of Arthur Orton, the Tichborne Claimant, whose ultimate exposure necessitated the employment, at great public expense of time and money, of the best judicial and forensic wits in a legal process of unprecedented length.

The belief in witches, though not extinct in our country even to-day, affords examples of the converse of imposture, for in the majority of cases it was the superstitions of society which attributed powers of evil to innocent persons whose subsequentvii mock-trials and butchery made a public holiday for their so-called judges.

The long-continued doubt as to the true sex of the Chevalier D'Eon shows how a belief, no matter how groundless, may persist. Many cases of recent years may also be called in witness as to the initial credulity of the public, and to show how obstinacy maintains a belief so begun. The Humbert case—too fresh in the public memory to demand treatment here—the Lemoine case, and the long roll of other fraudulent efforts to turn the credulity of others to private gain, show how widespread is the criminal net, and how daring and persevering are its manipulators.

The portion of the book which deals with the tradition of the "Bisley Boy" has had, as it demanded, more full and detailed treatment than any other one subject in the volume. Needless to say, the author was at first glance inclined to put the whole story aside as almost unworthy of serious attention, or as one of those fanciful matters which imagination has elaborated out of the records of the past. The work which he had undertaken had, however, to be done, and almost from the very start of earnest enquiry it became manifest that here was a subject which could not be altogether put aside or made light of. There were too many circumstances—matters of exact record, striking in themselves and full of some strange mystery, all pointingviii to a conclusion which one almost feared to grasp as a possibility—to allow the question to be relegated to the region of accepted myth. A little preliminary work amongst books and maps seemed to indicate that so far from the matter, vague and inchoate as it was, being chimerical, it was one for the most patient examination. It looked, indeed, as if those concerned in making public the local tradition, which had been buried or kept in hiding somewhere for three centuries, were on the verge of a discovery of more than

national importance. Accordingly, the author, with the aid of some friends at Bisley and its neighbourhood, went over the ground, and, using his eyes and ears, came to his own conclusions. Further study being thus necessitated, the subject seemed to open out in a natural way. One after another the initial difficulties appeared to find their own solutions and to vanish; a more searching investigation of the time and circumstances showed that there was little if any difficulty in the way of the story being true in essence if not in detail. Then, as point after point arising from others already examined, assisted the story, probability began to take the place of possibility; until the whole gradually took shape as a chain, link resting in the strength of link and forming a cohesive whole. That this story impugns the identity—and more than the identity—of Queen Elizabeth, one of the most famous and glorious rulers whom the world has seen, and hints at an explanationix of circumstances in the life of that monarch which have long puzzled historians, will entitle it to the most serious consideration. In short, if it be true, its investigation will tend to disclose the greatest imposture known to history; and to this end no honest means should be neglected.

B. S.

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I. PRETENDERS

FAMOUS IMPOSTORS

A. PERKIN WARBECK

Richard III literally carved his way to the throne of England. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that he waded to it through blood. Amongst those who suffered for his unscrupulous ambition were George Duke of Clarence, his own elder brother, Edward Prince of Wales, who on the death of Edward IV was the natural successor to the English throne, and the brother of the latter, Richard Duke of York. The two last mentioned were the princes murdered in the Tower by their malignant uncle. These three murders placed Richard Duke of Gloucester on the throne, but at a cost of blood as well as of lesser considerations which it is hard to estimate. Richard III left behind him a legacy of evil consequences which was far-reaching. Henry VII, who succeeded him, had naturally no easy task in steering through the many family complications resulting from the long-continued "Wars of the Roses"; but Richard's villany had created a new series of complications on a more ignoble, if less criminal,4 base. When Ambition, which deals in murder on a wholesale scale, is striving its best to reap the results aimed at, it is at least annoying to have the road to success littered with the débris of lesser and seemingly unnecessary crimes. Fraud is socially a lesser evil than murder; and after all—humanly speaking—much more easily got rid of. Thrones and even dynasties were in the melting pot between the reigns of Edward III and Henry VII; so there were quite sufficient doubts and perplexities to satisfy the energies of any aspirant to royal honours—however militant he might be. Henry VII's time was so far unpropitious that he was the natural butt of all the shafts of unscrupulous adventure. The first of these came in the person of Lambert Simnel, the son of a baker, who in 1486 set himself up as Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick—then a prisoner in the Tower—son of the murdered Duke of Clarence. It was manifestly a Yorkist plot, as he was supported by Margaret Duchess Dowager of Burgundy (sister of Edward IV) and others. With the assistance of the Lord-Deputy (the Earl of Kildare) he was crowned in Dublin as King Edward VI. The pretensions of Simnel were overthrown by the exhibition of the real Duke of Warwick, taken from prison for the purpose. The attempt would have been almost comic but that the effects were tragic. Simnel's span of notoriety was only a year, the close of which was attended with heavy slaughter5 of his friends and mercenaries. He himself faded into the obscurity of the minor life of the King's household to which he was contemptuously relegated. In fact the whole significance of the plot was that it was the first of a series of frauds consequent on the changes of political parties, and served as a *balon d'essai* for the more serious imposture of Perkin Warbeck some five years afterwards. It must, however, be borne in mind that Simnel was a pretender on his own account and not in any way a "pacemaker" for the later criminal; he was in the nature of an unconscious forerunner, but without any ostensible connection. Simnel went his way, leaving, in

the words of the kingly murderer his uncle, the world free for his successor in fraud “to bustle in.”

PERKIN WARBECK

The battle of Stoke, near Newark—the battle which saw the end of the hopes of Simnel and his upholders—was fought on 16 June, 1487. Five years afterwards Perkin Warbeck made his appearance in Cork as Richard Plantagenet Duke of York. The following facts regarding him and his life previous to 1492 may help to place the reader in a position to understand other events and to find causes through the natural gateway of effects.

To Jehan Werbecque (or Osbeck as he was called in Perkin's "confession"), Controller of the town of Tournay in Picardy, and his wife, *née* Katherine de Faro, was born in 1474, a son christened Pierrequin and later known as Perkin Warbeck.6 The Low Countries in the fifteenth century were essentially manufacturing and commercial, and, as all countries were at that period of necessity military, growing youths were thus in touch at many points with commerce, industry and war. Jehan Werbecque's family was of the better middle class, as witness his own position and employment; and so his son spent the earlier years of his life amid scenes and conditions conducive to ambitious dreams. He had an uncle John Stalyn of Ghent. A maternal aunt was married to Peter Flamme, Receiver of Tournay and also Dean of the Guild of Schelde Boatmen. A cousin, John Steinbeck, was an official of Antwerp.

In the fifteenth century Flanders was an important region in the manufacturing and commercial worlds. It was the centre of the cloth industry; and the coming and going of the material for the clothing of the world made prosperous the shipmen not only of its own waters but those of others. The ships of the pre-Tudor navy were small affairs and of light draught suitable for river traffic, and be sure that the Schelde with its facility of access to the then British port of Calais, to Lille, to Brussels, to Bruges, to Tournai, Ghent, and Antwerp, was often itself a highway to the scenes of Continental and British wars.

About 1483 or 1484, on account of the Flemish War, Pierrequin left Tournay, proceeding to Antwerp, and to Middleburg, where he took service7 with a merchant, John Strewe, he being then a young boy of ten or twelve. His next move was to Portugal, whither he went with the wife of Sir Edward Brampton, an adherent of the House of York. A good deal of his early life is told in his own confession made whilst he was a prisoner in the Tower about 1497.

In Portugal he was for a year in the service of a Knight named Peter Vacz de Cogna, who, according to a statement in his confession, had only one eye. In the Confession he also states in a general way that with de Cogna he visited other countries. After this he was with a Breton merchant, Pregent Meno, of whom he states incidentally: "he made me learn English." Pierrequin Werbecque must have been a precocious boy—if all his statements are true—for when he went to Ireland in 1491 with Pregent Meno he was only seventeen years of age, and there had been already crowded into his life a fair amount of the equipment for enterprise in the shape of experience, travel, languages, and so forth.

It is likely that, to some extent at all events, the imposture of Werbecque, or Warbeck, was forced on him in the first instance, and was not a free act on his own part. His

suitability to the part he was about to play was not altogether his own doing. Nay, it is more than possible that his very blood aided in the deception. Edward IV is described as a handsome debonair young man, and Perkin8 Warbeck it is alleged, bore a marked likeness to him. Horace Walpole indeed in his *Historic Doubts* builds a good deal on this in his acceptance of his kingship. Edward was notoriously a man of evil life in the way of affairs of passion, and at all times the way of ill-doing has been made easy for a king. Any student of the period and of the race of Plantagenet may easily accept it as fact that the trend of likelihood if not of evidence is that Perkin Warbeck was a natural son of Edward IV. Three hundred years later the infamous British Royal Marriage Act made such difficulties or inconveniences as beset a king in the position of Edward IV unnecessary: but in the fifteenth century the usual way out of such messes was ultimately by the sword. Horace Walpole, who was a clever and learned man, was satisfied that the person who was known as Perkin Warbeck was in reality that Richard Duke of York who was supposed to have been murdered in the Tower in 1483 by Sir James Tyrrell, in furtherance of the ambitious schemes of his uncle. At any rate the people in Cork in 1491 insisted on receiving Perkin as of the House of York—at first as a son of the murdered Duke of Clarence. Warbeck took oath to the contrary before the Mayor of Cork; whereupon the populace averred that he was a natural son of Richard III. This, too, having been denied by the newcomer, it was stated that he was the son of the murdered Duke of York.

9It cannot be denied that the Irish people were in this matter as unstable as they were swift in their judgments, so that their actions are really not of much account. Five years before they had received the adventurer Lambert Simnel as their king, and he had been crowned at Dublin. In any case the allegations of Warbeck's supporters did not march with established facts of gynecology. The murdered Duke of York was born in 1472, and, as not twenty years elapsed between this period and Warbeck's appearance in Ireland, there was not time in the ordinary process of nature, for father and son to have arrived at such a quality of manhood that the latter was able to appear as full grown. Even allowing for an unusual swiftness of growth common sense evidently rebelled at this, and in 1492 Perkin Warbeck was received in his final semblance of the Duke of York, himself younger son of Edward IV. Many things were possible at a period when the difficulties of voyage and travel made even small distances insuperable. At the end of the fifteenth century Ireland was still so far removed from England that even Warbeck's Irish successes, emphasised though they were by the Earls of Desmond and Kildare and a numerous body of supporters, were unknown in England till considerably later. This is not strange if one will consider that not until centuries later was there a regular postal system, and that nearly two

centuries later the Lord Chief Justice Sir Matthew10 Hale, who was a firm believer in witchcraft, would have condemned such a thing as telegraphy as an invention of the Devil.

In the course of a historical narrative like the present it must be borne in mind (amongst other things) that in the fifteenth century, men ripened more quickly than in the less strenuous and more luxurious atmosphere of our own day. Especially in the Tudor epoch physical gifts counted for far more than is now possible; and as early (and too often sudden) death was the general lot of those in high places, the span of working life was prolonged rather by beginning early than by finishing late. Even up to the time of the Napoleonic Wars, promotion was often won with a rapidity that would seem like an ambitious dream to young soldiers of to-day. Perkin Warbeck, born in 1474, was nineteen years of age in 1493, at which time the Earl of Kildare spoke of "this French lad," yet even then he was fighting King Henry VII, the Harry Richmond who had overthrown at Bosworth the great and unscrupulous Richard III. It must also be remembered for a proper understanding of his venture, that Perkin Warbeck was strongly supported and advised with great knowledge and subtlety by some very resolute and influential persons. Amongst these, in addition to his Irish "Cousins" Kildare and Desmond, was Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV, who helped the young adventurer in his plot by "coaching" him up11 in the part which he was to play, to such an extent that, according to Lord Bacon, he was familiar with the features of his alleged family and relatives and even with the sort of questions likely to be asked in this connection. In fact he was, in theatrical parlance, not only properly equipped but "letter-perfect" in his part. Contemporary authority gives as an additional cause for this personal knowledge, that the original Jehan de Warbecque was a converted Jew, brought up in England, of whom Edward IV was the godfather. In any case it may in this age be accepted as a fact that there was between Edward IV and Perkin Warbeck so strong a likeness as to suggest a *prima facie* possibility, if not a probability, of paternity. Other possibilities crowd in to the support of such a guess till it is likely to achieve the dimensions of a belief. Even without any accuracy of historical detail there is quite sufficient presumption to justify guess-work on general lines. It were a comparatively easy task to follow the lead of Walpole and create a new "historic doubt" after his pattern, the argument of which would run thus:

After the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471, Edward IV had but little to contend against. His powerful foes were all either dead or so utterly beaten as to be powerless for effective war. The Lancastrian hopes had disappeared with the death of Henry VI in the Tower. Margaret of Anjou (wife of Henry VI) defeated at Tewkesbury,12 was in prison. Warwick had been slain at Barnet, and so far as fighting was concerned, King

Edward had a prolonged holiday. It was these years of peace—when the coming and going of even a king was unrecorded with that precision which marks historical accuracy—that made the period antecedent to Perkin's birth. Perkin bore an unmistakable likeness to Edward IV. Not merely that resemblance which marks a family or a race but an individual likeness. Moreover the young manhood of the two ran on parallel lines. Edward was born in 1442, and in 1461, before he was nineteen, won the battle of Mortimer's Cross which, with Towton, placed him on the throne. Perkin Warbeck at seventeen made his bid for royalty. It is hardly necessary to consider what is a manifest error in Perkin's Confession—that he was only nine years old, not eleven, at the time of the murder of Edward V. Nineteen was young enough in all conscience to begin an intrigue for a crown; but if the Confession is to be accepted as gospel this would make him only seventeen at the time of his going to Ireland—a manifest impossibility. Any statement regarding one's own birth is manifestly not to be relied on. At best such can only be an assertion *minus* the possibility of testing whence an error might come. Regarding his parentage, in case it may be alleged that there is no record of the wife of Jehan Warbecque having been in England, it may be allowed to recall13 a story which Alfred, Lord Tennyson used to say was amongst the hundred best stories. It ran thus:

A noble at the Court of Louis XIV was extremely like the King, who on its being pointed out to him sent for his double and asked him:

"Was your mother ever at Court?"

Bowing low, he replied:

"No, sire; but my father was!"

Of course Perkin Warbeck's real adventures, in the sense of dangers, began after his claim to be the brother of Edward V was put forward. Henry VII was not slow in taking whatever steps might be necessary to protect his crown; there had been but short shrift for Lambert Simnel, and Perkin Warbeck was a much more dangerous aspirant. When Charles VIII invited him to Paris, after the war with France had broken out, Henry besieged Boulogne and made a treaty under which Perkin Warbeck was dismissed from France. After making an attempt to capture Waterford, the adventurer transferred the scene of his endeavours from Ireland to Scotland which offered him greater possibilities for intrigue on account of the struggles between James IV and Henry VII. James, who finally found it necessary to hasten his departure, seemed to believe really in his pretensions,14 for he gave him in marriage a kinswoman of his own, Catherine Gordon, daughter of the Earl of Huntly—who by the way was re-married no less than three times after Perkin Warbeck's death. Through the influence of Henry VII,

direct or indirect, Perkin had to leave Scotland as he had been previously forced from Burgundy and the Low Countries. Country after country having been closed to him, he made desperate efforts in Cornwall, where he captured St. Michael's Mount, and in Devon, where he laid siege to Exeter. This however being raised by the Royal forces, he sought sanctuary in Beaulieu in the New Forest where, on promise of his life, he surrendered. He was sent to the Tower and well treated; but on attempting to escape thence a year later, 1499, he was taken. He was hanged at Tyburn in the same year.

Pierrequin Warbecque's enterprise was in any case a desperate one and bound to end tragically—unless, of course, he could succeed in establishing his (alleged) claim to the throne in law and then in supporting it at great odds. The latter would necessitate his vanquishing two desperate fighting men both of them devoid of fear or scruples—Richard III and Henry VII. In any case he had the Houses of Lancaster, Plantagenet and Tudor against him and he fought with the rope round his neck.

15An Act of Parliament, 1 Richard III, Cap. 15, made at Westminster on the 23 Jan., 1485, precluded all possibility—even if Warbeck should have satisfied the nation of his identity—of a legal claim to the throne, for it forbade any recognition of the offspring of Lady Elizabeth Grey to whom Edward IV was secretly married, in May, 1464, the issue of which marriage were Edward V and his brother, Richard. The act is short and is worth reading, if only for its quaint phraseology.

Cap XV. Item for certayn great causes and consideracions touchynge the suretye of the kynges noble persone as of this realme, by the advyce and assente of his lordes spirituall and temporal, and the commons in this present parliament assembled, and by the auctorite of the same. It is ordeined established and enacted, that all letters patentes, states confrymacions and actes of parlyament of anye castels seignowries, maners, landes, tenementes, fermes, fee fermes, franchises, liberties, or other hereditamentes made at any tyme to Elizabeth late wyfe of syr John Gray Knight; and now late callinge her selfe queene of England, by what so ever name or names she be called in the same, shalbe from the fyrst day of May last past utterly voyd, adnulled and of no strengthe nor effecte in the lawe. And that no person or persons bee charged to our sayde soveraygne lord the Kynge, nor to the sayde Elyzabeth, of or for any issues, prifites, or revenues of any of the sayde seignowries, castelles, maners, landes, tenementes, fermes or other hereditamentes nor for any trespas or other intromittynge in the same, nor for anye by suretye by persone or16 persones to her or to her use—made by them before the sayde fyrst daie of May last passed, but shalbe therof agaynste the sayd Kynge and the sayde Elizabeth clerly discharged and acquyte forever.[1]

1 In the above memorandum no statement is made regarding Jane Shore, though it may be that she had much to do with Perkin Warbeck.

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B. THE HIDDEN KING

The personality, nature and life of Sebastian, King of Portugal, lent themselves to the strange structure of events which followed his strenuous and somewhat eccentric and stormy life. He was born in 1554, and was the son of Prince John and his wife Juana, daughter of the Emperor Charles V. He succeeded his grandfather, John III, at the age of three. His long minority aided the special development of his character. The preceptor appointed to rule his youth was a Jesuit, Luiz-Goncalvoz de Camara. Not unnaturally his teacher used his position to further the religious aims and intrigues of his strenuous Order. Sebastian was the kind of youth who is beloved by his female relatives—quite apart from his being a King; and naturally he was treated by the women in a manner to further his waywardness. When he was fourteen years old he was crowned. From thence on he insisted on having his way in everything, and grew into a young manhood which was of the type beloved of an adventurous people. He was thus described:

"He was a headstrong violent nature, of reckless courage, of boundless ambition founded on a deep18 religious feeling. At the time of his coronation he was called 'Another Alexander.' He loved all kinds of danger, and found a keen pleasure in going out in a tempest in a small boat and in actually running under the guns of his own forts where his commands were stringent that any vessel coming in shore should be fired on. He was a notable horseman and could steer his charger efficiently by the pressure of either knee—indeed he was of such muscular vigour that he could, by the mere stringency of the pressure of his knees, make a powerful horse tremble and sweat. He was a great swordsman, and quite fearless. 'What is fear?' he used to say. Restless by nature he hardly knew what it was to be tired."

And yet this young man—warrior as he was, had a feminine cast of face; his features were symmetrically formed with just sufficient droop in the lower lip to give the characteristic 'note' of Austrian physiognomy. His complexion was as fine and transparent as a girl's; his eyes were clear and of blue; his hair of reddish gold. His height was medium, his figure fine; he was vigorous and active. He had an air of profound gravity and stern enthusiasm. Altogether he was, even without his Royal state, just such a young man as might stand for the idol of a young maid's dream.

And yet he did not seem much of a lover. When, in 1576, he entered Spain to meet Philip II at Guadaloupe to ask the hand of the Infanta Isabella19 in marriage, he was described as “cold as a wooer as he was ardent as a warrior.” His eyes were so set on ambition that mere woman’s beauty did not seem to attract him. Events—even that event, the meeting—fostered his ambition. When he knelt to his host, the elder king kissed him and addressed him as “Your Majesty” the first time the great title had been used to a Portuguese king. The effect must have come but little later for at that meeting he kissed the hand of the old warrior, the Duke of Alva, and uncovered to him. His underlying pride, however, was shewn at the close of that very meeting, for he claimed equal rights in formality with the Spanish king; and there was a danger that the visit of ceremony might end worse than it began. Neither king would enter the carriage in which they were to proceed together, until the host suggested that as there were two doors they should enter at the same time.

Sebastian’s religious fervour and military ambition became one when he conceived the idea of renewing the Crusades; he would recover the Holy Land from the dominion of the Paynim and become himself master of Morocco in the doing of it. With the latter object in his immediate view, he made in 1574, against the wise counsels of Queen Catherine, a *sortie de reconnaissance* of the African coast; but without any result—except the fixing of his resolution to proceed. In 1578 his scheme was complete. He would listen to no20 warning or counsel on the subject even from the Pope, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, or the Duke of Nassau. He seemed to foresee the realization of his dreams, and would forego nothing. He gathered an army of some 18,000 men (of which less than 2,000 were horsemen) and about a dozen cannon. The preparation was made with great splendour—a sort of forerunner of the Great Armada. It seemed to be, as in the case of the projected invasion of England ten years later by Spain, a case of “counting the chickens before they were hatched.”

Some indication of the number of adventurers and camp followers accompanying the army is given by the fact that the 800 craft ordained for the invasion of Morocco carried in all some 24,000 persons, inclusive of the fighting men. The paraphernalia and officials of victory comprised amongst many other luxuries: lists for jousts, a crown ready for the new King of Morocco to put on, and poets with completed poems celebrating victory.

At this time Morocco was entering on the throes of civil war. Muley Abd-el-Mulek, the reigning Sultan, was opposed by his nephew, Mohammed, and to aid the latter, who promised to bring in 400 horsemen, was the immediate object of Sebastian. But the fiery young King of Portugal had undertaken more than he was able to perform. Abd-el-Mulek opposed his 18,000 Portuguese with 55,000 Moors, (of whom 36,000 were

horsemen)21 and with three times his number of cannon. The young Crusader's generalship was distinctly defective; he was a fine fighting man, but a poor commander. Instead of attacking at once on his arrival and so putting the zeal of his own troops and the discouragement of the enemy to the best advantage, he wasted nearly a week in hunting parties and ineffectual manœuvring. When finally issue was joined, Abd-el-Mulek, though he was actually dying, surrounded the Portuguese forces and cut them to pieces. Sebastian, though he fought like a lion, and had three horses killed under him, was hopelessly beaten. There was an attendant piece of the grimmest comedy on record. The Sultan died during the battle, but he was a stern old warrior, and as he fell back in his litter he put his finger on his lip to order with his last movement that his death should be kept secret for the time being. The officer beside him closed the curtains and went on with the fight, pretending to take orders from the dead man and to transmit them to the captains.

The fate of Sebastian was sealed in that battle. Whether he lived or died, he disappeared on 5 August, 1578. One story was that after the battle of Alcaçer-el-Kebir, his body stripped and showing seven wounds was found in a heap of the slain; that it was taken to Fez and there buried; but was afterwards removed to Europe and found resting place in the Convent of Belen. Another22 story was that after a brilliant charge on his enemies he was taken in, but having been rescued by Lui de Brito he escaped unpursued. Certainly no one seemed to have seen the King killed, and it was strange that no part of his clothing or accoutrements was ever found. These were of great splendour, beauty and worth, and must have been easily traceable. There was a rumour that on the night following the battle some fugitives, amongst whom was one of commanding distinction, sought refuge at Arzilla.

Alcaçer-el-Kebir was known as the "Battle of the three Kings." All the principals engaged in it perished. Sebastian was killed or disappeared. Abd-el-Mulek died as we have seen, and Mohammed was drowned in trying to cross the river.

The dubiety of Sebastian's death gave rise in after years to several impostures.

The first began six years after Sebastian's successor—his uncle, Cardinal Henry—was placed on the throne. The impostor was known as the "King of Penamacor." The son of a potter at Alcobaca, he established himself at Albuquerque, within the Spanish borders, somewhat to the north of Badajos, and there gave himself out as "a survivor of the African Campaign." As usual the public went a little further and said openly that he was the missing Don Sebastian. At first he denied the soft impeachment, but later on the temptation became too great for him and he accepted it and set up in23 Penamacor, where he became known as the "King of Penamacor." He was

arrested and paraded through Lisbon, bareheaded, as if to let the public see that he in no way resembled the personality of Sebastian. He was sent to the galleys for life. But he must have escaped, for later on he appeared in Paris as Silvio Pellico, Duke of Normandy, and was accepted as such in many of the salons in the exclusive Faubourg St. Germain.

The second personator of Sebastian was one Matheus Alvares, who having failed to become a monk, a year later imitated the first impostor, and in 1585 set up a hermitage at Ericeira. He bore some resemblance to the late king in build, and in the strength of this he boldly gave himself out as "King Sebastian" and set out for Lisbon. But he was arrested by the way and entered as a prisoner. He was tried and executed with frightful accessories to the execution.

The third artist in this imposture appeared in 1594. He was a Spaniard from Madrigal in Old Castile—a cook, sixty years old (Sebastian would have been just forty if he had lived). When arrested he was given but short shrift and shared the same ghastly fate as his predecessor.

The fourth, and last, imposture was more serious. This time the personator began in Venice in 1598, calling himself "Knight of the Cross."

As twenty years had now elapsed since the disappearance of Sebastian, he would have changed24 much in appearance, so in one respect the personator had less to contend against. Moreover the scene of endeavour was this time laid in Venice, a place even more widely removed in the sixteenth century from Lisbon by circumstances than by geographical position. Again witnesses who could give testimony to the individuality of the missing King of twenty years ago were few and far between. But on the other hand the new impostor had new difficulties to contend against. Henry, the Cardinal, had only occupied the Portuguese throne two years, for in 1580 Philip II of Spain had united the two crowns, and had held the dual monarchy for eighteen years. He was a very different antagonist from any one that might be of purely Portuguese origin.

In the eyes of many of the people—like all the Latin races naturally superstitious—one circumstance powerfully upheld the impostor's claim. So long ago as 1587, Don John de Castro had made a seemingly prophetic statement that Sebastian was alive and would manifest himself in due time. His utterance was, like most such prophecies of the kind, "conducive to its own fulfilment;" there were many—and some of them powerful—who were willing at the start to back up any initiator of such a claim. In his time Sebastian had been used, so far as it was possible to use a man of his temperament and position, by the intriguers of the Catholic Church, and the present

occasion lent itself to their still-existent25 aims. Rome was very powerful four centuries ago, and its legions of adherents bound in many ties, were scattered throughout the known world. Be sure these could and would aid in any movement or intrigue which could be useful to the Church.

"The Knight of the Cross"—who insinuated, though he did not state so, that he was a Royal person was arrested on the showing of the Spanish Ambassador. He was a born liar, with all the readiness which the carrying out of such an adventure as he had planned requires. Not only was he well posted in known facts, but he seemed to be actually proof against cross-examination. The story he told was that after the battle of Alcaçer-el-Kebir he with some others, had sought temporary refuge in Arzilla and in trying to make his way from there to the East Indies, he had got to "Prester John's" land—the semi-fabled Ethiopia of those days. From thence he had been turned back, and had, after many adventures and much wandering—in the course of which he had been bought and sold a dozen times or more, found his way, alone, to Venice. Amongst other statements he alleged that Sebastian's confessor had already recognised and acknowledged him; but he was doubtless ignorant, when he made the statement, that Padre Mauricio, Don Sebastian's confessor, fell with his king in 1578. Two things, one, a positive inference and the other negative, told against him. He only26 knew of such matters as had been made public in depositions, and *he did not know Portuguese*. The result of his first trial was that he was sent to prison for two years.

But those two years of prison improved his case immensely. In that time he learned the Portuguese language and many facts of history. One of the first to believe—or to allege belief, in his story, Fray Estevan de Sampayo, a Dominican monk, was in 1599, sent by the Venetian authorities to Portugal to obtain an accredited description of the personal marks of King Sebastian. He returned within a year with a list of sixteen personal marks—attested by an Apostolic notary. Strange to say the prisoner exhibited every one of them—a complete agreement which in itself gave rise to the new suspicion that the list had been made out by, or on behalf of, the prisoner. The proof however was accepted—for the time; and he was released on the 28th of July, 1600—but with the imperative, humiliating proviso that he was to quit Venice within four and twenty hours under penalty of being sent to the galleys. A number of his supporters, who met him before he went, found that he had in reality no sort of resemblance to Sebastian. Don John de Castro, who was amongst them, said that a great change in Sebastian seemed to have taken place. (He had prophesied and adhered to his prophecy.) He now described him as a man of medium height and powerful frame, with hair27 and beard of black or dark brown, and said he had

completely lost his beauty. “What has become of my fairness?” the swarthy ex-prisoner used to say. He had eyes of uncertain colour, not large but sparkling; high cheek bones; long nose; thin lips with the “Hapsburg droop” in the lower one. He was short from the waist up. (Sebastian’s doublet would fit no other person.) His right leg and arm were longer than the left, the legs being slightly bowed like Sebastian’s. He had small feet with extraordinarily high insteps; and large hands. “In fine,” Don John summed up illogically, “he is the self-same Sebastian—except for such differences as resulted from years and labours.” Some other particulars he added which are in no way helpful to a conclusion.

The Impostor told his friends that he had in 1597, sent a messenger from Constantinople to Portugal—one Marco Tullio Catizzone—who had never returned. Thence he had travelled to Rome—where, when he was just on the eve of being presented to the Holy Father, he was robbed of all he had; thence to Verona and so on to Venice. After his expulsion from Venice he seems to have found his way to Leghorn and Florence, and thence on to Naples, where he was handed over to the jurisdiction of the Spanish Viceroy, the Count of Lemos, who had visited him in prison, and who well remembered King Sebastian whom he had seen when in a diplomatic mission. The Viceroy came to the28 conclusion that he bore no likeness at all to Sebastian, that he was ignorant of all save the well known historical facts that had been published, and that his speech was of “corrupt Portuguese mingled with tell-tale phrases of Calabrian dialect.” Thereupon he took active steps against him. One witness who was produced, recognized in him the real Marco Tullio Catizzone, and Count de Lemos sent for his wife, mother-in-law and brother-in-law, all of whom he had deceived and deserted. His wife, Donna Paula of Messina, acknowledged him; and he confessed his crime. Condemned to the galleys for life, Marco Tullio, out of consideration of a possibility of an error of justice, was so far given indulgence by the authorities that he did not have to wear prison dress or labour at the oar. Many of his supporters, who still believed in him, tried to mitigate his lot and treated him as a companion; so that the hulk at San Lucar, at the mouth of the Guadalquiver became a minor centre of intrigue. But still he was not content, and adventuring further, he tried to get money from the wife of Medina-Sidonia then Governor of Andalusia. He was again arrested with some of his associates. Incriminating documents were found on him. He was racked and confessed all. And so in his real name and parentage, Marco Tullio, son of Ippolit Catizzone of Taverna, and of Petronia Cortes his wife, and husband of Paula Gallardetta was executed. He had, though of liberal education, never29 worked at any occupation or calling; but he had previously to his great fraud, personated other men—amongst them Don Diego of Arragon. On 23rd of September, 1603, he was

dragged on a hurdle to the Square of San Lucar; his right hand was cut off and he was hanged. Five of his companions, including two priests, shared his fate.

But in a way he and the previous impostors had a sort of posthumous revenge, for Sebastian had now entered into the region of Romantic Belief. He was, like King Arthur, the ideal and the heart of a great myth. He became "The Hidden King" who would some day return to aid his nation in the hour of peril—the destined Ruler of the Fifth Monarchy, the founder of an universal Empire of Peace.

A hundred years ago, the custom in British theatres was to finish the evening's performance with a farce. On this occasion the tragedy had been finished two centuries before the "comic relief" came. The occasion was in the French occupation of Portugal in 1807. The strange belief in the Hidden King broke out afresh. A rigorous censorship of Sebastianist literature was without avail—even though its disseminators were condemned by the still-existing Inquisition. The old prophecy was renewed, with a local and personal application—Napoleon was to be destroyed in the Holy Week of 1808, by the waiting Sebastian, whose approach from his mysterious retreat was to be veiled with a30 thick fog. There were to be new portents; the sky was to be emblazoned with a cross of the Order of Aviz, and on March 19th a full moon was to occur during the last quarter. All these things were foretold in an *egg*, afterwards sent by Junot to the National Museum. The general attitude of the French people towards the subject was illustrated by a remark in an ironical manner of one writer: "what can be looked for from a people, one half of whom await the Messiah, the other half Don Sebastian?" The authority on the subject of King Sebastian, M. d'Antas, relates that as late as 1838, after the crushing of a Sebastianist insurrection in Brazil certain still believing Sebastianists were to be seen along the coast peering through the fog for the sails of the mythical ship which was to bring to them the Hidden King who was then to reveal himself.

31

C. "STEFAN MALI"
THE FALSE CZAR

Stefan Mali (Stephen the Little) was an impostor who passed himself off in Montenegro as the Czar Peter III of Russia, who was supposed to have been murdered in 1762. He appeared in the Bocche di Cattaro in 1767. No one seemed to know him or to doubt him; indeed after he had put forth his story he did not escape identification. One witness who had accompanied a state visit to Russia averred that he recognized

the features of the Czar whom he had seen in St. Petersburg. Like all adventurers Stefan Mali had good personal resources. An adventurer, and especially an adventurer who is also an impostor, must be an opportunist; and an opportunist must be able to move in any direction at any time; therefore he must be always ready for any emergency. The time, the place, and the circumstances largely favoured the impostor in this case. It is perhaps but fair to credit him with foreknowledge, intention, and understanding of all that he did. In after years he justified himself in this respect and showed distinctly that he was a man of brains and capable of using them. He32 was no doubt not only able to sustain at the start his alleged personality, but also to act under new conditions and in new circumstances as they developed themselves, as a man of Czar Peter's character and acquired knowledge might have done. Cesare Augusto Levi, who is the authority on this subject, says, in his work "*Venezia e il Montenegro*": "He was of fine presence and well proportioned form and of noble ways. He was so eloquent that he exercised with mere words a power not only on the multitude but also on the higher classes.... He must certainly have been in St. Petersburg before he scaled Montenegro; and have known the true Peter III, for he imitated his voice and his gestures—to the illusionment of the Montenegrins. There is no certainty of such a thing, but he must, in the belief of the Vladika Sava have been a descendant of Stefano Czernovich who reigned after Giorgio IV."

At that time Montenegro was ruled by Vladika Sava, who having spent some twenty years in monastic life, was unfitted for the government of a turbulent nation always harassed by the Turks and always engaged in a struggle for bare existence. The people of such a nation naturally wanted a strong ruler, and as they were discontented under the sway of Sava the recognition of Stefan Mali was almost a foregone conclusion. He told a wonderful story of his adventures since his reported death—a story naturally interesting to such an adventurous33 people; and as he stated his intention of never returning to Russia, they were glad to add such a new ally to their fighting force for the maintenance of their independence. As the will of the people was for the new-comer, the Vladika readily consented to confine himself to his spiritual functions and to allow Stefan to govern. The Vladika of Montenegro held a strange office—one which combined the functions of priest and generalissimo—so that the new division of the labour of ruling was rather welcome than otherwise to the people of a nation where no man ever goes without arms. Stephen—as he now was—governed well. He devoted himself fearlessly to the punishment of ill-doing, and early in his reign had men shot for theft. He established Courts of Justice and tried to further means of communication throughout the little kingdom, which, is, after all, little more than a bare rock. He even so far impinged on Sava's sacred office as to prohibit Sunday

labour. In fact his labours so much improved the outlook of the Montenegrins that the result brought trouble on himself as well as on the nation in general. Hitherto, whatever foreign nations may have believed as to the authenticity of Stephen's claim, they had deliberately closed their eyes to his new existence, so long as under his rule the little nation of Montenegro did not become a more dangerous enemy to all or any of them.

But the nations interested grew anxious at the34 forward movement in Montenegro. Venice, then the possessor of Dalmatia, was alarmed, and Turkey regarded the new ruler as an indirect agent of Russia. Together they declared war. This was the moment when Fate declared that the Pretender should show his latent weakness of character. The Montenegrins are naturally so brave that cowardice is unknown amongst them; but Stephen did not dare to face the Turkish army, which attacked Montenegro on all the land sides. But the Montenegrins fought on till a chance came to them after many months of waiting in the shape of a fearful storm which desolated their enemies' Camp. By a sudden swoop on the camp they seized much ammunition of which they were sadly in want and by the aid of which they gained delivery from their foes. The Russian government seemed then to wake up to the importance of the situation, and, after sending the Montenegrins much help in the shape of war material, asked them to join again in the war against the Turks. The Empress Catherine in addition to this request, sent another letter denouncing Stephen as an impostor. He admitted the charge and was put in prison. But in the impending war a strong man was wanted at the head of affairs; and Sava, who now had the mundane side of his dual office once more thrust again upon him, was a weak one. The situation was saved by Prince George Dolgourouki, the representative of the Empress Catherine,35 who, with statesmanlike acumen, saw that such a desperate need required an exceptional remedy. He recognized the false Czar as Regent. Stephen Mali, thus restored to power under such powerful auspices, once more governed Montenegro until 1774, when he was murdered by the Greek player Casamugna—by order, it is said, of the Pasha of Scutari, Kara Mahmound.

By the irony of Fate this was exactly the way in which the real Czar, whose personality he had assumed, had died some dozen years before.

This impostor was perhaps the only one who in the history of nations prospered finally in his fraud. But as may be seen he was possessed of higher gifts than most of his kind; he was equal to the emergencies which presented themselves—and circumstances favoured him, rarely.

D. THE FALSE DAUPHINS

On 21 January, 1793, Louis XVI of France was beheaded in the Place de la Revolution, formerly Place de Louis Quinze. From the moment his head fell, his only son the Dauphin became by all constitutional usage, his successor, Louis XVII. True the child-king was in the hands of his enemies; but what mattered that to believers in the "Divine Right." What mattered it either that he was at that moment in the prison of the Temple, where he had languished since August 13, 1792, already consecrated to destruction, in one form or another. He was then under eight years of age, and so an easy victim. His gaoler, one Simon, had already been instructed to bring him up as a "sansculotte." In the furtherance of this dreadful ordinance he was taught to drink and swear and to take a part in the unrighteous songs and ceremonies of the Reign of Terror. Under such conditions no one can be sorry that death came to his relief. This was in June, 1795—he being then in his eleventh year. In the stress and turmoil of such an overwhelming cataclysm as the Revolution, but little notice was taken of a death which, under other circumstances,37 would undoubtedly have been of international interest if not of importance. But by this time the death of any one, so long as it was by violence, was too common a matter to cause concern to others. The Terror had practically glutted the lust for blood. Under such conditions but little weight was placed on the accuracy of records; and to this day there survive practical inconveniences and difficulties in daily life from the then disruption of ordered ways. The origin of such frauds or means of fraud as are now before us is in uncertainty. Shakespeare says:

"How oft the sight of means to do ill deedsMakes ill deeds done."

The true or natural criminal is essentially an opportunist. The intention of crime, even if it be only a desire to follow the line of least resistance, is a permanent factor in such lives, but the direction, the mechanism, and the scope of the crime are largely the result of the possibilities which open and develop themselves from a fore-ordered condition of things.

EDWARD IV AS A YOUNG MAN

Here then was the opening which presented itself at the end of the eighteenth century. France was in a state of social chaos. The fountains of the deep were stirred, and no human intelligence could do more than guess at what might result from any individual effort of self-advancement. The public conscience was debauched, and for all practical38 purposes the end justified the means. It was an age of desperate adventure, of reckless enterprise, of unscrupulous methods. The Royalty of France was overthrown—in abeyance till at least such a time as some Colossus of brains or energy, or good fortune, should set it up again. The hopes of a great nation of return to a settled order of things through constitutional and historical channels were centred

in the succession to the Crown. And through the violence of the upheaval any issue was possible. The state of affairs just before the death of Louis XVII gave a chance of success to any desperate fraud. The old King was dead, the new King was a child and in the hands of his bitterest enemies. Even if anyone had cared to vindicate his rights there seemed at present no way of accomplishing this object. To any reckless and unscrupulous adventurer here was an unique chance. Here was a kingship going: a daring hand might grasp the crown which rested in so perilous a manner on the head of a baby. Moreover the events of the last fifteen years of the century had not only begotten daring which depended on promptness, but had taught and fostered desperation. It is a wonder to us who look back on that time through the safety-giving mist of a century, not that there was any attempt to get a crown, if only by theft, but that there were not a hundred attempts made for each one that history has recorded.

39As a matter of fact, there were seven attempts made to personate the dead Dauphin, son of Louis XVI, that "son of St. Louis," who, in obedience to Abbé Edgworth's direction to "ascend to heaven," went somewhere where it is difficult—or perhaps inexpedient—to follow him.

The first pretender appears to have been one Jean Marie Hervagault, son of a tailor. His qualification for the pretence appears to have been but a slender one, that of having been born in 1781, only about three years before the Dauphin. This, taken by itself, would seem to be but a poor equipment for such a crime; but in comparison with some of the later claimants it was not without reason of approximate possibility as far as date was concerned. It was not this criminal's first attempt at imposture, for he had already pretended to be a son of la Vaucelle of Longueville and of the Duc d'Ursef. Having been arrested at Hottot as a vagabond, he was taken to Cherburg, where he was claimed by his father. When claiming to be, like the old man in Mark Twain's inimitable *Huckleberry Finn*, "the late Dauphin," his story was that he had as a child been carried from the prison of the Temple in a basket of linen. In 1799 he was imprisoned at Chalons-sur-Marne for a month. He was, however, so far successful in his imposture as Louis XVII, that after some adventures he actually achieved a good following—chiefly of the landed interest and clerics.40 He was condemned to two years' imprisonment at Vitry, and afterwards to a term of twice that duration, during which he died, in 1812.

The second and third aspirants to the honour of the vacant crown were inconspicuous persons possessing neither personal qualification nor apparent claim of any sort except that of a desire for acquisition. One was Persat, an old soldier; the other, Fontolive, a bricklayer. The pretence of either of these men would have been entirely ridiculous but for its entirely tragic consequences. There is short shrift for the

unsuccessful impostor of royalty—even in an age of fluctuation between rebellion and anarchy.

The fourth pretender was at least a better workman at crime than his predecessors. This was Mathurin Brunneau—ostensibly a shoemaker but in reality a vagabond peasant from Vezins, in the department of Maine-et-Loire. He was a born criminal as was shown by his early record. When only eleven years of age he claimed to be the son of the lord of the village, Baron de Vezins. He obtained the sympathy of the Countess de Turpin de Crisse, who seemed to have compassion for the boy. Even when the fraud of his parentage was found out she took him back into her household—but amongst the servants. After this his life became one of adventure. When he was fifteen he made a tour through France. In 1803 he was put in the House of Correction at St. Denis. In 1805 he41 enlisted as a gunner. In 1815 he re-appeared with an American passport bearing the name of Charles de Navarre. His more ambitious attempt at personation in 1817, was not in the long run successful. He claimed his rights, as "Dauphin" Bourbon under Louis XVIII, was arrested at St. Malo, and confined at Bicêtre. He got round him a gang of persons of evil life, as shown by their various records. One was a false priest, another a prisoner for embezzlement, another an ex-bailiff who was also a forger, another a deserter; with the usual criminal concomitant of women, dishonoured clergy and such like. At Rouen he was sentenced to pay a fine of three thousand francs in addition to imprisonment for seven years. He died in prison.

The imposture regarding the Dauphin was like a torch-race—so soon as the lighted torch fell from the hand of one runner it was lifted by him who followed. Brunneau, having disappeared into the prison at Rouen, was succeeded by Henri Herbert who made a dramatic appearance in Austria in 1818. At the Court in Mantone, the scene of his appearance, he gave the name of Louis Charles de Bourbon, Duc de Normandie. His account of himself, given in his book published in 1831, and republished—with enlargements, by Chevalier del Corso in 1850, is without any respect at all for the credulity of his readers.

The story tells how an alleged doctor, one answering42 to the not common name of Jenais-Ojardias, some time before the death of the Dauphin had had made a toy horse of sufficient size to contain the baby king, the opening to the interior of which was hidden by the saddle-cloth. The wife of the gaoler Simon, helped in the plot, the carrying out of which was attempted early in 1794. Another child about the Dauphin's size, dying or marked for death by fatal disease, was drugged and hidden in the interior. When the toy horse was placed in the Dauphin's cell the children were exchanged, the little king having also been drugged for the purpose. It would almost

seem that the narrator here either lost his head or was seized with a violent *cacoethes scribendi*, for he most unnecessarily again lugs in the episode adapted from Trojan history. The worthy doctor of the double name had another horse manufactured, this time of life size. Into the alleged entrails of this animal, which was harnessed with three real horses as one of a team of four, the Dauphin, once more drugged, was concealed. He was borne to refuge in Belgium, where he was placed under the protection of the Prince de Condé. By this protector he was, according to his story, sent to General Kléber who took him to Egypt as his nephew under the name of Monsieur Louis. After the battle of Marengo in 1800, he returned to France, where he confided his secret to Lucien Bonaparte and to Fouché (the Minister of Police),43 who got him introduced to the Empress Josephine, who recognised him by a scar over his right eye. In 1804 (still according to his story), he embarked for America and got away to the banks of the Amazon, where amid the burning deserts (as he put it) he had adventures capable of consuming lesser romancists with envy. Some of these adventures were amongst a tribe called "the Mamelucks"—which name was at least reminiscent of his alleged Egyptian experiences. From the burning deserts on the banks of the Amazon he found his way to Brazil, where a certain "Don Juan," late of Portugal and at that time Regent of Brazil, gave him asylum.

Leaving the hospitable home of Don Juan, he returned to Paris in 1815. Here Condé introduced him to the Duchesse d'Angoulême (his sister!) and according to his own naïve statement "the Princess was greatly surprised," as indeed she might well have been—quite as much as the witch of Endor was by the appearance of Samuel. Having been repulsed by his (alleged) sister, the alleged king made a little excursion, embracing in its erratic course Rhodes, England, Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. When in Austria he met Silvio Pellico in prison. Having spent some years himself in prison in the same country, he went to Switzerland. Leaving Geneva in 1826, he entered France, under the name of Herbert. He was in Paris the following year under44 the name of "Colonel Gustave," and forthwith revived his fraud of being "the late Dauphin." In 1828, he appealed to the Chamber of Peers. To this appeal he appears to have received no direct reply; but apropos of it, Baron Mounier made a proposition to the Chamber that in future no such application should be received unless properly signed and attested and presented by a member of the Chamber. He gathered round him some dupes who believed in him. To these he told a number of strange lies based on some form of perverted truth, but always taking care that those of whom he spoke were already dead. Amongst them was the wife of Simon, who had died in 1819. Desault, the surgeon, who had medical care of Louis XVII, and who died in 1795, the ex-Empress Josephine, who died in 1814, General Pichegru, who died in

1804, and the Duc de Bourbon (Prince de Condé) who died in 1818. In the course of his citation of the above names, he plays havoc with generally accepted history—Desault according to him did not die naturally but was poisoned. Josephine died simply because she knew the secret of the young King's escape. Pichegru died from a similar cause and not by suicide. Fualdes was assassinated, but it was because he knew the fatal secret. With regard to one of his dead witnesses whose name was Thomas-Ignace-Martin de Gallardon, there is a rigmarole which would not be accepted in the nursery of an idiot asylum. There45 is a mixture of Pagan mythology and Christian hagiology which would have been condemned by Ananias himself. In one passage he talks of seeing suddenly before him—he could not tell (naturally enough) whence he came—a sort of angel who had wings, a long coat and a *high hat*. This supernatural person ordered the narrator to tell the King that he was in danger, and the only way to avoid it was to have a good police and to keep the Sabbath. Having given his message the visitant rose in the air and disappeared. Later on the suggested angel told him to communicate with the Duc Decazes. The Duke naturally, and wisely enough, handed the credulous peasant over to the care of a doctor. Martin himself died, presumably by assassination, in 1834.

The Revolution of 1830 awoke the pretensions of Herbert, who now appeared as the Baron de Richmont, and wrote to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, his (supposed) sister, putting on her the blame of all his troubles. But the consequences of this effort were disastrous to him. He was arrested in August, 1833. After hearing many witnesses the Court condemned him to imprisonment for twelve years. He was arraigned under the name of "Ethelbert Louis-Hector-Alfred," calling himself the "Baron de Richmont." He escaped from Clairvaux, whither he had been transferred from Saint-Pélagie, in 1835. In 1843 and 1846 he published his memoirs—enlarged but omitting some46 of his earlier assertions, which had been disproved. He returned to France after the amnesty of 1840. In 1848 he appealed—unheeded—to the National Assembly. He died in 1855 at Gleyze.

The sixth "Late Dauphin" was a Polish Jew called Naundorf—an impudent impostor not even seeming suitably prepared by time for the part which he had thus voluntarily undertaken, having been born in 1775, and thus having been as old at the birth of the Dauphin as the latter was when he died. This individual had appeared in Berlin in 1810, and was married in Spandau eight years later. He had been punished for incendiarism in 1824, and later got three years' imprisonment at Brandenburg for coining. He may be considered as a fairly good all-round—if unsuccessful—criminal. In England he was imprisoned for debt. He died in Delft in 1845.

The last attempt at impersonating Louis XVII, the seventh, afforded what might in theatrical parlance be called the "comic relief" of the whole series, both as regards means and results. This time the claimant to the Kingship of France was none other than a half-bred Iroquois, one called Eleazar, who appeared to be the ninth son of Thomas Williams, otherwise Thorakwaneken, and an Indian woman, Mary Ann Konwatewentala. This lady, who spoke only Iroquois, said at the opportune time she was *not* the mother of Lazar (Iroquois for Eleazar). She made her mark as she could not write.47 Eleazar had been almost an idiot till the age of thirteen; but, being struck on the head by a stone, recovered his memory and intelligence. He said he remembered sitting on the knees of a beautiful lady who wore a rich dress with a train. He also remembered seeing in his childhood a terrible person; shewn the picture of Simon he recognised him with terror. He learned English but imperfectly, became a Protestant and a missionary and married. His profile was something like that of the typical Bourbon. In 1841, the Prince de Joinville, seeing him on his travels in the United States, told him (according to Eleazar's account) that he was the son of a king, and got him to sign and seal a parchment, already prepared, the same being a solemn abdication of the Crown of France in favour of Louis Philippe, made by Charles Louis, son of Louis XVI, also styled Louis XVII King of France and Navarre. The seal used was the seal of France, the one used by the old Monarchy. The "poor Indian with untutored mind" made with charming diffidence the saving clause regarding the seal,—"if I am not mistaken." Of course there was in the abdication a clause regarding the payment of a sum of money "which would enable me to live in great luxury in this country or in France as I might choose." The Reverend Eleazar, despite his natural disadvantages and difficulties, was more fortunate than his fellow claimants inasmuch as the time of his imposture48 was more propitious. Louis Philippe, who was always anxious to lessen the danger to his tottering throne, made a settlement on him from his Civil List, and the "subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

Altogether the Louis XVII impostures extended over a period of some sixty years, beginning with Hervagault's pretence soon after the death of the Dauphin, and closing at Gleyze with the death of Henri Herbert, the alleged Baron de Richmont who appeared as the alleged Duc de Normandie.

49

E. PRINCESS OLIVE

The story of Mrs. Olive Serres, as nature made it, was one thing; it was quite another as she made it for herself. The result, before the story was completely told, was a

third; and, compared with the other, one of transcendent importance. Altogether her efforts, whatsoever they were and crowned never so effectively, showed a triumph in its way of the thaumaturgic art of lying; but like all structures built on sand it collapsed eventually. In the plain version—nature's—the facts were simply as follows. She, and a brother of no importance, were the children of a house painter living in Warwick, one Robert Wilmot, and of Anna Maria his wife. Having been born in 1772 she was under age when in 1791 she was married, the ceremony therefore requiring licence supported by bond and affidavit. Her husband was John Thomas Serres who ten years later was appointed marine painter to King George III. Mr. and Mrs. Serres were separated in 1804 after the birth of two daughters, the elder of whom, born in 1797, became in 1822 the wife of Antony Thomas Ryves a portrait painter—whom she divorced in 1847. Mrs. 50A. T. Ryves twelve years later filed a petition praying that the marriage of her mother, made in 1791, might be declared valid and she herself the legitimate issue of that marriage. The case was heard in 1861, Mrs. Ryves conducting it in person. Having produced sufficient evidence of the marriage and the birth, and there being no opposition, the Court almost as a matter of course pronounced the decree asked for. In this case no complications in the way of birth or marriage of Mrs. Serres were touched on.

Robert Wilmot, the house-painter, had an elder brother James who became a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and went into the Church, taking his degree of Doctor of Divinity. Through his College he was presented in 1781 to the living of Barton-on-the-heath, Warwickshire. The Statutes of his College contained a prohibition against marriage whilst a Fellow. James Wilmot D. D. died in 1807 leaving his property between the two children of Robert, after life-use by his brother. James and Robert Wilmot had a sister Olive, who was born in 1728 and married in 1754 to William Payne with issue one daughter, Olivia, born in 1759. Robert Wilmot died in 1812.

OLIVIA SERRES

Out of these rough materials Mrs. Olive Serres set herself in due course to construct and carry out, as time and opportunity allowed, and as occasions presented themselves and developed, a fraudulent romance in real life and action. She was, however,51 a very clever woman and in certain ways—as was afterwards proved by her literary and artistic work—well dowered by nature for the task—crooked though it was—which she set for herself. Her ability was shown not only by what she could do and did at this time of her life, but by the manner in which she developed her natural gifts as time went on. In the sum of her working life, in which the perspective of days becomes merged in that of years, she touched on many subjects, not always of an

ordinary kind, which shewed often that she was of conspicuous ability, having become accomplished in several branches of art. She was a painter of sufficient merit to have exhibited her work in the Royal Academy in 1794 and to be appointed landscape-painter to the Prince of Wales in 1806. She was a novelist, a press writer, an occasional poet and in many ways of a ready pen. She was skilled in some forms of occultism, and could cast horoscopes; she wrote, in addition to a pamphlet on the same subject, a book on the writings of Junius, claiming to have discovered the identity of the author—none other than James Wilmot D. D. She wrote learnedly on disguised handwriting. In fact she touched on the many phases of literary effort which come within the scope of those who live by the work of their brains. Perhaps, indeed, it was her facility as a writer that helped to lead her astray; for in her practical draughtsmanship and in her brain teeming with romantic ideas she52 found a means of availing herself of opportunities suggested by her reckless ambition. Doubtless the cramped and unpoetic life of her humble condition in the house-painter's home in Warwick made her fret and chafe under its natural restraint. But when she saw her way to an effective scheme of enlarging her self-importance she acted with extraordinary daring and resource. As is usual with such natures, when moral restraints have been abandoned, the pendulum swung to its opposite. As she had been lowly she determined to be proud; and having fixed on her objective began to elaborate a consistent scheme, utilising the facts of her own surroundings as the foundation of her imposture. She probably realised early that there must be a base somewhere, and so proceeded to manufacture or arrange for herself a new identity into which the demonstrable facts of her actual life could be wrought. At the same time she manifestly realised that in a similar way fact and intention must be interwoven throughout the whole of her contemplated creation. Accordingly she created for herself a new *milieu* which she supported by forged documents of so clever a conceit and such excellent workmanship, that they misled all who investigated them, until they came within the purview of the great lawyers of the day whose knowledge, logical power, skill and determination were arrayed against her. By a sort of intellectual metabolism she changed the identities and conditions of her53 own relations whom I have mentioned, always taking care that her story held together in essential possibilities, and making use of the abnormalities of those whose prototypes she introduced into fictional life.

The changes made in her world of new conditions were mainly as follows: Her uncle, the Reverend James, who as a man of learning and dignity was accustomed to high-class society, and as a preacher of eminence occasionally in touch with Crown and Court, became her father; and she herself the child of a secret marriage with a great

lady whose personal rank and condition would reflect importance on her daughter. But proof, or alleged proof, of some kind would be necessary and there were too many persons at present living whose testimony would be available for her undoing. So her uncle James shifted his place and became her grandfather. To this the circumstances of his earlier life gave credibility in two ways; firstly because they allowed of his having made a secret marriage, since he was forbidden to marry by the statutes of his college, and secondly because they gave a reasonable excuse for concealing his marriage and the birth of a child, publicity regarding which would have cost him his livelihood.

At this point the story began to grow logically, and the whole scheme to expand cohesively. Her genius as a writer of fiction was being proved; and with the strengthening of the intellectual nature54 came the atrophy of the moral. She began to look higher; and the seeds of imagination took root in her vanity till the madness latent in her nature turned wishes into beliefs and beliefs into facts. As she was imagining on her own behoof, why not imagine beneficially? This all took time, so that when she was well prepared for her venture things had moved on in the nation and the world as well as in her fictitious romance. Manifestly she could not make a start on her venture until the possibility vanished of witnesses from the inner circle of her own family being brought against her; so that she could not safely begin machinations for some time. She determined however to be ready when occasion should serve. In the meantime she had to lead two lives. Outwardly she was Olive Serres, daughter of Robert Wilmot born in 1772 and married in 1791, and mother of two daughters. Inwardly she was the same woman with the same birth, marriage and motherhood, but of different descent being (imaginatively) grand-daughter of her (real) uncle the Rev. James Wilmot D. D. The gaps in the imaginary descent having been thus filled up as made and provided in her own mind, she felt more safe. Her uncle—so ran her fiction—had early in his college life met and become friends with Count Stanislaus Poniatowski who later became by election King of Poland. Count Poniatowski had a sister—whom the ingenious Olive dubbed “Princess of Poland”—who became the wife of her uncle55 (now her grandfather) James. To them was born, in 1750, a daughter Olive, the marriage being kept secret for family reasons, and the child for the same reason being passed off as the offspring of Robert the housepainter. This child Olive, according to the fiction, met His Royal Highness Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, brother of the King, George III. They fell in love with each other and were privately married—by the Rev. James Wilmot D. D.—on 4 March 1767. They had issue one daughter, Olive, born at Warwick 3 April 1772. After living with her for four years the Duke of Cumberland deserted his wife, who was then pregnant, and in 1771

married—bigamously, it was alleged—Lady Anne Horton, sister of Colonel Luttrell, daughter of Lord Irnham, and widow of Andrew Horton of Catton, Derbyshire. The (alleged) Royal Duchess died in France in 1774, and the Duke in 1790.

Thus fact and fiction were arrayed together in a very cunning way. The birth of Olive Wilmot (afterwards Serres) in 1772 was proved by a genuine registry. Likewise that of her daughter Mrs. Ryves. For all the rest the certificates were forged. Moreover there was proof of another Olive Wilmot whose existence, supported by genuine registration, might avert suspicion; since it would be difficult to prove after a lapse of time that the Olive Wilmot born at Warwick in 1772 daughter of Robert (the house-painter), was not the56 granddaughter of James (the Doctor of Divinity). In case of necessity the real date (1759) of the birth of Olive Wilmot sister of the Rev. James could easily be altered to the fictitious date of the birth of "Princess" Olive born 1750.

It was only in 1817 that Mrs. Serres began to take active measures for carrying her imposture into action; and in the process she made some tentative efforts which afterwards made difficulty for her. At first she sent out a story, through a memorial to George III, that she was daughter of the Duke of Cumberland by Mrs. Payne, wife of Captain Payne and sister of James Wilmot D. D. This she amended later in the same year by alleging that she was a natural daughter of the Duke by the sister of Doctor Wilmot, whom he had seduced under promise of marriage. It was not till after the deaths of George III and the Duke of Kent in 1820, that the story took its third and final form.

It should be noticed that care was taken not to clash with laws already in existence or to run counter to generally received facts. In 1772 was passed the Royal Marriage Act (12 George III Cap. 11) which nullified any marriage contracted with anyone in the succession to the Crown to which the Monarch had not given his sanction. Therefore Mrs. Serres had fixed the (alleged) marriage of (the alleged) Olive Wilmot with the Duke of Cumberland as in 1767—five years earlier—so that57 the Act could not be brought forward as a bar to its validity. Up to 1772 such marriages could take place legally. Indeed there was actually a case in existence—the Duke of Gloucester (another brother of the King) having married the dowager Countess of Waldegrave. It was of common repute that this marriage was the motive of the King's resolve to have the Royal Marriage Act added to the Statute book. At the main trial it was alleged by Counsel, in making the petitioner's claim, that the King (George III) was aware of the Duke of Cumberland's marriage with Olive Wilmot, although it was not known to the public, and that when he heard of his marriage with Lady Anne Horton he was very angry and would not allow them to come to Court.

The various allegations of Mrs. Serres as to her mother's marriage were not treated seriously for a long time but they were so persisted in that it became necessary to have some denial in evidence. Accordingly a law-case was entered. One which became a *cause célèbre*. It began in 1866—just about a hundred years from the time of the alleged marriage. With such a long gap the difficulties of disproving Mrs. Serres' allegations were much increased. But there was no help for it; reasons of State forbade the acceptance or even the doubt of such a claim. The really important point was that if by any chance the claimant should win, the Succession would be endangered.

58The presiding judge was the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Cockburn. With him sat Lord Chief Baron Pollock and the Judge Ordinary Sir James Wilde. There was a special jury. The case took the form of one in the English Probate Court made under the "Legitimacy Declaration Act." In this case, Mrs. Ryves, daughter of Mrs. Serres, was the petitioner. Associated with her in the claim was her son, who, however, is of no interest in the matter and need not be considered. The petition stated that Mrs. Ryves was the legitimate daughter of one John Thomas Serres and Olive his wife, the said Olive being, whilst living, a natural-born subject and the legitimate daughter of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland and Olive Wilmot, his wife. That the said Olive Wilmot, born in 1750, was lawfully married to His Royal Highness Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, fourth son of Frederick Prince of Wales (thus being grandson of George II and brother of King George III), on 4 March 1767, at the house of Thomas, Lord Archer, in Grosvenor Square, London, the marriage being performed by the Rev. James Wilmot D. D., father of the said Olive Wilmot. That a child, Olive, was born to them on 3 April 1772, who in 1791 was married to John Thomas Serres. And so on in accordance with the (alleged) facts above given.

The strange position was that even if the petitioner59 should win her main case she would prove her own illegitimacy. For granting that the alleged Olive Serres should have been legally married to the Duke of Cumberland, the Royal Marriage Act, passed five years later, forbade the union of the child of such a marriage, except with the sanction of the reigning monarch.

In the making of the claim of Mrs. Ryves a grave matter appeared—one which rendered it absolutely necessary that the case should be heard in the most formal and adequate way and settled once for all. The matter was one affecting the legality of the marriage of George III, and so touching the legitimacy of his son afterwards George IV, his son afterwards William IV and his son the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria—and so debarring them and all their descendants from the Crown of England. The points of contact were in documents insidiously though not overtly produced and the

preparation of which showed much constructive skill in the world of fiction. Amongst the many documents put in evidence by the Counsel for Mrs. Ryves were two certificates of the (alleged) marriage between Olive Wilmot and the Duke of Cumberland. On the back of each of these alleged certificates was written what purported to be a certificate of the marriage of George III to Hannah Lightfoot performed in 1759 by J. Wilmot. The wording of the documents varied slightly.

60It was thus that the claim of Mrs. Ryves and her son became linked up with the present and future destinies of England. These alleged documents too, brought the Attorney General upon the scene. There were two reasons for this. Firstly the action had to be taken against the Crown in the matter of form; secondly in such a case with the possibility of such vast issues it was absolutely necessary that every position should be carefully guarded, every allegation jealously examined. In each case the Attorney General was the proper official to act.

The Case of the Petitioners was prepared with extraordinary care. There were amongst the documents produced, numbering over seventy, some containing amongst them forty-three signatures of Dr. Wilmot, sixteen of Lord Chatham, twelve of Mr. Dunning (afterwards the 1st Baron Ashburton), twelve of George III, thirty-two of Lord Warwick and eighteen of H.R.H., the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria. Their counsel stated that although these documents had been repeatedly brought to the notice of the successive Ministers of the Crown, it had never been suggested until that day that they were forgeries. This latter statement was traversed in Court by the Lord Chief Baron, who called attention to a debate on the subject in the House of Commons in which they were denounced as forgeries.

In addition to those documents already quoted were the following certificates:

61

“The marriage of these parties was this day duly solemnized at Kew Chapel, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, by myself.

“J. Wilmot.”

“George P.”
“Hannah.”

Witness to this marriage

“W. Pitt.”
“Anne Taylor.”

May 27, 1759.

* * * * *

April 17, 1759

“This is to Certify that the marriage of these parties (George, Prince of Wales, to Hannah Lightfoot) was duly solemnized this day, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, at their residence at Peckham, by myself.

“J. Wilmot.”

“George Guelph.”
“Hannah Lightfoot.”

Witness to the marriage of these parties,—

“William Pitt.”
“Anne Taylor.”

* * * * *

“I hereby Certify that George, Prince of Wales, married Hannah Wheeler *alias* Lightfoot, April 17, 1759, but from finding62 the latter to be her right name I solemnized the union of the said parties a second time May the 27th, 1759, as the Certificate affixed to this paper will confirm.

“J. Wilmot.
Witness (Torn)”

* * * * *

The case for the Crown was strongly supported. Not only did the Attorney-General, Sir Roundell Palmer (afterwards Lord Chancellor and First Earl of Selborne) appear himself, but he was supported by the Solicitor-General, the Queen’s Advocate, Mr. Hannen and Mr. R. Bourke. The Attorney-General made the defence himself. At the outset it was difficult to know where to begin, for everywhere undoubted and unchallenged facts were interwoven with the structure of the case; and of all the weaknesses and foibles of the important persons mentioned, full advantage was taken. The marriage of the Duke of Gloucester to Lady Waldegrave had made him unpopular in every way, and he was at the time a *persona ingrata* at Court. There had been rumours of scandal about the King (when Prince of Wales) and the “Fair Quaker,” Hannah Lightfoot. The anonymity of the author of the celebrated “Letters of Junius,” which attacked the King so unmercifully, lent plausibility to any story which might

account for it. The case of Mrs. Ryves, tried in 1861, in which her own63 legitimacy had been proved and in which indisputable documents had been used, was taken as a proof of her *bona fides*.

Mrs. Ryves herself was in the box for nearly the whole of three days, during which she bore herself firmly, refusing even to sit down when the presiding judge courteously extended that privilege to her. She was then, by her own statement, over seventy years of age. In the course of her evidence a Memorial to George IV was produced, written by her mother, Mrs. Serres, in which the word offspring was spelled “orfspring”; in commenting on which the Attorney-General produced a congratulatory Ode to the Prince Regent on his birthday in 1812, by the same author, in which occurred the line:

“Hail valued heir orfspring of Heaven’s smile.” Similar eccentric orthography was found in other autograph papers of Mrs. Serres.

The Attorney-General, in opposing the claim, alleged that the whole story of the Duke of Cumberland’s marriage to Olive Wilmot was a concoction from beginning to end, and said that the mere statement of the Petitioner’s case was sufficient to stamp its true character. That its folly and absurdity were equal to its audacity; in every stage it exposed itself to conviction by the simplest tests. He added that the Petitioner might have dwelt so long upon documents produced and fabricated by others, that, with her memory impaired by old age,64 the principle of veracity might have been poisoned, and the offices of imagination and memory confounded to such an extent that she really believed that things had been done and said in her presence which were in fact entirely imaginary. No part of her story was corroborated by a single authentic document, or by a single extrinsic fact. The forgery, falsehood and fraud of the case were proved in many ways. The explanations were as false and feeble as the story itself. “I cannot of course,” he said, “lay bare the whole history of the concoction of these extraordinary documents, but there are circumstances which indicate that they were concocted by Mrs. Serres herself.”

Having commented on some other matters spoken of, but regarding which no evidence was adduced, he proceeded to speak of the alleged wife of Joseph Wilmot D. D., the Polish Princess, sister of Count Poniatowski, afterwards elected King of Poland (1764), who was the mother of his charming daughter, Olive. “The truth is,” said Sir Roundell, “that both the Polish Princess and the charming daughter were pure myths; no such persons ever existed—they were as entirely creatures of the imagination as Shakespeare’s Ferdinand and Miranda.”

As to the documents produced by the Petitioners he remarked:

“What sort of documents were those which were produced? The internal evidence proved that they were the most65 ridiculous, absurd, preposterous series of forgeries that the perverted ingenuity of man ever invented … they were all written on little scraps and slips of paper, such as no human being would ever have used for the purpose of recording transactions of this kind, and it would be proved that in every one of these pieces of paper the watermark of date was wanting.”

This was but a new variant of the remark made by the Lord Chief Justice, just after the putting-in of the alleged marriage Certificate of the Prince of Wales and Hannah Lightfoot:

“The Court is, as I understand, asked solemnly to declare, on the strength of two certificates, coming I know not whence, written on two scraps of paper, that the marriage, the only marriage of George III which the world believes to have taken place, between His Majesty and Queen Charlotte, was an invalid marriage, and consequently that all the Sovereigns who have sat on the throne since his death, including Her present Majesty, were not entitled to sit on the throne. That is the conclusion which the Court is asked to come to upon these two rubbishy pieces of paper, one signed ‘George P.,’ and the other ‘George Guelph.’ I believe them to be gross and rank forgeries. The Court has no difficulty in coming to the conclusion, even assuming that the signatures had that character of genuineness which they have not, that what is asserted in these documents has not the slightest foundation in fact.”

With this view the Lord Chief Baron and the Judge-Ordinary entirely concurred, the former adding:

“… the declarations of Hannah Lightfoot, if there ever was such a person, cannot be received in evidence on the66 faith of these documents … the only issues for the jury are the issues in the cause and this is not an issue in the cause, but an incidental issue.… I think that these documents, which the Lord Chief Justice has treated with all the respect which properly belongs to them, are not genuine.”

Before the Attorney General had finished the statement of his case, he was interrupted by the foreman of the jury, who said that the jury were unanimously of opinion that there was no necessity to hear any further evidence as they were convinced that the signatures of the documents were not genuine. On this the Lord Chief Justice said:

“You share the opinion which my learned brothers and I have entertained for a long time; that every one of the documents is spurious.”

As the Counsel for the Petitioners had “felt it his duty to make some observations to the jury before they delivered their verdict,” and had made them, the Lord Chief Justice summed up. Towards the conclusion of his summing-up he said, in speaking of the various conflicting stories put forth by Mrs. Serres:

“In each of the claims which she made at different times, she appealed to documents in her possession by which they were supported. What was the irresistible inference? Why, that documents were from time to time prepared to meet the form which her claims from time to time assumed.”

The jury, without hesitation, found that they were not satisfied “that Olive Serres, the mother of67 Mrs. Ryves, was the legitimate daughter of Henry Frederick Duke of Cumberland and Olive his wife; and they were not satisfied that Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, was lawfully married to Olive Wilmot on the 4th of March 1767....”

The case of Mrs. Serres is an instance of how a person, otherwise comparatively harmless but afflicted with vanity and egotism, may be led away into evil courses, from which, had she realised their full iniquity, she might have shrunk. The only thing outside the case we have been considering, was that she separated from her husband; which indeed was an affliction rather than a crime. She had been married for thirteen years and had borne two children, but so far as we know no impropriety was ever alleged against her. One of her daughters remained her constant companion till her twenty-second year and through her long life held her and her memory in filial devotion and respect. The forethought, labour and invention which she devoted to the fraud, if properly and honestly used, might have won for her a noteworthy place in the history of her time. But as it was, she frittered away in criminal work her good opportunities and great talents, and ended her life within the rules of the King’s Bench.

71

II. PRACTITIONERS OF MAGIC

PARACELSUS

Ifeel that I ought to begin this record with an apology to the *manes* of a great and fearless scholar, as earnest as he was honest, as open-minded as he was great-hearted. I do so because I wish to do what an unimportant man can after the lapse of centuries, to help a younger generation to understand what such a man as I write of

can do and did under circumstances not possible in times of greater enlightenment. The lesson which the story can tell to thinking youth cannot be told in vain. The greatest asset which worth has in this world is the irony of time. Contemporaneous opinion, though often correct, is generally on the meagre side of appreciation—practically always so with regard to anything new. Such must in any case be encountered in matters of the sixteenth century which being on the further side of an age of discovery and reform had hardened almost to the stage of ossification the beliefs and methods of the outgoing order of things. Prejudice—especially when it is based on science and religion—dies hard: the very spirit whence originates a stage of progress or reform, makes its inherited follower tenacious of *its* traditions however72 short they may be. This is why any who, in this later and more open minded age, may investigate the intellectual discoveries of the past, owe a special debt in the way of justice to the memories of those to whom such fresh light is due. The name and story of the individual known as Paracelsus—scholar, scientist, open minded thinker and teacher, earnest investigator and searcher for elemental truths—is a case in point. Anyone who contents himself with accepting the judgment of four centuries passed upon the great Swiss thinker, who had rendered famous in history his place of birth, his canton and his nation, would inevitably come to the conclusion that he was merely a charlatan a little more clever than others of his kind; an acceptor of all manner of eccentric beliefs (including the efficacy of spirits and demons in pathological cases), a drunkard, a wastrel, an evil liver, a practiser of necromancy, an astrologer, a magician, an atheist, an alchemist—indeed an "ist" of all defamatory kinds within the terminology of the sixteenth century and of all disputatious churchmen and scientists who have not agreed with his theories and conclusions ever since.

Let us begin with the facts of his life. His name was Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, and he was the son of a doctor living in Einsiedeln in the canton of Schwyz, named Wilhelm Bombast von Hohenheim, natural son of a Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. He was born in 1490.73 It was not uncommon for a man of that age who was striving to make a name for himself, to assume some *nom de plume* or *de guerre*; and with such a family record as his own, it was no wonder that on the threshold of his life the young Theophrastus did so. In the light of his later achievements, we can well imagine that he had some definite purpose in mind, or at least some guiding principle of suggestiveness, in choosing such a compound word from the Greek as Paracelsus (which is derived from "para," meaning before, in the sense of superior to, and Celsus, the name of an Epicurean philosopher of the second century.) Celsus appears to have had views of great enlightenment according to the

thought of his own time. Unhappily only fragments of his work remain, but as he was a follower of Epicurus after an interval of between four and five centuries, it is possible to get some idea of his main propositions. Like Epicurus he stood for nature. He did not believe in fatalism, but he did in a supreme power. He was a Platonist and held that there was no truth which was against nature. It is easy to see from his life and work that Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim shared his views. His intellectual attitude was that of a true scientist—denying nothing *prima facie* but investigating all.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,Believe me, than in half the creeds."

74His father moved in 1502 to Villach in Carinthia, where he practised medicine till his death in 1534. Theophrastus was a precocious boy; after youthful study with his father, he entered the University of Basel when he was about sixteen, after which he prosecuted chemical researches under the learned Trithemius Bishop of Sponheim who had written on the subject of the Great elixir—the common subject of the scientists of that day,—and at Wurzburg. From thence he proceeded to the great mines in the Tyrol, then belonging to the Fugger family. Here he studied geology and its kindred branches of learning—especially those dealing with effects and so far as possible with causes—metallurgy, mineral waters, and the diseases of and accidents to mines and miners. The theory of knowledge which he deduced from these studies was that we must learn nature from nature.

In 1527, he returned to Basel, where he was appointed town physician. It was a characteristic of his independence and of his mind, method and design, that he lectured in the language of the place, German, foregoing the Latin tongue, usual up to that time for such teaching. He did not shrink from a bold criticism of the medical ideas and methods then current. The effect of this independence and teaching was that for a couple of years his reputation and his practice increased wonderfully. But the time thus passed allowed his enemies not only to see the danger for them that75 lay ahead, but to take such action as they could to obviate it. Reactionary forces are generally—if not always—self-protective, without regard to the right or wrong of the matter, and Paracelsus began to find that the self-interest and ignorance of the many were too strong for him, and that their unscrupulous attacks began to injure his work seriously. He was called conjurer, necromancer, and many such terms of obloquy. Then what we may call his "professional" enemies felt themselves strong enough to join in the attack. As he had kept a careful eye on the purity of medicines in use, the apothecaries, who, in those days worked in a smaller field than now, and who found their commerce more productive through guile than excellence, became almost declared opponents. Eventually he had to leave Basel. He went to Esslingen, from which however he had to retire at no distant period from sheer want.

Then began a period of wandering which really lasted for the last dozen years of his life. This time was mainly one of learning in many ways of many things. The ground he covered must have been immense, for he visited Colmar, Nurnberg, Appengall, Zurich, Augsburg, Middelheim, and travelled in Prussia, Austria, Hungary, Egypt, Turkey, Russia, Tartary, Italy, the Low Countries and Denmark. In Germany and Hungary he had a bad time, being driven to supply even the bare necessaries of life by odd—any—means, even to76 availing himself of the credulity of others—casting nativities, telling fortunes, prescribing remedies for animals of the farm such as cows and pigs, and recovering stolen property; such a life indeed as was the lot of a mediæval "tramp." On the other hand, as a contra he did worthy work as a military surgeon in Italy, the Low Countries and Denmark. When he got tired of his wandering life, he settled down in Salsburg, in 1541, under the care and protection of the Archbishop Ernst. But he did not long survive the prospect of rest; he died later in the same year. The cause of his death is not known with any certainty, but we can guess that he had clamorous enemies as well as strong upholding from the conflicting causes given. Some said that he died from the effects of a protracted debauch, others that he was murdered by physicians and apothecaries, or their agents, who had thrown him over a cliff. In proof of this story it was said that the surgeons had found a flaw or fracture in his skull which must have been produced during life.

He was buried in the churchyard of Saint Sebastian; but two centuries later, 1752, his bones were moved to the porch of the church, and a monument erected over them.

His first book was printed in Augsburg in 1526. His real monument was the collection of his complete writings so far as was possible, the long work of Johann Huser made in 1589–91. This77 great work was published in German, from printed copy supplemented by such manuscript as could be discovered. Then and ever since there has been a perpetual rain of statements against him and his beliefs. Most of them are too silly for words; but it is a little disconcerting to find one writer of some distinction repeating so late as 1856 all the malignant twaddle of three centuries, saying amongst other things that he believed in the transmutation of metals and the possibility of an *elixir vitæ*, that he boasted of having spirits at his command, one of which he kept imprisoned in the hilt of his sword and another in a jewel; that he could make any one live forever; that he was proud to be called a magician; and had boasted of having a regular correspondence with Galen in Hell. We read in sensational journals and magazines of to-day about certain living persons having—or saying that they have—communion in the shape of "interviews" with the dead; but this is too busy an age for unnecessary contradictions and so such assertions are allowed to pass. The same

indifference may now and again have been exhibited in the case of men like Paracelsus.

Some things said of him may be accepted as being partially true, for his was an age of mysticism, occultism, astrology, and all manner of strange and weird beliefs. For instance it is alleged that he held that life is an emanation from the stars; that the sun governed the heart, the moon the brain,78 Jupiter the liver, Saturn the gall, Mercury the lungs, Mars the bile, Venus the loins; that in each stomach is a demon, that the belly is the grand laboratory where all the ingredients are apportioned and mixed; and that gold could cure ossification of the heart.

Is it any wonder that when in this age after centuries of progress such absurd things are current Paracelsus is shewn in contemporary and later portraits with a jewel in his hand transcribed Azoth—the name given to his familiar dæmon.

Those who repeat *ad nauseam* the absurd stories of his alchemy generally omit to mention his genuine discoveries and to tell of the wide scope of his teaching. That he used mercury and opium for healing purposes at a time when they were condemned; that he did all he could to stop the practice of administering the vile electuaries of the mediæval pharmacopœia; that he was one of the first to use laudanum; that he perpetually held—to his own detriment—that medical science should not be secret; that he blamed strongly the fashion of his time of accounting for natural phenomena by the intervention of spirits or occult forces; that he deprecated astrology; that he insisted on the proper investigation of the properties of drugs and that they should be used more simply and in smaller doses. To these benefits and reforms his enemies answered that he had made a pact with the devil. For reward of his labours, his genius, his fearless struggle79 for human good he had—with the exception of a few spells of prosperity—only penury, want, malicious ill-fame and ceaseless attacks by the professors of religion and science. He was an original investigator of open mind, of great ability and application, and absolutely fearless. He was centuries ahead of his time. We can all feel grateful to that French writer who said:

“Tels sont les services eminents que Paracelse a rendu à l’humanité souffrante, pour laquelle il montra toujours le dévouement le plus désintéressé; s’il en fut mal recompensé pendant sa vie que sa mémoire au moins soit honorée.”

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CAGLIOSTRO

The individual known to history as Comte Cagliostro, or more familiarly as Cagliostro, was of the family name of Balsamo and was received into the Church under the saintly name of Joseph. The familiarity of history is an appanage of greatness in some form. Greatness is in no sense a quality of worth or morality. It simply points to publicity, and if unsuccessful, to infamy. Joseph Balsamo was of poor parentage in the town of Palermo, Sicily, and was born in 1743. In his youth he did not exhibit any talent whatever, such volcanic forces as he had being entirely used in wickedness—base, purposeless, sordid wickedness, from which devolved no benefit to any one—even to the criminal instigator. In order to achieve greatness, or publicity, in any form, some remarkable quality is necessary; Joseph Balsamo's claim was based not on isolated qualities but on a union of many. In fact he appears to have had every necessary ingredient for this kind of success—except one, courage. In his case however, the lacking ingredient in the preparation of his hell-broth was supplied by luck; though such luck had to be paid for at the devil's usual price—81failure at the last. His biographers put his leading characteristics in rather a negative than a positive way—"indolent and unruly"; but as time went on the evil became more marked—even *ferae naturae*, poisonous growths, and miasmatic conditions have to manifest themselves or to cease to prevail. In the interval between young boyhood and coming manhood, Balsamo's nature—such as it was—began to develop, unscrupulousness working on an imaginative basis being always a leading characteristic. The unruly boy shewed powers of becoming an unruly man, fear being the only restraining force; and indolence giving way to wickedness. When he was about fifteen he was sent to a monastery to learn chemistry and pharmacy. The boy who had manifested a tendency to "grow downwards" found the beginning of a kind of success in these studies in which, to the surprise of all, he exhibited a form of aptitude. Chemistry has certain charms to a mind like his, for in its working are many strange surprises and lurid effects not unattended with entrancing fears. These he used before long to his own pleasure in the concern of others. When he was expelled from the religious house he led a dissolute and criminal life in Palermo. Amongst other wickednesses he robbed his uncle and forged his will. Here too, he committed a crime, not devoid of a certain humorous aspect, but which had a reflex action on his own life. Under promise of revealing a hidden treasure,82 he persuaded a goldworker, one Morano, to give him custody of a quantity of his wares. It was what, in criminal slang is called "a put-up job," and was worked by a gang of young thieves with Balsamo at their head. Having filled the soft head of the foolish goldsmith with ideas to suit his purpose, Joseph brought him on a treasure hunt into a cave where he was shortly surrounded by the gang dressed as fiends, who, in the victim's paralysis of fear, robbed him at their ease of some sixty ounces of gold. Morano, as might have been expected, was not satisfied

with the proceedings and vowed vengeance which he tried to effect later. Balsamo's pusillanimity worked hand in hand with Morano's vindictiveness, to the effect that the culprit incontinently absconded from his native town. He conferred the benefit of his presence on Messina where he was naturally attracted to a noted alchemist called Althotas, to whom he became a sort of disciple. Althotas was a man of great learning, according to the measure of that time and his own occupation. He was skilled in Eastern tongues and an adept occultist. It was said that he had actually visited Mecca and Medina in the disguise of an Oriental prince. Having attached himself to Althotas, Cagliostro went with him to Malta where he persuaded the Grand Master of the Knights to supply them with a laboratory for the manufacture of gold, and also with letters of83 introduction which he afterwards used with much benefit to himself.

CAGLIOSTRO

From Malta he went to Rome where he employed himself in forging engravings. Like other criminals, great and small, Comte Alessandro Cagliostro—as he had now become by his own creation of nobility—had a faculty of working hard and intelligently so long as the end he aimed at was to be accomplished by crooked means. Work in the ordinary ways of honesty he loathed and shunned; but work as a help to his nefarious schemes seemed to be a joy to him. Then he set himself up as a wonder-worker, improving as he went on all the customs and tricks of that calling. He sold an elixir which he said had all the potency usually attributed to such compounds but with an added efficacy all its own. He pretended to be able to transmute metals and to make himself invisible; indeed to perform all the wonders of the alchemist, the "cheap jack," and the charlatan. At Rome he became acquainted with and married a very beautiful woman, Lorenza de Feliciani, daughter of a lacemaker, round whom later biographers weave romances. According to contemporary accounts she seems to have been dowered with just such qualities as were useful in such a life as she had entered on. In addition to great and unusual beauty she was graceful, passionate, seductive, clever, plausible, soothing, and attractive in all ways dear and84 convincing to men. She must have had some winning charm which has lasted beyond her time, for a hundred years afterwards we find so level-headed a writer as Dr. Charles Mackay crediting her, quite unwarrantably with, amongst other good qualities, being a faithful wife. Her life certainly after her marriage was such that faithfulness in any form was one of the last things to expect in her. Her husband was nothing less than a swindler of a protean kind. He had had a great number of aliases before he finally fixed on Comte de Cagliostro as a *nomme de guerre*. He called himself successively Chevalier de Fischio, Marquis de Melina (or Melissa), Marquis de Pellegrini, Comte de Saint-German, Baron de Belmonte; together with such names as Fenix, Anna, Harat. He wrote a work somewhat of the nature of a novel called *Le Grand Cophte*—which he found useful later when he was pushing his scheme of a sort of new Freemasonry. After his marriage he visited several countries, Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Poland, Russia, Greece, Germany; as well as such towns as Naples, Palermo, Rhodes, Strasbourg, Paris, London, Lisbon, Vienna, Venice, Madrid, Brussels—in fact any place where many fools were crowded into a small space. In many of these he found use for the introductory letters of the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, as well as those of other dupes from whom it was his habit to secure such letters before the inevitable crash came. Wherever he85 travelled he was accustomed to learn all he could of the manners, customs and facts of each place he was in, thus accumulating a vast stock of a certain form of knowledge which he found most useful in his chosen

occupation—deceit. With regard to the last he utilised every form of human credulity which came under his notice. The latter half of the eighteenth century was the very chosen time of strange beliefs. Occultism became a fashion, especially amongst the richer classes, with the result that every form of swindle came to the fore. At this time Cagliostro, then nearing his fortieth year, began to have a widespread reputation for marvellous cures. As mysticism in all sorts of forms had a vogue, he used all the tricks of the cult, gathering them from various countries, especially France and Germany, where the fashion was pronounced. For this trickery he used all his knowledge of the East and all the picturesque aids to credulity which he had picked up during his years of wandering; and for his "patter," such medical terminology as he had learned—he either became a doctor or invented a title for himself. This he interlarded with scraps of various forms of fraudulent occultism and all sorts of suggestive images of eastern quasi-religious profligacy. He took much of the imagery which he used in his rituals of fraud from records of ancient Egypt. This was a pretty safe ground for his purpose, for in his time the Egypt of the past was a sealed book. It was only in 1799 that86 the Rosetta stone was discovered, and more than ten years from then before Dr. Young was able to translate its three inscriptions—Hieroglyphic Demotic and Greek—whence Hieroglyphic knowledge had its source. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico* might well serve as a motto for all occultism, true or false. Cagliostro, whose business it was to deceive and mislead, understood this and took care that in his cabalistic forms Egyptian signs were largely mixed with the pentagon, the signs of the Zodiac, and other mysterious symbols in common use. His object was primarily to catch the eye and so arrest the intelligence of any whom he wished to impress. For this purpose he went about gorgeously dressed and with impressive appointments. In Germany for instance he always drove in a carriage with four horses with courier and equerries in striking liveries. Happily there is extant a pen picture of him by Comte de Beugnot who met him in Paris at the house of the Comtesse de la Motte:

"of medium height and fairly fat, of olive colour, with short neck and round face, big protruberant eyes, a snub nose with open nostrils."

This gives of him anything but an attractive picture; but yet M. de Beugnot says: "he made an impression on women whenever he came into a room." Perhaps his clothing helped, for it was not of a commonplace kind. De Beugnot who was manifestly a careful and intelligent observer again comes to our aid with his pen:

"He wore a coiffure new in France; his hair parted in several little cadenottes (queues or tresses) uniting at the back of the head in the form known as a 'catogan' (hair

clubbed or bunched). A dress, French fashion, of iron grey, laced with gold, scarlet waistcoat broidered with bold *point de spain*, red breeches, a basket-hilted sword and a hat with white plumes!"

Aided by these adjuncts he was a great success in Paris whither he returned in 1785. As an impostor he knew his business and played "the game" well. When he was at work he brought to bear the influence of all his "properties," amongst them a tablecloth embroidered with cabalistic signs in scarlet and the symbols of the Rosy Cross of high degree; the same mysterious emblems marked the globe without which no wizard's atelier is complete.

Here too were various little Egyptian figures—"ushabtui" he would doubtless have called them had the word been in use in his day. From these he kept his dupes at a distance, guarding carefully against any discovery. He evidently did not fear to hurt the religious susceptibilities of any of his votaries, for not only were the crucifix and other emblems of the kind placed amongst the curios of his ritual, but he made his invocation in the form of a religious ceremony, going down on his knees and in all ways cultivating the emotions of those round him. He was aided by a young woman whom he described as pure as an angel and of great sensibility. The said young person kept her blue88 eyes fixed on a globe full of water. Then he proceeded to expound the Great Secret which he told his hearers had been the same since the beginning of things and whose mystery had been guarded by Templars of the Rosy Cross, by Magicians, by Egyptians and the like. He had claimed, as the Comte Saint-German said, that he had already existed for many centuries; that he was a contemporary of Christ; and that he had predicted His crucifixion by the Jews. As statements of this kind were made mainly for the purpose of selling the elixir which he peddled, it may easily be imagined that he did not shrink from lying or blasphemy when such seemed to suit his purpose. Daring and recklessness in his statements seemed to further his business success, so prophecy—or rather boastings of prophecy *after the event*—became part of the great fraud. Amongst other things he said that he had predicted the taking of the Bastille. Such things shed a little light on the methods of such impostors, and help to lay bare the roots or principles through which they flourish.

After his Parisian success he made a prolonged tour in France. In la Vendée he boasted of some fresh miracle—of his own doing—on each day; and at Lyons the boasting was repeated. Of course he occasionally had bad times, for now and again even the demons on whose acquaintance and help he prided himself did not work. In London after 1772, things had become so bad with him that he had89 to work as a house painter under his own name. Whatever may have been his skill in his art this was probably about the only honest work he ever did. He did not stick to it for long

however, for four years afterwards he lost three thousand pounds by frauds of others by whom he was introduced to fictitious lords and ladies. Here too he underwent a term of imprisonment for debt.

Naturally such an impostor found in Freemasonry, which is a secret cult, a way of furthering his ends. With the aid of his wife, who all through their life together seems to have worked with him, he founded a new branch of freemasonry in which a good many rules of that wonderful organisation were set at defiance. As the purpose of the new cult was to defraud, its net was enlarged by taking women into the body. The name used for it was the *Grand Egyptian Lodge*—he being himself the head of it under the title of the *Cophte* and his wife the *Grand Priestess*. In the ritual were some appalling ceremonies, and as these made eventually for profitable publicity, the scheme was a great success—and the elixir sold well. This elixir was the backbone of his revenue; and indeed it would have been well worthy of success if it had been all that he claimed for it. Dispensers of elixirs are not usually backward in proclaiming the virtues of their wares; but in his various settings forth Cagliostro went further than others. He claimed not only to restore youth and health and90 to make them perpetual, but to restore lost innocence and effect a whole moral regeneration. No wonder that he achieved success and that money rolled in! And no wonder that women, especially of the upper classes, followed him like a flock of sheep! No wonder that a class rich, idle, pleasure-loving, and fond of tasting and testing new sensations, found thrilling moments in the great impostor's mélange of mystery, religion, fear, and hope; of spirit-rapping and a sort of "black mass" in which Christianity and Paganism mingled freely, and where life and death, good and evil, whirled together in a maddening dance.

It was not, however, through his alleged sorcery that Cagliostro crept into a place in history; but by the association of his name with a sordid crime which involved the names of some of the great ones of the earth. The story of the Queen's Necklace, though he was acquitted at the trial which concluded it, will be remembered when the vapourings of the unscrupulous quack who had escaped a thousand penalties justly earned, have been long forgotten. Such is the irony of history! The story of the necklace involved Marie Antoinette, Cardinal Prince de Rohan, Comte de la Motte—an officer of the private guard of "Monsieur" (the Comte d'Artois), his wife Jeanne de Valois, descended from Henry II through Saint-Remy, his natural son and Nicole de Savigny. Louis XV had ordered from MM. Boemer et Bassange, jewellers91 to the Court of France, a beautiful necklace of extraordinary value for his mistress Madame du Barry, but died before it was completed. The du Barry was exiled by his successor, so the necklace remained on the hands of its makers. It was, however, of so great

intrinsic value that they could not easily find a purchaser. They offered it to Marie Antoinette for one million eight hundred thousand livres; but the price was too high even for a queen, and the necklace remained on hand. So Boemer showed it to Madame de la Motte and offered to give a commission on the sale to whoever should find a buyer. She induced her husband, Comte de la Motte, to join with her in a plot to accomplish the sale. De la Motte was a friend of Cagliostro, and he too was brought in as he had influence with the Cardinal Prince de Rohan whom they looked on as a likely person to be of service. He had his own ambitions to acquire influence over the queen and use her for political purposes as Mazarin had used Anne of Austria. De Rohan was then a man of fifty—not considered much of an age in these days, but the Cardinal's life had not made for comparative longevity. He was in fact something of that class of fool which has no peer in folly—an old fool; and Jeanne de la Motte fooled him to the top of his bent. She pretended to him that Marie Antoinette was especially friendly to her, and shewed him letters from the queen to herself all of which had been forged for the purpose. As at this time92 Madame de la Motte had borrowed or otherwise obtained from the Cardinal a hundred and twenty thousand livres, she felt assured he could be used for the contemplated fraud. She probably had not ever even spoken to the queen but she was not scrupulous in such a small matter as one more untruth. She finally persuaded him that Marie Antoinette wished to purchase the necklace through his agency, he acting for her and buying it in her name. To aid in the scheme she got her pet forger, Retaux de Vilette, to prepare a receipt signed "Marie Antoinette de France." The Cardinal fell into the trap and obtained the jewel, giving to Boemer four bills due successively at intervals of six months. At Versailles de Rohan gave the casket containing the necklace to Madame de la Motte, who in his presence handed it to a valet of the royal household for conveyance to the queen. The valet was none other than the forger Retaux de Vilette. Madame de la Motte sent to the Cardinal a letter by the same forger asking him to meet her (the queen) in the shrubbery at Versailles between eleven o'clock and midnight. To complete the deception a girl was procured, one Olivia, who in figure resembled the queen sufficiently to pass for her in the dusk. The meeting between de Rohan and the alleged queen was held at the Baths of Apollo—to the deception and temporary satisfaction of the ambitious churchman. When the first instalment for the purchase of the necklace was due,93 Boemer tried to find out if the queen really had possession of the necklace—which had in the meanwhile been brought to London, it was said, by Comte de la Motte. As Boemer could not manage to get an audience with the queen he came to the conclusion that he had been robbed, and made the matter public. This was reported to M. de Breteuil, Master of the King's household, and an enemy of de Rohan. De Breteuil saw the queen secretly and they agreed to act in concert in the

matter. Louis XVI asked for details of the purchase from Boemer, who told the truth so far as he knew it, producing as a proof the alleged receipt of the queen. Louis pointed out to him that he should have known that the queen did not sign after the manner of the document. He then asked de Rohan, who was Grand Almoner of France, for his written justification. This being supplied, he had him arrested and sent to the Bastille. Madame de la Motte accused Cagliostro of the crime, alleging that he had persuaded de Rohan to buy the necklace. She was also arrested as were Retaux de Vilette, and, later on at Brussels, Olivia, who threw some light on the fraud. The King brought the whole matter before Parliament, which ordered a prosecution. As the result of the trial which followed, Comte de la Motte and Retaux de Vilette were banished for life; Jeanne de la Motte was condemned to make *amende honourable*, to be whipped and branded with V on both shoulders, and to be94 imprisoned for life. Olivia and Cagliostro were acquitted. The Cardinal was cleared of all charges. Nothing seems to have been done for the poor jewellers, who, after all, had received more substantial injury than any of the others, having lost nearly two million livres.

After the affair of the Necklace, Cagliostro spent a time in the Bastille and when free, after some months, he and his wife travelled again in Europe. In 1789 he was arrested at Rome by order of the Inquisition and condemned to death as a Freemason. The punishment was later commuted to perpetual imprisonment. He ended his days in the Château de Saint-Leon near Rome. His wife was condemned to perpetual seclusion and died in the Convent of Sainte-Appolive.

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MESMER

Although Frederic-Antoine Mesmer made an astonishing discovery which, having been tested and employed in therapeutics for a century, is accepted as a contribution to science, he is included in the list of impostors because, however sound his theory was, he used it in the manner or surrounded with the atmosphere of imposture. Indeed the implement which he used in his practice, and which made him famous in fashionable and idle society, was set forth as having magic properties. He belonged to the same period as Cagliostro, having been born but nine years before him, in 1734, in Itzmang, Suabia; but the impostor pure and simple easily picked up the difference by beginning his life-work earlier and following it quicker with regard to results. Mesmer was not in any sense a precocious person. He was thirty-two years of age when he took his degree of Doctor of Medicine at Vienna in 1765. However he had already chosen his subject, animal magnetism as allied with medical therapeutics. His early

script under the title *De planetarum influxi* is looked on as a legal reminiscence of judicial astronomy. He left Vienna because, he said, of a cabal96 against him, and travelled in Europe, particularly in Switzerland, before he went to Paris to seek his fortune. This was in 1778, when he was some forty-four years of age; his reputation, which had been growing all the time, preceded him. He was then a man of fine appearance, tall and important-looking and conveying a sense of calm power. He produced much sensation and was at once credited—not without his own will or intention—with magic power. He posed as a benefactor of humanity; a position which was at once conceded to him, partly owing to the fact that an extraordinary atmosphere of calm seemed to surround him, which with his natural air of assurance founded on self-belief, was able to convey to his patients a sense of hope which was of course very helpful in cases of nervous failure and depression. He settled in the Hotel Bouret near the Place Vendôme and so in the heart of Paris; and at once undertook the treatment of patients hitherto deemed incurable. Fashion took up the new medical "craze" or "sensation," and he at once became the vogue. It was at this time of his life that Mesmer came to the parting of the ways between earnest science and charlatanism. So far as we know he still remained earnest in his scientific belief—as indeed he was till the end of his days. Inasmuch as fashion requires some concrete expression of its fancies, Mesmer soon used the picturesque side of his brain for the service of fashionable success. So he invented an appliance97 which soon became the talk of the town. This was the famous *baquet magique* or magic tub, a sort of covered bath, round which his patients were arranged in tiers. To the bath were attached a number of tubes, each of which was held by a patient, who could touch with the end of it any part of his or her body at will. After a while the patients began to get excited, and many of them went into convulsions. Amongst them walked Mesmer, clad in an imposing dress suggestive of mystery and carrying a long wand of alleged magic power; often calming those who had already reached the stage of being actually convulsed. His usual method of producing something of the same effect at private séances, was by holding the hand of the patient, touching the forehead and making "passes" with the open hand with fingers spread out, and by crossing and uncrossing his arms with great rapidity.

A well-attended séance must have been a curious and not altogether pleasant experience even to a wholesome spectator in full possession of his natural faculties. The whole surroundings of the place together with the previously cultured belief; the dusk and mystery; the "mysterious sympathy of numbers"—as Dean Farrar called it; the spasmodic snapping of the cords of tensity which took away all traces of reserve or reticence from the men and women present; the vague terror of the unknown, that

mysterious apprehension which is so potent98 with the nerves of weak or imaginative people; and, it may be, the slipping of the dogs of conscience—all these combined to wreck the moral and mental stability of those present, most of whom it must be remembered were actually ill, or imagined themselves to be so, which came practically to the same thing. The psychical emotion was all very well in the world of pleasure; but these creatures became physically sick through nervous strain. As described by the historian, they expectorated freely a viscous fluid, and their sickness passed into convulsions more or less violent; the women naturally succumbing more readily and more quickly than the men. This absolute collapse—half epileptic, half hysterical—lasted varying periods according to the influence exercised by the presence of the calm, self-reliant operator. We of a later age, when electric force has been satisfactorily harnessed and when magnetism as a separate power is better understood, may find it hard to understand that the most advanced and daring scientists of the time—to whom Frederic-Antoine Mesmer was at least allied—were satisfied that magnetism and electricity were variants of the same mysterious force or power. It was on this theory that he seems to have worked his main idea to practical effect. The base of his system was animal magnetism, which could be superinduced or aided by mechanical appliances. He did not deceive himself into believing that he had invented the idea but was quite willing to make the99 utmost use he could of the discoveries and inventions of others. So far as we can gather his intentions from his acts, the main object in his scientific work was to simplify the processes of turning emotion into effect. Magnetism had already been largely studied, and means were being constantly sought for increasing its efficacy. Father Hehl had brought to a point of accepted perfection the manufacture of metal plates used in magnetic development, and these Mesmer used, with the result that a violent controversy took place between them. So far as we can follow after the lapse of time, Mesmer was consistent in his theories and their application. He held that the principle was one of planetary influence on the nervous system, and its manifestation was by a process of alternate intension and remission. It is possible that Mesmer—who held that the heavenly bodies floated in a limitless magnetic fluid and that he could make all substances, even such things as bread or dogs magnetic—had in his mind the wisdom of following the same theory in matters of lesser significance, though of more individual import, than those of astronomy and its correlated sciences. If so he was wise in his generation, for later electricians have found that the system of alternating currents especially at high tension, is of vast practical importance. That he was practical in his use of the ideas of others is shown by the fact that he preferred the metallic plates of Father Hehl to his own passes, even100 though the report of the Royal Commission ruined him—at any rate checked his success, by stating that

similar effects to those attending his passes could be produced by other means, and that such passes had no effect unless through the patient's knowledge; in fact that it was all the work of imagination. Mesmer had been asked to appear before the Commission of the Faculty of Medicine appointed in 1784 to investigate and report, but he kept away. It would not have injured any man to have appeared before such a commission if his cause had been a good one. There were two such commissions. The first was of the leading physicians of Paris, and included such men as Benjamin Franklin, Lavoisier, the great chemist, and Bailly, the historian of astronomy.

It was distinctly to his disadvantage that Mesmer always kept at a distance the whole corps of savants such as the Faculty of Medicine and the Academy of Sciences—for they would no doubt have accepted his views, visionary though they were, if he could have shown any scientific base for them. True medical science has always been suspicious of, and cautious regarding, empiricism. More than once he stood in his own light in this matter—whether through obstinacy or doubt of his own theory does not matter. For instance, in Vienna, when his very existence as a scientist was at stake in the matter of the effects of his treatment of Mademoiselle Paradis, he introduced a humiliating101 clause in his challenge to the Faculty which caused them to refuse to accept it. Mademoiselle Paradis was blind and subject to convulsions. After treating her by his own method Mesmer said she was cured. An oculist said, after testing, that she was as blind as ever, and her family said that she was still subject to convulsions. But Mesmer persisted that she was cured, that there was a conspiracy against him, and that Mademoiselle Paradis had feigned. He challenged the Faculty of Medicine on the subject of his discovery. Twenty-four patients were to be selected by the Faculty; of these twelve were to be treated by Mesmerism and the other half by the means ordinarily in use. The condition he imposed was that the witnesses were *not* to be of the Faculty.

Again, when in answer to a request on his part that the French Government for the good of the community should subsidise him, a proposal was made to him, he did not receive it favourably. The request he made to Marie Antoinette was that he should have an estate and château and a handsome income, so that he might go on experimenting; he put the broad figures at four hundred or five hundred thousand francs. The Government suggestion was that he should have a pension of twenty thousand francs and the Cross of Saint Michael (Knighthood) if he would communicate for public use, to a board of physicians nominated by the King, such discoveries as he might make. After his refusal102 of the Government proposition Mesmer went to Spa, taking with him a number of his patients, and there opened a magnetic establishment where he renewed his Paris success. He asked Parliament to

hold an impartial examination into the theory and working of Animal Magnetism. Foiled in his scheme of state purchase on his own terms, he sold his secret to a group of societies, the members of which were to pay him a subscription of a hundred louis *per capita*. By this means he realised some 340,000 livres—representing to-day over a million. The associated body was composed of twenty-four societies called "societés de l'harmonie"—a sort of Freemasonry, under a Grand Master and Chiefs of the Order. A member had to be at the time of admission twenty-five years of age, of honest state and good name, not to smoke tobacco, and to pay an annual subscription of at least sixty francs. There were three grades in the Order: Initiated Associates, Corresponding Associates and Uninitiated. Amongst those belonging to the Society were such men as Lafayette, d'Espremisnil, and Berthollet the great chemist. Berthollet had, however, peculiar privileges, amongst which was the right of criticism. On one occasion he had a "row" with Mesmer about his charlatanism.

At length the French public, wearied with his trickeries and angry with his cupidity, openly expressed their dissatisfaction. Whereupon he left France, taking with him a fortune of three hundred103 and forty thousand francs. He went to England and thence to Germany. Finally he settled down in Mersbourg in his native country, Suabia, where he died in 1815, at the age of eighty-one.

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III. THE WANDERING JEW

The legend of the Wandering Jew has its roots in a belief in the possibility of human longevity beyond what is natural and normal. It is connected with the story of the Crucifixion and the mysteries that preceded and followed it. Our account may find its starting point in a book of extraordinary interest which made a sensation in the seventeenth century and is still delightful reading. The passage which should arrest our attention is as follows:

"The story of the Wandering Jew is very strange and will hardly obtain belief; yet there is a small account thereof set down by *Matthew Paris* from the report of an Armenian Bishop; who came into this Kingdom about four hundred years ago, and had often entertained this wanderer at his Table. That he was then alive, was first called *Cartaphilus*, was keeper of the Judgment Hall, whence thrusting out our Saviour with expostulation of his stay, was condemned to stay until His return; was after baptized by *Ananias*, and by the name of Joseph; was thirty years old in the dayes of our Saviour, remembered the Saints that arised with Him, the making of the

Apostles' Creed, and their several peregrinations. Surely were this true, he might be an happy arbitrator in many Christian controversies; but must impardonably condemn the obstinacy of the Jews, who can contemn the108 Rhetorick of such miracles, and blindly behold so living and lasting conversions."

The above is taken from the work entitled "Pseudoxia Epidemica" or Enquiries into very many Received Tenets and Commonly Presumed Truths by Sir Thomas Brown, Knight M.D. This was first published in 1640, so that the "about four hundred years ago" mentioned would bring the report of the Armenian Bishop to the first half of the thirteenth century.

Thus unless there be something of an authoritative character to upset the theory, Matthew Paris must be taken as the first European narrator of the story. As a matter of fact the legend began just about the time thus arrived at. The great work in Latin, "*Historia Major*," was begun by Roger of Wendover and completed in 1259 by the monk Matthew Paris. It was not however published—in our ordinary sense of the word—until the beginning of the year 1571 when Archbishop Parker took it in hand. In the meantime the art of printing had been established and the new world of thought and the reproduction of its fruit, had been developed for common use. The *Historia Major* was again printed in Zurich in 1589 and 1606. The next English edition was in 1640. This was reprinted in Paris in 1644. The English edition of forty years later, 1684, was a really fine specimen of typographic art. The authorship and date of its printing are given: Matthaei Paris, Monachi Albanensis109 Angli London MDCLXXXIV. The script is in ecclesiastical Latin and to any modern reader is of a fresh and almost child-like sincerity which at once disarms doubt or hostile criticism. Indeed it affords a good example of the mechanism of myth, showing how the littleness of human nature—vanity with its desire to shine and credulity in its primitive form, are not subject to the controlling influences of either sacredness of subject or the rulings of common sense. It lends another meaning to the quotation of Feste, the jester: *Cucullus non facit Monachum*. The artless narrative recorded in the *Historia Major* makes the whole inception of the myth transparent. In the monastery of St. Albans a conversation is held by the monks on one side and the Armenian Archbishop—name not given, on the other. The interpreter in French is one Henri Spigurnel a native of Antioch, servant of the bishop. We can gather even how Sir Thomas Brown M. D., doctor of Norwich and most open-minded of scientists, lent himself, unconsciously, to the propagation of error. Brown reading, or hearing read, the work of Matthew Paris took it for granted that the record was correct and complete; and in his own book summarises or generalises the statements made. For instance he says that the Armenian bishop had "often entertained this wanderer at his

table" &c. Now it was his servant who told the monks that the wandering Jew whom he had seen and heard110 speaking many times dined at the table of his lord the Archbishop. This at once minimises the value of the statement, for it does away at once with the respect due to the bishop's high office and presumed character, and with the sense of intellectual acumen and accuracy which might be expected to emanate from one of his scholarship and quality. Thus we get the story not from an accredited Bishop on a foreign mission—rare at the period and entrusted only to men of note—but from the gossip of an Armenian lacquey or valet, trying to show his own importance to a credulous serving brother of the monastery. And so, after all, coming from this source it is to be accepted with exceeding care—not to say doubt, even when seconded by the learned monastic scribe Matthew. So, also, for instance is his statement regarding the manner in which the wanderer's life is miraculously prolonged. It is to this effect. Each hundredth year Joseph falls into a faint so that he lies for a time unconscious. When he recovers he finds that his age is restored to that which it was when the Lord suffered. Joseph, it must be borne in mind, is the Wandering Jew, once Cartaphilus, who had kept Pilate's judgment-hall. Then Matthew himself takes up the story and gives what professes to be the *ipsissima verba* of the servant as to the conversation between Christ and Cartaphilus which culminated in the terrible doom pronounced on the janitor who, from the showing, did not seem a whit worse than111 any of the crowd present on that momentous day in Jerusalem. When Jesus, wearied already with carrying the great cross, leaned for a moment against the wall of the house of Cartaphilus just opposite the Judgment-hall the official said:

"'Vade Jesu citius, vade, quid moraris?' et Jesus severo vultu et oculo respiciens eum, dixit: 'Ego vado. Expectabis donec veniam.'"

Now this is the whole and sole foundation of the individual Wandering Jew. I say "individual" because there were before long other variants, and many old beliefs and fables were appropriated and used to back up the marvellous story, invented by the Armenian servant and recorded by the learned monk, Matthew. Amongst these beliefs were those which taught that John the Baptist never died; that the aloe blooms only once in a hundred years; and that the phœnix renews itself in fire. It is the tendency of legendary beliefs to group or nucleate themselves as though there were a conscious and intentional effort at self-protection; and this, together with the natural human tendency to enlarge and elaborate an accepted idea, is responsible for much. The legend started in the thirteenth century, took root and flourished, and in the very beginning of the seventeenth a variant blossomed. In this Joseph, originally Cartaphilus, became Ahasuerus. In the long pause the story, after the manner of all

things of earth, had grown,112 details not being lacking. The world was informed through the Bishop of Schleswig, how in 1547, at Hamburg, a man was seen in the Cathedral who arrested attention—why we are not told. He was about fifty years of age, of reverend manner, and dressed in ragged clothes; he bowed low at the name of Christ. Many of the nobility and gentry who saw him recognised him as one whom they had already seen in various places—England, France, Italy, Hungary, Persia, Spain, Poland, Moscow, Lieffland, Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, &c. Inquiry being made of him, he told the Bishop that he was Ahasuerus the shoe-maker of Jerusalem, who had been present at the Crucifixion and had ever since been always wandering. He was well posted in history, especially regarding the lives and sufferings of the Apostles, and told how, when he had directed Christ to move on, the latter had answered: "I will stand here and rest, but thou shalt move on till the last day." He had been first seen, we are told, at Lubeck.

It is strange that in an age of religious domination many of the legends of Our Saviour seem to have been based on just such intolerant anger at personal slight as might have ruled a short-tempered, vain man. For instance look at one of the Christ legends which was reproduced in poor Ophelia's distracted mind apropos of the owl, "They say, the owl was a baker's daughter." The Gloucestershire legend runs that Christ having113 asked for bread at baking time the mistress of the bakery took dough from the oven, but her daughter having remonstrated as to the size of the benefaction was turned into an owl. The penalty inflicted on the erring janitor of the Presidium is another instance.

The "Wandering Jew" legend once started, was hard to suppress. The thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the ages of Jew-baiting in the kingdoms of the West, and naturally the stories took their colour from the prevailing idea.

In 1644, Westphalus learned from various sources that the Wandering Jew healed diseases, and that he had said he was at Rome when it was burned by Nero; that he had seen the return of Saladin after his Eastern Conquests; that he had been in Constantinople when Salimen had built the royal mosque; that he knew Tamerlane the Scythian, and Scander Beg, Prince of Epirus; that he had seen Bajazet carried in a cage by Tamerlane's order; that he remembered the Caliphs of Babylon and of Egypt, the Empire of the Saracens, and the Crusades where he had known Godfrey de Bouillon. Amongst other things he seems to have apologised for not seeing the Sack of Jerusalem, because he was at that time in Rome at the Court of Vespasian.

The Ahasuerus version of the Wandering Jew legend seems to have been the popular one114 amongst the commonalty in England. As an instance might be quoted the broad-sheet ballad of 1670. It is not without even historical significance as it marks the measure of the time in many ways. It is headed: "The Wandering Jew, or the Shoemaker of Jerusalem who lived when Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified appointed by Him to live until Coming again. Tune, *The Lady's Fall* &c. Licens'd and Enter'd according to order." The imprint runs: "Printed by and for W. O. and sold by the Booksellers of Pyecorner and London-Bridge."

A century and a half later—1828—was published a much more pretentious work on the same theme. This was a novel written by Rev. George Croly. It was called: "Salathiel: a Story of the Past, the Present, the Future." It was published anonymously and had an immediate and lasting success. It was founded on historical lines, the author manifestly benefiting by the hints afforded by the work of that consummate liar (in a historical sense) Westphalus—or his informant. Croly was a strange man with a somewhat abnormal faculty of abstraction. I used to hear of him from my father who was a friend of his about a hundred years ago. Being of gentle nature he did not wish to cause any pain or concern to his family or dependents; but at the same time he, as a writer, had to guard himself against interruption and consequent digression of his thoughts during the times115 he set apart for imaginative work. So he devised a scheme which might often be put in practice with advantage by others similarly employed. When settling down to a spell of such work—which as every creative writer knows involves periods of mental abstraction though of bodily restlessness—he would stick an adhesive wafer on his forehead. The rule of the house was that when he might be adorned in this wise no one was to speak to him, or even notice him, except under special necessity.

The great vogue of *Salathiel* lasted some ten or more years, when the torch of the Wandering Jew was lighted by Eugene Sue the French novelist who had just completed in the *Débats* his story "Les Mystères de Paris." As its successor he chose the theme adopted by Croly, and the new novel *Le Juif-Errant* ran with overwhelming success in the *Constitutionnel*.

Sue was what in modern slang is called "up to date." He knew every trick and dodge of the world of advertisement, and in conjunction with his editor, Dr. Veron, he used them all. But he had good wares to exploit. His novels are really excellent, though the changes in social life and in religious, political and artistic matters, which took place between 1844 and 1910, make some things in them seem out of date. His great imagination, and his firm and rapid grasp of salient facts susceptible of being advantageously used in narrative, pointed out to him a fresh road. It was not sufficient

to the116 hour and place that Cartaphilus—or Joseph—or Ahasuerus, or Salathiel or whatever he might be called—should purge his sin by his personal sufferings alone. In the legend, up to then accepted, he had long ago repented; so to increase the poignancy of his sufferings, Sue took from the experience of his own time a means of embittering the very inmost soul of such an one. He must be made to feel that his existence is a curse not only to himself but to all the world. To this end he attached to the Wanderer the obligation of carrying a fell disease. The quick brain of the great *feuilletonist* seized the dramatic moment for utilising the occasion. A dozen years before, the frightful spread of the cholera, which had once again wrought havoc, woke the whole world to new terror. Some one of uneasy mind who found diversion in obscure comparisons, noted from the records of the disease that its moving showed the same progress in a given direction as a man's walking. A hint was sufficient for the public who eagerly seized the idea that the Wandering Jew had, from the first recorded appearance of the cholera, been the fated carrier of that dreaded pestilence. The idea seemed to be a dramatic inspiration and had prehensile grasp. Great as had been the success of the *Mysteries of Paris*, that of *The Wandering Jew* surpassed it, and for half a century the new novel kept vividly before its readers the old tradition, and so brought it down to the present.

117We may now begin to ask ourselves who and where in this great deception was the impostor. Who was the guilty one? And at first glance we are inclined to say "There is none! Whatever the error, mistake, deception, or false conclusion, there has been no direct guilt." This is to presuppose that guilt is of conscious premeditation; and neither intention of evil nor consciousness of guilt is apparent. In legal phrase the *mens rea* is lacking.

It is a purely metaphysical speculation whether guilt is a necessary element of imposition. One is an intellectual experience, the other is an ethical problem; and if we are content to deal with responsibility for another's misdoing, the question of the degree of blameworthiness is sufficient. Let us try a process of exclusions. The complete list of those who had a part in the misunderstanding regarding the myth of the Wandering Jew, leaving out the ostensible fictionists, were:

The Abbot of St. Albans, the Archbishop of Armenia, the interpreter, the Archbishop's servant, the monks or laybrothers who singly or in general conversed with any of the above; and finally Matthew Paris who recorded the story in its various phases. Of these we must except from all blame both the Abbot of St. Albans and the Archbishop of Armenia, both of whom were good grave men of high character and to each of whom had been entrusted matters of the highest concern. The interpreter seems to have only fulfilled his office with118 exactitude; if in any way or part he used his

opportunity to impose on the ignorance of the host or the guest there is no record, no suggestion of it. Matthew Paris was a man of such keenness of mind, of such observation and of such critical insight, that even to-day, after a lapse of over five hundred years, and the withstanding of all the tests of a new intellectual world which included such inventions as printing and photography, he is looked upon as one of the ablest of chroniclers. Moreover he put no new matter nor comments of his own into the wonderful and startling narratives which he was called on to record. He even hints at or infers his own doubt as to the statements made. The monks, servants and others mentioned generally, were merely credulous, simple people of the time, with reverence for any story regarding the *Via Dolorosa*, and respect or awe for those in high places.

There remains but the servant of the foreign Archbishop. It is to him that we must look for any outrage on our normal beliefs. He was manifestly a person of individually small importance—even Matthew Paris whose trained work it was to record with exactness, and whose duty it therefore was to sustain or buttress main facts, did not think it necessary or worth while to mention his name. He had in himself none of the dignity, honour, weight, learning or position of the noble of the Church who was the Abbot's guest. He was after119 all but a personal servant; probably one of readiness and expediency with a quick imagination and a glib tongue. One who could wriggle through a difficult position, defend himself with ready acquiescence, gain his ends of securing his master's ease, and find all necessary doors open through the bonhommie of his fellow servitors. Such an one accustomed to the exigencies of foreign travel, must have picked up many quaint conceits, legends and japes, and was doubtless a *persona grata* liked and looked up to by persons of his own class, sanctified to some little extent by the reflected glory of his master's great position. It is more than likely that he had been the recipient of many confidences regarding legend and conjecture concerning sacred matters, and that any such legend as he spoke of would have been imparted under conditions favourable to his own comfort. After the manner of his kind his stories doubtless lost nothing in the telling and gained considerably in the re-telling. Even in the short record of Matthew Paris, there is evidence of this in the way in which, after the striking story of Cartaphilus has been told, he returns to the matter again, adding picturesque and inconclusive details of the manner of the centennial renewal of the wanderer's youth. The simplest analysis here will show the falsity of the story; what the great logician Archbishop Whately always insisted on—"internal evidence"—is dead against the Armenian valet, courier, or servitor.120 He gave circumstantial account of the periodic illness, loss of memory, and recovery of youth on the part of Cartaphilus; but there is no hint of how he came to know it, and

Cartaphilus could not have told him, nor anybody else. We may, I think, take it for granted that no other mere mortal was present, for, had any other human being been there, all the quacksalvers of a thousand miles around would have moved heaven and earth to get information of what was going on, since in mediæval days there was nearly as much competition in the world of charlatanism as there is to-day in the world of sport. The Armenian was much too handy a man at such a crisis to be found out, so we may give him the benefit of the doubt and at once credit him with invention. It is hard to understand—or even to believe without understanding—that so mighty a legend and one so tenacious of life, arose and grew from such a beginning. And yet it is in accord with the irony of nature that one who has unintentionally and unwittingly achieved a publicity which would dwarf the malign reputation of Herostratus should have his name unrecorded.

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IV. JOHN LAW
THE MISSISSIPPI SCHEME AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

The great "Mississippi Scheme" which wrought havoc on the French in 1720 is the central and turning point in the history of John Law, late of Lauriston, Controller-General of Finance in France. His father, William Law (grand nephew of James Law, Archbishop of Glasgow) was a goldsmith in that city.

As in the seventeenth century the goldsmiths were also the bankers and moneylenders of the community, a successful goldsmith might be looked on as on the highroad to great fortune. To William Law in 1671 was born his first son John, who had considerable natural talent in the way of mathematics—and a nature which was such as to nullify their use. As a youth he showed proficiency in arithmetic and algebra, but as he was also in those early days riotous and dissipated, we may fairly come to the conclusion that he did not use his natural powers to their best advantage. He was already a gambler of a marked kind. Before he was of age he was already in debt and was squandering his patrimony. He sold the estate of Lauriston which his thrifty father had acquired,124 and gave himself over to a life of so-called pleasure. His mother, who had family ambitions, bought the estate so that it might remain in the family of its new possessors. He removed himself to London where within a couple of years he was sentenced to death for murder—not a vulgar premeditated murder for gain, but the unhappy result of a duel wherein he had killed his opponent, a boon companion, one Austin who had acquired the soubriquet of "Beau" Austin. Through social influence the death penalty was commuted for imprisonment, and the crime only

regarded as manslaughter. He had however to deal with the relatives of the dead man who were naturally vindictive. One of them entered an appeal against the commutation of the sentence. Law, with the characteristic prudence of his time and nationality, did not wait for the leisurely settlement of the legal process, but escaped to the continent where he remained for some years sojourning in various places. Being naturally clever and daring he seems to have generally fallen on his feet. Whilst in Holland he became secretary to an important official in the diplomatic world, from which service he drifted into an employment with the Bank of Amsterdam. Here the natural bent of his mind found expression. Banking in some of its forms is gambling, and as he was both banker and gambler—one by inherited tendency and the other by personal disposition—he began to find his vogue, addressing himself seriously125 to the intricacies and possibilities of the profession of banking. He was back in Scotland in 1701 (a risky venture on his part for his felony had not been "purged") and published a pamphlet, "*Proposals and Reasons for constituting a Council of Trade in Scotland*." This he followed up after some years, with another pamphlet, "*Money and Trade considered, with a proposal for supplying the Nation with Money*"; and in the same year (1709) he propounded to the Scotch Parliament a scheme for a State Bank on the security of land—a venture which on being tried speedily collapsed. This, like other schemes of that period, was based on the issue and use of paper money.

JOHN LAW

In the meantime, and for five or six years afterwards, he was travelling variously throughout Europe, occupying himself with formulating successive schemes of finance, and in gambling—a process in which he, being both skilled and lucky, amassed a sum of over a hundred thousand pounds. He had varying fortunes, however, and was expelled from several cities. He was not without believers in his powers. Amongst them was the Earl of Stair, then Ambassador to France, who allured by his specious methods of finance, suggested to the Earl of Stanhope that he might be useful in devising a scheme for paying off the British National Debt. After the death of Louis XIV, in 1715, he suggested to the Duke of Orleans, the Regent for the young

King (Louis XV), the formation126 of a State Bank. The Regent favoured the idea, but his advisers were against it; it was, however, agreed that Law might found a bank with power to issue notes and accept deposits. This was done by Letters Patent and the *Banque Générale* came into existence in 1710, and was an immediate success. Its principle was to issue paper money which was to be repayable by coin. Its paper rose to a premium in 1716; in 1717 there was a decree that it was to be accepted in the payment of taxes. This created a new form of cheap money, with the result that there was a great and sudden extension of industry and trade. From this rose the idea of a new enterprise—The Mississippi Company—which was to outvie the success of the East India Company incorporated by Charter in 1600 under the title of "The Governor and Company of the Merchants of London trading to the East Indies," which after periods of doubtful fortune, and having become consolidated with its rival "The General East India Company"—partially in 1702, and completely in 1708, under the somewhat elephantine name of "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies"—was now a vast organization of national importance. To the new French Company for exploiting the Mississippi Valley was made over Louisiana (which then included what were afterwards the States of Ohio and Missouri). The Decree of Incorporation was issued in 1717. The127 Parliament at Paris presently grew jealous of such a concession having been given to a foreigner; and the next year a rumour went about that Parliament was about to have him arrested, tried, and hanged. The Regent met the parliamentary resistance by making (1718) the *Banque Générale* into the *Banque Royale*—the King guaranteeing the notes. Law was made Director General; but he was unable to prevent the Regent from increasing the issue of paper money, by which means he managed to satisfy dishonestly his own extravagance. It was a fiscal principle of the time that the State accountants did not go behind the King's receipt—the *acquit de comptant* as it was called.

The Western Company was enlarged in 1718 by a grant of a monopoly of tobacco, and of the rights of trading ships and merchandise of the Company of Senegal. In 1719, the *Banque Royale* absorbed the rights of the East India and China Companies, and then assumed the all-embracing title of *Compagnie des Indes*. The next year it took in the African Company; and so through that the whole of the non-European trade of France. In 1719, the management of the Mint was handed over to Law's Company; and he was thus enabled to manipulate the coinage. In the same year he had undertaken to pay off the French National Debt, and so become the sole creditor of the Nation. He already exercised the functions of Receiver General and had revenue-farming abolished128 in its favour. He now controlled the collection and disposal of the whole of the State taxation. At this stage of his adventure, Law seemed a good

fiscal administrator. He repealed or reduced pressing taxes on useful commodities, and reduced the price of necessaries by forty per cent. so that the peasants could increase the value of their holdings and their crops without fear of coming later into the remorseless grip of the tax-farmer under the infamous *metayer* system. Free-trade was in the Provinces practically established. This, so far as it went, was all Law's doing. Turgot, who later got credit for what had been done, only carried out what the Scotch financier had planned.

Law had promised high dividends to the speculators in his scheme, and had so far paid them; so it was no wonder that "The System" raised its head again. In 1719–20, all France seemed to flock to Paris to such a degree and with such unanimity of purpose, that it was difficult to obtain room to go on with the necessary work of the Mississippi Scheme. In such matters, resting on human greed which throws all prudence to the winds, the pressure is always towards the centre; and the narrow street of Quin cam poix became a seething mass, day and night, of speculators in a hurry to buy shares. The time for trying to sell them had not yet arrived.

Naturally such a locality rose in value, and as demand emphasises paucity of space, extraordinary129 prices ruled. Even a small share in the lucky street, where fortunes could be made in an hour, rose to fabulous value. Houses formerly letting for forty pounds a year now fetched eight hundred pounds per month. And no wonder, when shares of the face value of five hundred livres sold for ten thousand! When there is such an overwhelming desire to buy, then is the opportunity for sellers to realise, and the time for such speculation on the one side, and for such commerce on the other, is naturally short and the need pressing.

At the beginning of 1720 everything seemed to be increasing in a sort of geometric ratio. After a dividend of forty per cent. had been declared, shares of five hundred value rose to eighteen thousand. Greed, and the opportunity for satisfying its craving, turned the heads of ordinarily sensible people. The whole world seemed mad. It appeared right enough that the financial wonder-worker who had created such a state of things should be loaded with additional honours. It was only scriptural that he who had already multiplied his talents should be entrusted with more. There was universal rejoicing when John Law—exiled foreigner and condemned murderer—was appointed, in January, 1720, Controller-General of the whole finances of France. Naturally enough, even the hard head of the canny Scot began to manifest symptoms of giving way in the shape of becoming *exalté*. And naturally enough his enemies—financial,130 political and racial—did not lose the opportunities afforded them of taking advantage of it. Tongues began to wag, and all sorts of rumours, some of them reconcilable with common sense and easily credible, others outrageous, began to go

about. Lord Stair reported that Law had boasted that he would raise France on the ruins of England and Holland, to a greater height than she had ever reached; that he could crush the East India Company and even destroy British trade and credit when he chose. Stair resented this, and he and Law from being close friends became enemies. To appease the incensed and at present all-powerful Law, the powers that were recalled Lord Stair.

On 23 February 1720, the *Compagnie des Indes* and the *Banque Royale* were united, thus linking the ends of the financial chain. "The System" was now complete.

When Aladdin set the Genius, who had hitherto worked so willingly, the final task of hanging a roc's egg in the centre of the newly-created palace, he brought the whole structure tumbling about his ears. So it was with John Law and the egregious Mississippi Scheme. His idea was complete and perfect. But the high sun when it reaches its meridianal splendour begins from that instant its downward course.

The reaction was not long in manifesting itself. Usually in such matters there is a pause before the131 great driving-wheels reverse their motion, and the backward motion, beginning slowly, gathers way as it progresses. But in this case human intelligence and not soulless machinery was the propulsive force of reaction. The speculators had begun to work before the onward movement had come to an end or even begun to slacken. They were loaded up with a vast amount of stocks whose value, even if there had been money to redeem them, was severely limited, whereas they had purchased at prices varying between the first rise above nominal value and that reached by the last desperate speculator. It is not wise to hold such inflated stock too long, and in a crisis sailing-master Wisdom orders Quarter-master Caution to take a trick at the helm. When the bare idea of unification of financial interests was mooted, the wise holders of stock commenced to unload. When this movement began its progress was rapid—so long as there was anything to be moved. The first class to feel it were the bankers. The specie ran out like the pent-up water from a burst reservoir, till in an incredibly short time there was not sufficient remaining to afford the money-change needed in daily life. The advisers and officials of the State, seriously alarmed, began at once to take strong measures supported by royal decrees. Then as ruin began to stare the whole nation in the face more and more with every hour, desperate expedients were resorted to. The value of the currency132 was made by every stratagem, dishonest trick, and unscrupulous exercise of power, to fluctuate so that such differences or margins as arose might be grasped forthwith for national use. Payments in bullion, except for very small amounts, were forbidden. The possession of anything over five hundred livres in specie was deemed an offence punishable by confiscation, partial or wholesale, and by fine. Domiciliary visits were paid to seek

evidence of offence and to enforce the new laws, and informers in this connection were well paid.

Then began a war, between public oppression and individual trickery, to defend acquired rights and evade unjust demands. The holders of paper money, unable to realise in specie, tried to protect themselves by purchasing goods of intrinsic value. Precious metals, jewels, and such like were bought in such quantities that the supplies diminished and the prices grew, until to avoid immediate ruin, such purchases were proclaimed illegal and prohibited. Then ordinary commodities of lesser values were tried as means of barter, till their prices too rose to such an extent that trade was paralysed. In order to meet the growing danger a still more desperate expedient was resorted to. A decree was issued the effect of which would be to reduce—gradually it was hoped—the obligation of bank notes to one-half their nominal value. This completed the panic, for here was a position which could not be guarded against by any prudence or wisdom.133 No one could henceforth by any possibility be financially safe. The speculators who had already realised were alone safe. *Bona fide* investors, if not already overwhelmed by disaster, saw the tide of ruin rising rapidly around them. Nothing within the power of the state could now be done to check or even lessen the state of panic; not even the reversal of the late decree in ten days after its issue. To make matters still worse the Banque at this very time suspended payment. Probably in a wild endeavour to do *something* which would avert odium from itself by saddling the responsibility on someone else, the Government procured the dismissal of Law from the Controller-Generalship of Finance. However—strange to say—he was very soon appointed by the Regent as Intendant-General of Commerce and Director of the ruined bank. The much-vaunted, idolised, and believed-in “System” had now fallen hopelessly and was ruined forever. Law was everywhere attacked and insulted with such unmitigated rancour that he had to leave the country. He had invested the bulk of the great fortune which he had by now acquired, in estates in France; and these together with everything else that he had were now confiscated.

At the end of the same year, 1720, whilst he was at Brussels he was asked by the command of the Czar (Peter), to administer the finances of Russia, but declined. After this episode, grateful to a134 broken man, he spent a couple of years wandering about Italy and Germany and probably gaming a fluctuating income through gambling. Next he was to be found in Copenhagen where he had sought sanctuary from his creditors. Next year there was an outward change in his status, when he went to England, on a ship of war, at the invitation of the Government. There he was presented to George I. Somewhat to his chagrin he was denounced in the House of Lords as a

Catholic—(he had abjured his old belief of Protestantism before accepting the high office of Controller-General of Finances in 1720)—and an adherent of the Pretender. He pleaded in the King's Bench the Royal pardon for the murder of Beau Austin which had been sent to him in 1719. He spent the succeeding few years in England whence he corresponded with the Duke of Orleans. He expected to be recalled to France but his hope was never realised. He wished to go to the Continent but was practically a prisoner in England, fearing to leave it lest he should be arrested by his creditors, amongst whom was the new French East India Company which had been reconstructed on the ruins of the old. In 1725 Sir Robert Walpole, then Prime Minister, asked Lord Townshend, the Secretary of State, to give Law a King's commission of some sort, so that such might serve for his protection. In the same year he went to Italy. He died in Venice in 1729, in what, compared with his135 former state, was poverty. To the last he was a gambler, always ready to take long risks for a prospect, however remote, of large gain. A story is told that in his last years he wagered his last thousand pounds to a shilling (20,000 to 1) against the throwing of double sixes six consecutive times. The law of chances was with him and naturally he won. He renewed his wager but the authorities would not allow the further gamble to take place.

John Law married, quite early in life, the daughter of the Earl of Banbury and widow of Mr. Seignior. His widow died in 1747. Some of the members of his family were not undistinguished; his son died a Colonel in the Austrian service; and one of his nephews became Comte de Lauriston and rose to be a General in the French army and Aide-de-Camp to the first Napoleon. He was made a Marshal of France by Louis XVIII.

John Law was a handsome and distinguished-looking man, blonde, with small dark grey eyes and fresh complexion. He made an agreeable impression on strangers. Saint-Simon, the social historian, gave him a good character: "innocent of greed and knavery, a mild good man whom fortune had not spoilt." Others of his time regarded him as a pioneer of modern statesmanship.

How is it then that such a man must be set down an impostor? In historical perspective as an impostor he must be regarded, though not as such in136 the narrowest view. The answer is that his very prominence sits amongst his judges. Lesser men, and greater men of lesser position, might well stand excused in matters wherein he is accorded condemnation.

"That in the Captain's but a choleric wordWhich in the soldier is flat blasphemy."

If, when a man plays a game wherein life and death and the fortunes of many thousands are involved, it behoves him to be at least careful, much greater is his responsibility where the prosperity and happiness of nations are at stake. Had Law merely started new theories of finance, and had they gone wrong, he might well claim, and be accorded, excuse. But his were inventions of what, in modern slang, is called "get-rich-quick" principles. Not only did Law not enrich human life—with one exception, that of enlarging the currency in use—or add to the sum total of human well-being and happiness; he even neglected to show that forethought and consideration for others which in all honour ought to be exercised by the deviser and controller of great risks. He was a gambler, and a gambler only. He merely put into the pockets of some persons that which he had taken out of the pockets of others; and in doing so showed no consideration for the poor, the thrifty, the needy—for any of those whose contentment and happiness depend on such as are in high places and dowered137 in some way with productive powers. The soulless uneducated churl who does an honest day's work does more for humanity than the genius who merely shifts about the already garnered wealth of ages. John Law posed as a benefactor and accepted all the benefits that accrued to him from the praises of those who followed in his wake and gleaned the rich wastage of his empire-moving theories and schemes. Financiers of Law's type no more benefit a country or enrich a people than do the hordes of wasters and "tape"-betting men who prey on labour as locusts do on the crops. If they wish not to do unnecessary harm—which is putting their duty at the lowest possible estimate—they should at least try to avoid repeating the errors which have wrecked others. A brief glance at the wreckage which lay well within the Scotch gambler's vision, will show how he shut his eyes deliberately not only to facts, but to the many correlations of cause and effect. Before his Mississippi Scheme was formulated, there had been experience of banking enterprises, of schemes for mercantile combination and for the exploitation of capital, of adventurous dealings in the developments of countries new and more or less savage, East and West and South.

The following list will typify. Of all these John Law had knowledge sufficient to judge of difficulties to be encountered in the early stages, of dangers not only incidental to the things themselves, but based deep in human nature.

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The East India Company founded in 1600
The Bank of England founded in 1694
The Africa Company founded in 1695
The Darien Company founded in 1695

A glance at each of these, all of which were within the scope and knowledge of Law, their aims, formation and development, up to the time spoken of, can hardly fail to be illuminative. The sixteenth century had been an age of adventure and discovery; the seventeenth of the foundation of great commercial enterprise, of conception of ideas, of the constructive beginnings of things. The time for development had come with the eighteenth; and now care and forethought, prudence and resource, were the preparations for success.

The East India Company was in reality the pioneer of corporate trading, and as for nearly a hundred years it was in a measure alone in its scale of magnitude, its experiences could well serve as exemplar, guide, and danger signal. It was based on that surest of all undertakings, natural growth. It came into existence because it was wanted, and from no other cause. Its very name, its modest capital, its self-protective purpose make for understanding.

In its Charter of Incorporation its purpose was indicated in the name: "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies." Its capital was £70,000, which though139 a large sum for those days, was, according to our modern lights, an almost ridiculously small sum for the object then before it, and to which it ultimately attained. The time was ripe for just such an undertaking.

The Peace of Vervins (1598) which left both France and Spain free to look after their domestic concerns, was immediately followed by the Edict of Nantes (1599) which gave religious liberty to France, and such a new freedom is always followed by national expansion. By this time Spain—the explorer or conqueror—and Holland—the patient organiser—held Eastern commerce in their hands. England had been gradually making a commerce of her own in the Indies, and all that was required was an official acknowledgment, so that the thunder of her guns should, when required, follow the creaking of her cordage. From the story of this great enterprise, through its first twenty-five years, could be drawn the lesson of such schemes as Law was now formulating. Though it had succeeded, in spite of Dutch and Portuguese opposition, in establishing "factories" when the historic massacre by the Dutch at Amboyna in the Molucca Islands, took place in 1725, the Eastern Company seemed near its dissolution. It was not till the establishment of the Hooghly factory in 1742 that things began to look up. After that, fortune favoured the Company more than she had appeared likely to do at the start. The marriage of Charles II to140 Catherine of Braganza in 1661 brought progress in its train. Catherine's dower, which included Bombay and so put a part of Portugal's later possessions in British keeping, greatly stimulated the East India Company which thenceforth was able to weather the storms that threatened or assailed. The privilege of making war on its own account, conceded

by Charles II, gave the Company a national importance which was destined to consolidate its interests with those of England itself. So strong did it become that before the end of the eighteenth century it was able to resist the attack on its charter made by a powerful and progressive rival, the "New Company." The rivals, after a few years of *pourparlers* and tentative efforts, were united in 1708; and thenceforth the amalgamation, under the title "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies," was practically unassailable on its own account. It was additionally safe in that it had the protection of the great Whig Party under Godolphin. The capital of the Company, now enlarged to £3,200,000, was lent to the Government at five per cent. interest and was finally merged in the National Funds. The history of the Company, after 1717 does not belong here, as it is only considered as showing that John Law had the experience of an earlier Company similar to his own to guide him in its management if he had chosen to avail himself of it.

The Bank of England was, strangely enough,141 the project of a Scotchman, William Paterson. The plan was submitted to Government in 1691 but was not carried into existence for three years. It was purely a business concern, brought into effective existence through the needs of commerce, the opportunity afforded being the need of the State and the concern of the statesman. It had a capital at first of over £1,200,000, which was loaned to the nation on the security of the taxes when the Charter was signed, there being certain safeguards against the possibility of political misuse. The Controlling Board was to have twenty-five members who were to be elected annually by the stockholders with a substantial qualification. There were at this time in England private banks; but this was an effort to formulate the banking rights, duties, and powers of capital under the ægis of the State itself. But even so sound a venture, enormously popular from the very first and with the whole might of the nation behind it, had its own difficulties to encounter. Its instantaneous success was an incentive to other adventurers; and the co-operation with government which it made manifest created jealousy with private persons and commercial concerns. Within two years its very existence was threatened, first by the individual hostility of those in the bullion trade, who already acted as bankers, and then by a rival concern incorporated under strong political support. This was the National Land Bank whose purpose was to142 use the security of real estate as a guarantee for the paper money which it issued for convenient usage. Strong as the Bank of England was by its nature, its popularity, and its support, it was in actual danger until the rival which had never "caught on"—to use an apposite Americanism—actually and almost instantaneously collapsed.

The safety thus temporarily obtained was purchased at the cost to the Government of a further loan of two million sterling—with the value to the contra of an alliance thus begun with the Whig ministry.

A further danger came from the mad and maddening South Sea Scheme five years later; but from which it was happily saved solely through the greater cupidity and daring of the newer company.

The Darien Company, which followed hard on the heels of The African Company, was formed in 1695, by Paterson; on the base of An Act of the Scottish Parliament for the purpose of making an opening for Scottish capital after the manner of the East India Company by which English enterprise had already so largely benefited. Its career was of such short duration and its failure so complete that there was little difficulty in understanding the causes of its collapse. It might serve for a *pendant* of Lamb's criticism of the meat that was "ill fed and ill killed, ill kept and ill cooked." The Company was started to utilise, in addition to exploiting new lands, the waste of time, energy and143 capital, between West and East; and yet it was not till the first trading fleet was sailing that its objective was made known to the adventurers. Its ideas of trading were those of a burlesque, and its materials of barter with tropical savages on the criminal side of the ludicrous—bibles, heavy woollen stuffs and periwigs! Naturally a couple of years finished its working existence and "The rest is silence." And yet at the inception of the scheme two great nations vied with one another for its control.

There are those who may say that John Law was not an impostor, but a great financier who made a mistake. Financiers must not make mistakes—or else they must be classed amongst the impostors; for they deal with the goods and prospects of others as well as their own. Law was simply a gambler on a great scale. He led a nation, through its units, to believe that the following of his ideas would lead to success. Financial schemes without good ideas and practical working to carry them out are deceptive and destructive. The Mississippi Scheme is a case in point. If the original intention had been carried out in its entirety—which involved vast pioneering and executive action of present and future generations, and an almost absolute foregoing of immediate benefits—the result would have been of immense service to the successors in title of the original ventures. The assessable value of the real estate conveyed under the Mississippi144 Scheme to-day equals more than a third of the present gigantic National Debt of France, swollen though the latter is by the Napoleonic wars, the war with Austria, the cost and indemnity of the war with Germany, and, in addition, by the long wars with England and Russia.

If human beings had been angels, content with the prospect of gains in the distant future, Law's schemes might have succeeded. As it was, he, working for his own purposes with an imperfect humanity, can only be judged by results.

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V. WITCHCRAFT AND CLAIRVOYANCE

A. THE PERIOD

For convenience, the masculine offender is in demonology classed under the female designation. According to Michelet and other authorities there were ten thousand alleged witches for each alleged wizard! and anyhow there is little etiquette as to the precedence of ladies in criminal matters.

The first English Statute dealing directly with witches appears to be the thirty-third of Henry VIII (1541) which brought into the list of felonies persons "devising or practising conjurations, witchcraftes, sorcerie or inchantments or the digging up of corpses," and depriving such of the benefit of clergy. It was however repealed by I Edward VI Cap. 12, and again by I Mary (in its first section.). Queen Elizabeth, however, passed another Act (5 Elizabeth Cap. 16) practically repeating that of her father, which had been in abeyance for more than thirty years. The Statute of Elizabeth is exceedingly interesting in that it states the condition of the law at that time. The opening words leave no misunderstanding:

"Whereas at this day there is no ordinary nor condigne punishment provided against the wicked offences of conjurations148 or invocations of evil spirits, or of sorceries, inchantments, charmes or witchcraftes, which be practised to the obstruction of the persons and goods of the Queene's subjects, or for other lewd purposes. Be it enacted that if any person or persons after the first day of June next coming, shall use practice, or exercise any invocations, or conjurations, of evill or wicked spirits, to or for any intent or purpose, or else if any person or persons after the said first day of June shall use, practice or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charme or sorcerie, whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroied, that then as well every such offendour or offendours in invocations, or conjurations, as is aforesayde, their aydours and counsellors, as also everie such offendour or offendours in that Witchcrafte, enchantment, charme or sorcerie whereby the death of any person doth ensue, their ayders and counsellors, being of eyther of the sayde offences lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer paines of death, as a felon or felons, and shall lose the privilege and benefit of Clergy and sanctuary," &c.

In this act lesser penalties are imposed for using any form of witchcraft or sorcery, for inducing to any persons harm, or to "provoke any person to unlawfull love or to hurt or destroy any person in his or her bodye, member or goods," or for the discovery or recovery of treasure. From that time down to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, when the law practically died out, witchcraft had its place in the category of legal offences. The law was finally repealed by an Act in the tenth year of George II. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the time of witch-fever, and in that period, especially in its earlier days when the belief149 had become epidemic, it was ruthless and destructive. It is said that in Genoa five hundred persons were burned within three months in the year 1515, and a thousand in the diocese of Como in a year. Round numbers in such matters are to be distrusted, as we find they seldom bear investigation; but there is little doubt that in France and Germany vast numbers suffered and perished. Even in more prosaic and less emotional England there were many thousands of judicial murders in this wise. It is asserted that within two centuries they totalled thirty thousand.

It is startling to find such a weird and impossible credulity actually rooted in the Statute book of one's own country, and that there are records of judges charging juries to convict. Sir Matthew Hale, a great lawyer, a judge of the Common Pleas in 1654, and Lord Chief Justice in 1671, was a firm believer in witchcraft. He was a grave and pious man, and all his life was an ardent student of theology as well as of law. And yet in 1664 he sentenced women to be burned as witches. In 1716 a mother and daughter—the latter only nine years of age—were hanged in Huntingdon. In Scotland the last case of a woman being condemned as a witch occurred at Dornoch in 1722.

It is no easy task in these days, which are rationalistic, iconoclastic and enquiring, to understand how the commonalty not only believed in witchcraft but acted on that belief. Probably the most tolerant150 view we can take, is that both reason and enquiry are essential and rudimentary principles of human nature. Every person of normal faculties likes to know and understand the reasons of things; and inquisitiveness is not posterior to the period of maternal alimentation. If we seek for a cause we are bound to find one—even if it be wrong. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico* has a wide if not always a generous meaning; and when fear is founded on, if not inspired by ignorance, that unthinking ferocity which is one of our birthrights from Adam is apt to carry us further than we ever meant to go. In an age more clear-seeing than our own and less selfish we shall not think so poorly of primitive emotions as we are at present apt to. On the contrary we shall begin to understand that in times when primitivity holds sway, we are most in touch with the loftiest things we are capable of understanding, and our judgment, being complex, is most exact. Indeed in this branch

of the subject persons used to call to aid a special exercise of our natural forces—the æsthetic. When witchcraft was a belief, the common idea was that that noxious power was almost entirely held by the old and ugly. The young, fresh, and beautiful, were seldom accepted as witches save by the novelty-loving few or those of sensual nature. This was perhaps fortunate—if the keeping down of the population in this wise was necessary; it is easier as well as safer to murder the uncomely than those of greater151 charm. In any case there was no compunction about obliterating the former class. The general feeling was much the same as that in our own time which in sporting circles calls for the destruction of vermin.

It will thus be seen that the profession of witchcraft, if occasionally lucrative, was nevertheless always accompanied with danger and execration. This was natural enough since the belief which made witchcraft dangerous was based on fear. It is not too much to say that in every case, professed witchcraft was an expression of fraudulent intent. Such pity, therefore, as the subject allows of must be confined to the guiltless victims who, despite blameless life, were tried by passion, judged by frenzy, and executed by remorseless desperation. There could be no such thing as quantitative analysis of guilt with regard to the practice of witchcraft: any kind of playing with the subject was a proof of *some* kind of wrongful intent, and was to be judged with Draconian severity. Doubtless it was a very simple way of dealing with evils, much resembling the medical philosophy of the Chinese. The whole logic of it can be reduced to a sorites. Any change from the normal is the work of the devil—or *a* devil as the case may be. Find out the normal residence of that especial devil—which is in some human being. Destroy the devil's dwelling. You get rid of the devil. It is pure savagery of the most primitive kind. And152 it is capable of expansion, for logic is a fertile plant, and when its premises are wrong it has the fecundity of a weed. Before even a savage can have time to breathe, his logic is piling so fast on him that he is smothered. If a human being is a devil then the club which destroys him or her is an incarnation of good, and so a god to be worshipped in some form—or at any rate to be regarded with esteem, like a sword, or a legal wig, or a stethoscope, or a paint-brush, or a shovel, or a compass, or a drinking-vessel, or a pen. If all the necessary conditions of life and sanity and comfort were on so primitive a base, what an easy world it would be to live in!

One benefit there was in witchcraft, though it was not recognised officially as such at the time. It created a new industry—a whole crop of industries. It is of the nature of belief that it encourages belief—not always of exactly the same kind—but of some form which intelligence can turn into profit. We cannot find any good in the new industry—grapes do not grow on thorns nor figs on thistles. The sum of human

happiness was in no sense augmented; but at least a good deal of money or money's worth changed hands; which, after all, is as much as most of the great financiers can point to as the result of long and strenuous success. In the organisation of this form of crime there were many classes, of varying risks and of benefits in inverse ratio to them. For the ordinary rule of153 finance holds even here: large interest means bad security. First there were the adventurers themselves who took the great risks of life and its collaterals—esteem, happiness, &c. The money obtained by this class was usually secured by fraudulent sales of worthless goods or by the simple old financial device of blackmail. Then there were those who were in reality merely parasites on the pleasing calling—those timorous souls who let "'I dare not' wait upon 'I would' like the poor cat i' the adage." These were altogether in a poorer way of trade than their bolder brothers and sisters. They lacked courage, and sometimes even sufficient malice for the proper doing of their work; with the result that success seldom attended them at all, and never heartily. But at any rate they could not complain of inadequate punishment; whenever religious zeal flamed up they were generally prominent victims. They can in reality only be regarded as specimens of parasitic growth. Then there came the class known in French criminal circles as *agents provocateurs*, whose business was not only to further ostensible crime but to work up the opposition against it. Either branch of their art would probably be inadequate; but by linking their services they managed to eke out a livelihood. Lastly there was the lowest grade of all, the Witch-finder—a loathly calling, comparable only to the class or guild of "paraskistae" or "rippers" in the ritual of the Mummy industry of ancient Egypt.

154Of these classes we may I think consider some choice specimens—so far as we may fittingly investigate the *personnel* of a by-gone industry. Of the main body, that of Wizards and Witches or those pretending to the cult, let us take Doctor Dee and Madame Voisin, and Sir Edward Kelley and Mother Damnable—thus representing the method of the procession of the unclean animals from the Ark. Of the class of Witchfinders one example will probably be as much as we can stand, and we will naturally take the one who obtained fame in his calling—namely Matthew Hopkins, who stands forth like Satan, "by merit raised to that bad eminence."

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B. DOCTOR DEE

Even a brief survey of the life of the celebrated "Doctor Dee," the so-called "Wizard" of the sixteenth century, will leave any honest reader under the impression that in the perspective of history he was a much maligned man. If it had not been that now and

again he was led into crooked bye-paths of alleged occultism, his record might have stood out as that of one of the most accomplished and sincere of the scientists of his time. He was in truth, whatever were his faults, more sinned against than sinning. If the English language is not so elastic as some others in the matter of meaning of phrases, the same or a greater effect can be obtained by a careful use of the various dialects of the British Empire. In the present case we may, if English lacks, well call on some of the varieties of Scotch terminology. The intellectual status of the prime wizard, as he is held to be in general opinion, can be well indicated by any of the following words or phrases "wanting," "crank," "a tile off," "a wee bit saft," "a bee in his bonnet." Each of these is indicative of some form of monomania, generally harmless. If John Dee had not had some great qualities, such156 negative weaknesses would have prevented his reputation ever achieving a permanent place in history of any kind. As it is his place was won by many accomplished facts. The following is a broad outline of his life, which was a long one lasting for over eighty years.

John Dee was born in 1527, and came of a Welsh race. A good many years after his start in life he, after the harmless fashion of those (and other) times, made out a family tree in which it was shewn that he was descended from, among other royalties, Roderick the Great, Prince of Wales. This little effort of vanity did not, however, change anything. The world cared then about such things almost as little as it does now; or, allowing for the weakness of human beings in the way of their own self-importance, it might be better to say as it professes to do now. John Dee was sent to the University of Cambridge when he was only fifteen years old. The College chosen for him was St. John's, and here he showed extraordinary application in his chosen subject, mathematics. He took his probationary degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1545, and was made a Fellow in 1546. In his early years of College life his work was regulated in a remarkable way. Out of the twenty-four hours, eighteen were devoted to study, four to sleep, the remaining two being set apart for meals and recreation. Lest this should seem incredible it may be remembered that three hundred years later, the French Jesuits,157 having made exhaustive experiments, arrived at the conclusion that for mere purposes of health, without making any allowance for the joy or happiness of life, and treating the body merely as a machine from which the utmost amount of work mental and physical could be got without injury, four hours of sleep per diem sufficed for health and sanity. And it is only natural that a healthy and ambitious young man trying to work his way to success would, or might have been, equally strenuous and self-denying. His appointment as Fellow of St. John's was one of those made when the College was founded. That he was skilled in other branches of learning was shown by the fact that in the University he was appointed as Under Reader in Greek. He was

daring in the practical application of science, and during the representation of one of the comedies of Aristophanes, created such a sensation by appearing to fly, that he began to be credited by his companions with magical powers. This was probably the beginning of the sinister reputation which seemed to follow him all his life afterwards. When once an idea of the kind has been started even the simplest facts of life and work seem to gather round it and enlarge it indefinitely. So far as we can judge after a lapse of over three hundred years, John Dee was an eager and ardent seeker after knowledge; and all through his life he travelled in the search wherever he was likely to gain his object. It is a main difficulty of158 following such a record that we have only facts to follow. We know little or nothing of motives except from results, and as in the development of knowledge the measure of success can only bear a small ratio to that of endeavour, it is manifest that we should show a large and tolerant understanding of the motives which animate the seeker for truth. In the course of his long life John Dee visited many lands, sojourned in many centres of learning, had relations of common interests as well as of friendship with many great scholars, and made as thinker, mathematician, and astronomer, a reputation far transcending any ephemeral and purely gaseous publicity arising from the open-mouthed wonder of the silly folk who are not capable of even trying to understand things beyond their immediate ken. Wherever he went he seems to have been in touch with the learned and progressive men of his time, and always a student. At various times he was in the Low Countries, Louvain (from whose University he obtained the degree of LL.D.), Paris, Wurtemberg, Antwerp, Presburg, Lorraine, Frankfort-on-the-Oder, Bohemia, Cracow, Prague, and Hesse-Cassel. He even went so far afield as St. Helena. He was engaged on some great works of more than national importance. For instance, when in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII instituted the reform of the Calendar which was adopted by most of the great nations of the world, Dee approved and worked out159 his own calculations to an almost similar conclusion, though the then opposition to him cost England a delay of over one hundred and seventy years. In 1572 he had proved his excellence as an astronomer in his valuable work in relation to a newly discovered star (Tycho Brahe's) in Cassiopœia. In 1580 he made a complete geographical and hydrographical map of the Queen's possessions. He tried—but unhappily in vain—to get Queen Mary to gather the vast collections of manuscripts and old books which had been made in the Monasteries (broken up by Henry VIII) of which the major part were then to be obtained both easily and cheaply. He was a Doctor of Laws (which by the way was his only claim to be called "Doctor" Dee, the title generally accorded to him). He was made a rector in Worcestershire in 1553; and in 1556, Archbishop Parker gave him ten years' use of the livings of Upton and Long Leadenham. He was made Warden of Manchester College in 1595, and was named by Queen Elizabeth as Chancellor of St.

Paul's. In 1564, he was appointed Dean of Gloucester, though through his own neglect of his own interest it was never carried out. The Queen approved, the Archbishop sealed the deed; but Dee, unmindful, overlooked the formality of acceptance and the gift eventually went elsewhere. Queen Elizabeth, who consistently believed in and admired him, wanted to make him a bishop, but he declined the responsibility. For once the formality at consecration:160 "*Nolo Episcopari*" was spoken with truthful lips. More than once he was despatched to foreign places to make special report in the Queen's service. That he did not—always, at all events—put private interest before public duty is shown by his refusal to accept two rectories offered to him by the Queen in 1576, urging as an excuse that he was unable to find time for the necessary duties, since he was too busily occupied in making calculations for the reformation of the Calendar. He seems to have lived a most proper life, and was twice married. After a long struggle with adversity in which—last despair of a scholar—he had to sell his books, he died very poor, just as he was preparing to migrate. At his death in 1608 he left behind him no less than seventy-nine works—nearly one for each year of his life. Just after the time of the Armada, following on some correspondence with Queen Elizabeth, he had returned to England after long and adventurous experiences in Poland and elsewhere, during which he had known what it was to receive the honours and affronts of communities. He took back with him the reputation of being a sorcerer, one which he had never courted and which so rankled in him that many years afterwards he petitioned James I to have him tried so that he might clear his character.

If there be any truth whatever in the theory that men have attendant spirits, bad as well as good, Dr. Dee's bad spirit took the shape of one who161 pretended to occult knowledge, the so-called Sir Edward Kelley of whom we shall have something to say later on.

Dee was fifty-four years of age when he met Sir Edward Kelley who was twenty-eight years his junior. The two men became friends, and then the old visionary scholar at once became dominated by his younger and less scrupulous companion, who very soon became his partner. From that time Dee's down-fall—or rather down-*slide* began. All the longings after occult belief which he had hitherto tried to hold in check began not only to manifest themselves, but to find expression. His science became merged in alchemy, his astronomical learning was forced into the service of Astrology. His belief, which he as a cleric held before him as a duty, was lost in spiritualism and other forms of occultism. He began to make use for practical purposes of his crystal globe and his magic mirror in which he probably had for long believed secretly. Kelley practically ruined his reputation by using for his own purposes the influence which he had over the old man. His opportunities were

increased by the arrival in England of Laski, about 1583. The two scholars had many ideas in common, and Kelley did not fail, in the furtherance of his own views, to take advantage of the circumstance. He persuaded Dee to go with his new friend to Poland, in the hope of benefiting further in his studies in the occult by wider162 experience of foreign centres of learning. They journeyed to Laskoe near Cracow, where the weakness of the English scholar became more evident and his form of madness more developed. Dee had now a fixed belief in two ideas which he had hitherto failed to materialise—the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, both of them dreams held as possible of realisation to the scientific dreamer in the period of the Renaissance. Dee believed at one time that he had got hold of the Philosopher's Stone, and actually sent to Queen Elizabeth a piece of gold taken from a transmuted warming-pan. As it is said in the life of Dee that he and Kelley had found a quantity of the Elixir of Life in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, we can easily imagine what part the latter had in the transaction. It was he, too, who probably fixed on Glastonbury as the place in which to search for Elixirs, as that holy spot had already a reputation of its own in such matters. It has been held for ages that the staff used by Joseph of Arimathea took root and blossomed there. Somehow, whatever the Glastonbury Elixir did, the Philosopher's Stone did not seem to keep its alleged properties in the Dee family. John Dee's young son Arthur, aged eight, tried its efficacy; but without success. Perhaps it was this failure which made Kelley more exacting, for a couple of years later in 1589, he told his partner that angels had told him it was the divine wish that they should have163 their wives in common. The sage, who was fond of his wife—who was a comely woman, whereas Kelley's was ill favoured and devoid of charms—naturally demurred at such an utterance even of occult spirits. Mrs. Dee also objected, with the result that there were alarums and excursions and the partnership was rudely dissolved—which is a proof that though the aged philosopher's mind had been vitiated by the evil promptings of his wily companion he had not quite declined to idiocy.

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C. LA VOISIN

In Paris a woman named Des Hayes Voisin, a widow who had taken up the business of a midwife, towards the end of the seventeenth century made herself notorious by the telling of fortunes. Such at least was the manifest occupation of the worthy lady, and as she did not flaunt herself unduly, her existence was rather a retired one. Few who did not seek her services knew of her existence, fewer still of her residence. The life of

a professor of such mysteries as the doings of Fate—so-called—is prolonged and sweetened by seclusion. But there is always an "underground" way of obtaining information for such as really desire it; and Madame Voisin, for all her evasive retirement, was always to be found when wanted—which means when she herself wanted to be found. She was certainly a marvellous prophet, within a certain range of that occult art. Like all clever people she fixed limitations for herself; which was wise of her, for to prophesy on behalf of every one who may yearn for a raising of the curtain, be it of never so small a corner, on all possible subjects, is to usurp the general functions of the Almighty. Wisely therefore, Madame Voisin became a specialist.165 Her subject was husbands; her chief theme their longevity. Naturally such women as were unsatisfied with the personality, circumstances, or fortunes of their partners, joined the mass of her *clientèle*, a mass which taking it "bye and large" maintained a strange exactness of dimensions. This did not much trouble the public, or even the body of her clients, for no one except Madame herself knew their numbers. It was certainly a strange thing how accurately Madame guessed, for she had seemingly no data to go on—the longevity of the husbands were never taken into the confidence of the prophet. She took care to keep almost to herself the rare good fortune, in a sense, which attended her divination; for ever since the misfortune which had attended the late Marquise de Brinvilliers became public, the powers of the law had taken a quite unnecessary interest in the proceedings of all of her cult. Longevity is quite a one-sided arrangement of nature; we can only be sure of its accuracy when it is too late to help in its accomplishment. In such a game there is only one throw of the dice, so that it behoves anyone who would wager successfully to be very sure that the chances are in his—or her—favour.

Madame Voisin's clients were generally in a hurry, and so were willing to take any little trouble or responsibility necessary to ensure success. They had two qualities which endear customers to those of La Voisin's trade; they were grateful and they166 were silent. That they were of cheery and hopeful spirit was shown by the fact that as a rule they married again soon after the dark cloud of bereavement had fallen on them. When the funeral baked meats have coldly furnished forth the marriage tables, it is better to remain as inconspicuous as possible; friends and onlookers will take notice, and, when they notice, they will talk. Moreover the new partner is often suspicious and apt to be a little jealous of his predecessor in title. Thus, Madame Voisin being clever and discreet, and her clients being—or at any rate appearing to be—happy in their new relations and silent to the world at large, all went prosperously with the kindly-hearted prophet. No trouble rose as to testamentary dispositions. Men who are the subjects of prophecy have usually excellently-drawn wills. This is especially the

case with husbands who are no longer young. Young husbands are as a rule not made the subjects of prophecy.

Madame Voisin's great accuracy of prediction did not excite at the time so much public admiration as it might have done if she or her clients had taken the public more into their confidence; but it was noted afterwards that in most cases the male individual who retired early from the scene was the senior partner in that *congeries* of three which has come to be known as "the eternal triangle." In later conversations, following in the wake of the167 completed prophecy, confidences were exchanged as to the studies in certain matters of science in which Madame Voisin seemed to have attained a rare proficiency.

The late Mr. Charles Peace, an adventurous if acquisitive spirit, who gave up his life in the same manner as the deceased Mr. Haman, worked alone during the long period of his professional existence, and with misleading safety. The illustrious French lady-prophet unwisely did not value this form of security, and so multiplied opportunities of failure. She followed an entirely opposite policy, one which though it doubtless stood by her on many occasions had a fatal weakness. In some ways it may facilitate matters if one is one's own Providence; such a course avoids temporarily errors of miscalculation or deduction of probable results. And just as the roulette table has certain chances in favour of Zero, there is for the practical prophet a large hazard in that the dead are unable to speak or to renew effort on a more favourable basis. La Voisin, probably through some unfavourable or threatening experiences, saw the wisdom of associating the forces of prediction and accomplishment, and with the readiness of an active personality effected the junction. For this she was already fairly well equipped with experiences. Both as a wife and a lover of warm and voluptuous nature she understood something of the passions of humanity, on both the female and the male side; and being a woman she168 knew perhaps better of the two the potency of feminine longing. This did not act so strongly in the lesser and more directly commercial, if less uncertain, phases of her art, such as finding lost property, divining the result of hazards, effecting immunity from danger, or the preserving indefinitely the more pleasing qualities of youth. But in sterner matters, when the issue was of life or death, the masculine tendency towards recklessness kicked the beam. As a nurse in active touch with both medical and surgical wants, aims, and achievements, she was at ease in the larger risks of daily life. And after all, her own ambitions, aided by the compelling of her own natural demands for physical luxury, were quite independent, only seeking through exiguous means a way of achievement. In secret she studied the mystery of a toxicologist; and, probably by cautious experiment, satisfied herself of her proficiency in that little-known science. That she

had other aims, more or less dependent on this or the feelings which its knowledge superinduced, can be satisfactorily guessed from some of her attendant labours which declared themselves later.

After a time La Voisin's vogue as a sorceress brought her into certain high society where freedom of action was unhampered by moral restraints. The very rich, the leaders of society and fashion of the time, the unscrupulous whose ambitious efforts had been crowned with success of a kind,169 leaders of Court life, those in high military command, mistresses of royalty and high aristocracy—all became companions and clients in one or more of her mysterious arts. Amongst them were the Duchesse de Bouillon, the Comtesse de Soissons, Madame de Montespan, Olympe de Mancini, Marshal de Luxembourg, the Duc de Vendôme, Prince de Clermont-Lodeve. It was not altogether fashionable not to be in touch with Madame Voisin. Undeterred by the lessons of history, La Voisin went on her way, forced as is usual in such cases by the circumstances which grow around the criminal and prove infinitely the stronger. She was at the height of her success when the public suspicion, followed by action, revealed the terrible crimes of the Marquise de Brinvilliers; and she was caught in the tail of the tempest thus created.

This case of Madame de Brinvilliers is a typical one of how a human being, goaded by passion and lured by opportunity, may fall swiftly from any estate. It is so closely in touch with that of Madame Voisin that the two have almost to be considered together. They began with the desire for dabbling in forbidden mysteries. Three men—two Italians and one German, all men of some ability—were violent searchers for the mythical "philosopher's stone" which was to fulfil the dream of the mediæval alchemist by turning at will all things into gold. In the search they all gravitated to Paris. There the usual thing happened. Money170 ran short and foolish hoping had to be supplemented by crime. In the whirling world of the time there was always a ready sale for means to an end, however nefarious either might be. The easy morality of the time allowed opportunity for all means, with the result that there was an almost open dealing in poisons. The soubriquet which stole into existence—it dared not proclaim itself—is a self-explanatory historical lesson. The *poudre de succession* marks an epoch which, for sheer, regardless, remorseless, profligate wickedness is almost without peer in history, and this is said without forgetting the time of the Borgias. Not even natural affection or family life or individual relationship or friendliness was afforded any consideration. This phase of crime, which was one almost confined to the upper and wealthier classes, depended on wealth and laws of heredity and entail. Those who benefited by it salved what remnants of conscience still remained to them with the thought that they were but helping the natural process of waste and

recuperation. The old and feeble were removed, with as little coil as might be necessary, in order that the young and lusty might benefit. As the change was a form of plunder, which had to be paid for in a degree in some way approximate to results, prices ran high. Poisoning on a successful scale requires skilful and daring agents, whose after secrecy as well as whose present aid has to be secured. Exili and Glasser—one of the Italians171 and the German—did a thriving trade. As usual in such illicit traffic, the possibility of purchase under effective conditions made a market. There is every reason to believe from after results that La Voisin was one such agent. The cause of La Brinvilliers entering the market was the purely personal one of an affair of sensual passion. Death is an informative circumstance. Suspicion began to leak out that the polyglot firm of needy foreigners had dark dealings. Two of them—the Italians—were arrested and sent to the Bastille where one of them died. By unhappy chance the other was given as cell-companion Captain Sainte-Croix, who was a lover of the Marquise de Brinvilliers. Sainte-Croix as a Captain in the regiment of the Marquis had become intimate in his house. Brinvilliers was a fatuous person and of imperfect moral vision. The Captain was handsome, and Madame la Marquise amorous. Behold then all the usual *personnel* of a tragedy of three. After a while the intrigue became a matter of family concern. The lady's father,—the Civil Lieutenant d'Aulroy, procured a *lettre de cachet*, and had the erring lover immured in the Bastille as the easiest and least public way out of the difficulty. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," says the proverb. The proverbial philosopher understated the danger of such juxtaposition. Evil manners added corruption even to their kind. In the Bastille the exasperated lover listened to the wiles of Exili; and another172 stage of misdoing began. The Marquise determined on revenge, and be sure that in such a case in such a period even the massive walls of the Bastille could not prevent the secret whisper of a means of effecting it. D'Aulroy, his two sons, and another sister perished. Brinvilliers himself was spared through some bizarre freak of his wife's conscience. Then the secret began to be whispered—first, it was said, through the confessional; and the *Chambre Ardente*, analogous to the British Star Chamber, instituted for such purposes, took the case in hand. The result might have been doubtful, for great social forces were at work to hush up such a scandal, but that, with a truly seventeenth century candour, the prisoner had written an elaborate confession of her guilt, which if it did not directly assure condemnation at least put justice on the right track.

The trial was a celebrated one, and involved incidentally many illustrious persons as well as others of lesser note. In the end, in 1676, Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers was burned—that is, what was left of her was burned after her head had been cut off, a matter of grace in consideration of her rank. It is soothing to the feelings of many

relatives and friends—not to mention those of the principal—in such a case when "great command o'ersways the order" of purgation by fire.

Before the eddy of the Brinvilliers' criminal scandal reached to the lower level of Madame173 Voisin, a good many scandals were aired; though again "great command" seems to have been operative, so far as human power availed, in minimising both scandals and punishments. Amongst those cited to the *Chambre Ardente* were two nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, the Duchesse de Bouillon, the Comtesse de Soissons, and Marshal de Luxembourg. In some of these cases that which in theatrical parlance is called "comic relief" was not wanting. It was a witty if impertinent answer of the Duchesse de Bouillon to one of her judges, La Reyne, an ill-favoured man, who asked, apropos of a statement made at the trial that she had taken part in an alleged invocation of Beelzebub, "and did you ever see the Devil?"—

"Yes, I am looking at him now. He is ugly, and is disguised as a Councillor of State!"

The King, Louis XIV, took much interest in the trial and even tried now and again to smooth matters. He even went so far as to advise the Comtesse de Soissons who was treated by the Court rather as a foolish than a guilty woman, to keep out of the way if she were really guilty. In answer she said with the haughtiness of her time that though she was innocent she did not care to appear in a Law Court. She withdrew to Brussels where she died some twenty years later. Marshal de Luxembourg—François Henri de Montmorenci-Boutteville, duke, peer, Marshal of France to give his full titles—was shown to have engaged in an174 attempt to recover lost property by occult means. On which basis and for having once asked Madame Voisin to produce his Satanic Majesty, he was alleged to have sold himself to the Devil. But his occult adventures did not stand in the way of his promotion as a soldier though he had to stand a trial of over a year long; he was made Captain of the Guard and finally given command of the Army.

La Voisin with her accomplices—a woman named Vigoureux and Le Sage, a priest—were with a couple of score of others arrested in 1679, and were, after a spell of imprisonment in the Bastille, tried. As a result Voisin, Vigoureux and her brother, and Le Sage were burned early in 1680. In Voisin's case the mercy of previous decapitation, which had been accorded to her guilty sister Brinvilliers, was not extended to her. Perhaps this was partly because of the attitude which she had taken up with regard to religious matters. Amongst other unforgivable acts she had repelled the Crucifix—a terrible thing to do according to the ideas of that superstitious age.