

CHAPTER IV.

SURVIVAL IN CULTURE (*continued*).

Occult Sciences—Magical powers attributed by higher to lower races—
Magical processes based on Association of Ideas—Omens—Augury, &c.—
—Oneiromancy—Haruspication, Scapulimancy, Chiromancy, &c.—
Cartomancy, &c.—Rhabdomancy, Dactyliomancy, Coscinomancy, &c.—
Astrology—Intellectual conditions accounting for the persistence of
Magic—Survival passes into Revival—Witchcraft, originating in
savage culture, continues in barbaric civilization; its decline in early
mediæval Europe followed by revival; its practices and counter-
practices belong to earlier culture—Spiritualism has its source in
early stages of culture, in close connexion with witchcraft—Spirit-
rapping and Spirit-writing—Rising in the air—Performances of tied
mediums—Practical bearing of the study of Survival.

IN examining the survival of opinions in the midst of conditions of society becoming gradually estranged from them, and tending at last to suppress them altogether, much may be learnt from the history of one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind, the belief in Magic. Looking at Occult Science from this ethnographic point of view, I shall instance some of its branches as illustrating the course of intellectual culture. Its place in history is briefly this. It belongs in its main principle to the lowest known stages of civilization, and the lower races, who have not partaken largely of the education of the world, still maintain it in vigour. From this level it may be traced upward, much of the savage art holding its place substantially unchanged, and many new practices being in course of time developed, while both the older and newer developments have lasted on more or less among modern cultured nations. But during the ages in which progressive

racés have been learning to submit their opinions to closer and closer experimental tests, occult science has been breaking down into the condition of a survival, in which state we mostly find it among ourselves.

The modern educated world, rejecting occult science as a contemptible superstition, has practically committed itself to the opinion that magic belongs to a lower level of civilization. It is very instructive to find the soundness of this judgment undesignedly confirmed by nations whose education has not advanced far enough to destroy their belief in magic itself. In any country an isolated or outlying race, the lingering survivor of an older nationality, is liable to the reputation of sorcery. It is thus with the Lavas of Burma, supposed to be the broken-down remains of an ancient cultured race, and dreaded as man-tigers;¹ and with the Budas of Abyssinia, who are at once the smiths and potters, sorcerers and were-wolves, of their district.² But the usual and suggestive state of things is that nations who believe with the sincerest terror in the reality of the magic art, at the same time cannot shut their eyes to the fact that it more essentially belongs to, and is more thoroughly at home among, races less civilized than themselves. The Malays of the Peninsula, who have adopted Mohammedan religion and civilization, have this idea of the lower tribes of the land, tribes more or less of their own race, but who have remained in their early savage condition. The Malays have enchanters of their own, but consider them inferior to the sorcerers or poyangs belonging to the rude Mintira; to these they will resort for the cure of diseases and the working of misfortune and death to their enemies. It is, in fact, the best protection the Mintira have against their stronger Malay neighbours, that these are careful not to offend them for fear of their powers of magical revenge. The Jakuns, again, are a rude and wild race, whom the Malays despise as infidels and little higher than animals, but whom at the

¹ Bastian, 'Oestl. Asien,' vol. i. p. 119.

² 'Life of Nath. Pearce,' ed. by J. J. Halls, vol. i. p. 286.

same time they fear extremely. To the Malay the Jakun seems a supernatural being, skilled in divination, sorcery, and fascination, able to do evil or good according to his pleasure, whose blessing will be followed by the most fortunate success, and his curse by the most dreadful consequences ; he can turn towards the house of an enemy, at whatever distance, and beat two sticks together till that enemy will fall sick and die ; he is skilled in herbal physic ; he has the power of charming the fiercest wild beasts. Thus it is that the Malays, though they despise the Jakuns, refrain, in many circumstances, from ill-treating them.¹ In India, in long-past ages, the dominant Aryans described the rude indigenes of the land by the epithets of ' possessed of magical powers,' ' changing their shape at will.'² To this day, Hindus settled in Chota-Nagpur and Singbhum firmly believe that the Mundas have powers of witchcraft, whereby they can transform themselves into tigers and other beasts of prey to devour their enemies, and can witch away the lives of man and beast ; it is to the wildest and most savage of the tribe that such powers are generally ascribed.³ In Southern India, again, we hear in past times of Hinduized Dravidians, the Sudras of Canara, living in fear of the demoniacal powers of the slave-caste below them.⁴ In our own day, among Dravidian tribes of the Nilagiri district, the Todas and Badagas are in mortal dread of the Kurumbas, despised and wretched forest outcasts, but gifted, it is believed, with powers of destroying men and animals and property by witchcraft.⁵ Northern Europe brings the like contrast sharply into view. The Finns and Lapps, whose low Tatar barbarism was characterized by sorcery such as flourishes still among their Siberian kins-

¹ ' Journ. Ind. Archip.' vol. i. p. 328 ; vol. ii. p. 273 ; see vol. iv. p. 425.

² Muir, ' Sanskrit Texts,' part ii. p. 435.

³ Dalton, ' Kols,' in ' Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. vi. p. 6 ; see p. 16.

⁴ Jas. Gardner, ' Faiths of the World,' s.v. ' Exorcism.'

⁵ Shortt, ' Tribes of Neilgherries,' in ' Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. vii. pp. 247, 277 ; Sir W. Elliot in ' Trans. Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology,' 1868, p. 253.

folk, were accordingly objects of superstitious fear to their Scandinavian neighbours and oppressors. In the middle ages the name of Finn was, as it still remains among seafaring men, equivalent to that of sorcerer, while Lapland witches had a European celebrity as practitioners of the black art. Ages after the Finns had risen in the social scale, the Lapps retained much of their old half-savage habit of life, and with it naturally their witchcraft, so that even the magic-gifted Finns revered the occult powers of a people more barbarous than themselves. Rühs writes thus early in the last century: 'There are still sorcerers in Finland, but the skilfullest of them believe that the Lapps far excel them; of a well-experienced magician they say, "That is quite a Lapp," and they journey to Lapland for such knowledge.'¹ All this is of a piece with the survival of such ideas among the ignorant elsewhere in the civilized world. Many a white man in the West Indies and Africa dreads the incantations of the Obi-man, and Europe ascribes powers of sorcery to despised outcast 'races maudites,' Gypsies and Cagots. To turn from nations to sects, the attitude of Protestants to Catholics in this matter is instructive. It was remarked in Scotland: 'There is one opinion which many of them entertain, . . . that a popish priest can cast out devils and cure madness, and that the Presbyterian clergy have no such power.' So Bourne says of the Church of England clergy, that the vulgar think them no conjurers, and say none can lay spirits but popish priests.² These accounts are not recent, but in Germany the same state of things appears to exist still. Protestants get the aid of Catholic priests and monks to help them against witchcraft, to lay ghosts, consecrate herbs, and discover thieves;³ thus with unconscious irony judging the relation of Rome toward modern civilization.

The principal key to the understanding of Occult Science

¹ F. Rühs, 'Finland,' p. 296; Bastian, 'Mensch.' vol. iii. p. 202.

² Brand, 'Pop. Ant.' vol. iii. pp. 81-3; see p. 313.

³ Wuttke, 'Deutsche Volksaberglaube,' p. 128; see p. 239.

is to consider it as based on the Association of Ideas, a faculty which lies at the very foundation of human reason, but in no small degree of human unreason also. Man, as yet in a low intellectual condition, having come to associate in thought those things which he found by experience to be connected in fact, proceeded erroneously to invert this action, and to conclude that association in thought must involve similar connexion in reality. He thus attempted to discover, to foretell, and to cause events by means of processes which we can now see to have only an ideal significance. By a vast mass of evidence from savage, barbaric, and civilized life, magic arts which have resulted from thus mistaking an ideal for a real connexion, may be clearly traced from the lower culture which they are of, to the higher culture which they are in.¹ Such are the practices whereby a distant person is to be affected by acting on something closely associated with him—his property, clothes he has worn, and above all cuttings of his hair and nails. Not only do savages high and low like the Australians and Polynesians, and barbarians like the nations of Guinea, live in deadly terror of this spiteful craft—not only have the Parsis their sacred ritual prescribed for burying their cut hair and nails, lest demons and sorcerers should do mischief with them, but the fear of leaving such clippings and parings about lest their former owner should be harmed through them, has by no means died out of European folk-lore, and the German peasant, during the days between his child's birth and baptism, objects to lend anything out of the house, lest witchcraft should be worked through it on the yet unconsecrated baby.² As the negro fetish-man, when his patient does not come in person, can

¹ For an examination of numerous magical arts, mostly coming under this category, see 'Early History of Mankind,' chaps. vi. and x.

² Stanbridge, 'Abor. of Victoria,' in 'Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. i. p. 299; Ellis, 'Polyn. Res.' vol. i. p. 364; J. L. Wilson, 'W. Africa,' p. 215; Spiegel, 'Avesta,' vol. i. p. 124; Wuttke, 'Deutsche Volksaberglaube,' p. 195; general references in 'Early History of Mankind,' p. 129.

divine by means of his dirty cloth or cap instead,¹ so the modern clairvoyant professes to feel sympathetically the sensations of a distant person, if communication be made through a lock of his hair or any object that has been in contact with him.² The simple idea of joining two objects with a cord, taking for granted that this communication will establish connexion or carry influence, has been worked out in various ways in the world. In Australia, the native doctor fastens one end of a string to the ailing part of the patient's body, and by sucking at the other end pretends to draw out blood for his relief.³ In Orissa, the Jeypore witch lets down a ball of thread through her enemy's roof to reach his body, that by putting the other end in her own mouth she may suck his blood.⁴ When a reindeer is sacrificed at a sick Ostyak's tent door, the patient holds in his hand a cord attached to the victim offered for his benefit.⁵ Greek history shows a similar idea, when the citizens of Ephesus carried a rope seven furlongs from their walls to the temple of Artemis, thus to place themselves under her safeguard against the attack of Croesus ; and in the yet more striking story of the Kylonians, who tied a cord to the statue of the goddess when they quitted the asylum, and clung to it for protection as they crossed unhallowed ground ; but by ill-fate the cord of safety broke and they were mercilessly put to death.⁶ And in our own day, Buddhist priests in solemn ceremony put themselves in communication with a sacred relic, by each taking hold of a long thread fastened near it and around the temple.⁷

Magical arts in which the connexion is that of mere analogy or symbolism are endlessly numerous throughout

¹ Burton, 'W. and W. from West Africa,' p. 411.

² W. Gregory, 'Letters on Animal Magnetism,' p. 128.

³ Eyre, 'Australia,' vol. ii. p. 361 ; Collins, 'New South Wales,' vol. i. pp. 561, 594.

⁴ Shortt, in 'Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. vi. p. 278.

⁵ Bastian, 'Mensch,' vol. iii. p. 117.

⁶ See Grote, vol. iii. pp. 113, 351.

⁷ Hardy, 'Eastern Monachism,' p. 241.

the course of civilization. Their common theory may be readily made out from a few typical cases, and thence applied confidently to the general mass. The Australian will observe the track of an insect near a grave, to ascertain the direction where the sorcerer is to be found, by whose craft the man died.¹ The Zulu may be seen chewing a bit of wood, in order, by this symbolic act, to soften the heart of the man he wants to buy oxen from, or of the woman he wants for a wife.² The Obi-man of West Africa makes his packet of grave-dust, blood, and bones, that this suggestive representation of death may bring his enemy to the grave.³ The Khond sets up the iron arrow of the War-god in a basket of rice, and judges from its standing upright that war must be kept up also, or from its falling that the quarrel may be let fall too ; and when he tortures human victims sacrificed to the Earth-goddess, he rejoices to see them shed plentiful tears, which betoken copious showers to fall upon his land.⁴ These are fair examples of the symbolic magic of the lower races, and they are fully rivalled in superstitions which still hold their ground in Europe. With quaint simplicity, the German cottager declares that if a dog howls looking downward, it portends a death ; but if upward, then a recovery from sickness.⁵ Locks must be opened and bolts drawn in a dying man's house, that his soul may not be held fast.⁶ The Hessian lad thinks that he may escape the conscription by carrying a baby-girl's cap in his pocket—a symbolic way of repudiating manhood.⁷ Modern Servians, dancing and singing, lead about a little girl dressed in leaves and flowers, and pour bowls of water over her to make the rain come.⁸ Sailors becalmed will sometimes

¹ Oldfield, in 'Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. iii. p. 246.

² Grout, 'Zulu-land,' p. 134.

³ See specimen and description in the Christy Museum.

⁴ Macpherson, 'India,' pp. 130, 363.

⁵ Wuttke, 'Volksaberglaube,' p. 31.

⁶ R. Hunt, 'Pop. Rom. of W. of England,' 2nd ser. p. 165 ; Brand, 'Pop. Ant.' vol. ii. p. 231.

⁷ Wuttke, p. 100.

⁸ Grimm, 'D. M.' p. 560.

whistle for a wind; but in other weather they hate whistling at sea, which raises a whistling gale.¹ Fish, says the Cornishman, should be eaten from the tail towards the head, to bring the other fishes' heads towards the shore, for eating them the wrong way turns them from the coast.² He who has cut himself should rub the knife with fat, and as it dries, the wound will heal; this is a lingering survival from days when recipes for sympathetic ointment were to be found in the Pharmacopœia.³ Fanciful as these notions are, it should be borne in mind that they come fairly under definite mental law, depending as they do on a principle of ideal association, of which we can quite understand the mental action, though we deny its practical results. The clever Lord Chesterfield, too clever to understand folly, may again be cited to prove this. He relates in one of his letters that the king had been ill, and that people generally expected the illness to be fatal, because the oldest lion in the Tower, about the king's age, had just died. 'So wild and capricious is the human mind,' he exclaims, by way of comment. But indeed the thought was neither wild nor capricious, it was simply such an argument from analogy as the educated world has at length painfully learnt to be worthless; but which, it is not too much to declare, would to this day carry considerable weight to the minds of four-fifths of the human race.

A glance at those magical arts which have been systematized into pseudo-sciences, shows the same underlying principle. The art of taking omens from seeing and meeting animals, which includes augury, is familiar to such savages as the Tupis of Brazil⁴ and the Dayaks of Borneo,⁵ and extends upward through classic civilization. The Maoris may give a sample of the character of its rules: they

¹ Brand, vol. iii. p. 240.

² Hunt, *ibid.* p. 148.

³ Wuttke, p. 165; Brand, vol. iii. p. 305.

⁴ Magalhães de Gandavo, p. 125; D'Orbigny, vol. ii. p. 168.

⁵ St. John, 'Far East,' vol. i. p. 202; 'Journ. Ind. Archip.' vol. ii. p. 357.

hold it unlucky if an owl hoots during a consultation, but a council of war is encouraged by prospect of victory when a hawk flies overhead ; a flight of birds to the right of the war-sacrifice is propitious if the villages of the tribe are in that quarter, but if the omen is in the enemy's direction the war will be given up.¹ Compare these with the Tatar rules, and it is obvious that similar thoughts lie at the source of both. Here a certain little owl's cry is a sound of terror, although there is a white owl which is lucky ; but of all birds the white falcon is most prophetic, and the Kalmuk bows his thanks for the good omen when one flies by on the right, but seeing one on the left turns away his face and expects calamity.² So to the negro of Old Calabar, the cry of the great kingfisher bodes good or evil, according as it is heard on the right or left.³ Here we have the obvious symbolism of the right and left hand, the foreboding of ill from the owl's doleful note, and the suggestion of victory from the fierce swooping hawk, a thought which in old Europe made the bird of prey the warrior's omen of conquest. Meaning of the same kind appears in the 'Angang,' the omens taken from meeting animals and people, especially on first going out in the morning, as when the ancient Slaves held meeting a sick man or an old woman to bode ill-luck. Any one who takes the trouble to go into this subject in detail, and to study the classic, mediæval, and oriental codes of rules, will find that the principle of direct symbolism still accounts for a fair proportion of them, though the rest may have lost their early significance, or may have been originally due to some other reason, or may have been arbitrarily invented (as a considerable proportion of such devices must necessarily be) to fill up the gaps in the system. It is still plain to us why the omen of the crow should be different on the right or left hand, why a vulture should mean rapacity, a stork concord, a pelican piety, an ass labour, why the

¹ Yate, 'New Zealand,' p. 90 ; Polack, vol. i. p. 248.

² Klemm, 'Cultur-Gesch.' vol. iii. p. 202.

³ Burton, 'Wit and Wisdom from West Africa,' p. 381.

fierce conquering wolf should be a good omen, and the timid hare a bad one, why bees, types of an obedient nation, should be lucky to a king, while flies, returning however often they are driven off, should be signs of importunity and impudence.¹ And as to the general principle that animals are ominous to those who meet them, the German peasant who says a flock of sheep is lucky but a herd of swine unlucky to meet, and the Cornish miner who turns away in horror when he meets an old woman or a rabbit on his way to the pit's mouth, are to this day keeping up relics of early savagery as genuine as any flint implement dug out of a tumulus.

The doctrine of dreams, attributed as they are by the lower and middle races to spiritual intercourse, belongs in so far rather to religion than to magic. But oneiromancy, the art of taking omens from dreams by analogical interpretation, has its place here. Of the leading principle of such mystical explanation, no better types could be chosen than the details and interpretations of Joseph's dreams (Genesis xxxvii., xl., xli.), of the sheaves and the sun and moon and eleven stars, of the vine and the basket of meats, of the lean and fat kine, and the thin and full corn-ears. Oneiromancy, thus symbolically interpreting the things seen in dreams, is not unknown to the lower races. A whole Australian tribe has been known to decamp because one of them dreamt of a certain kind of owl, which dream the wise men declared to forebode an attack from a certain other tribe.² The Kamchadals, whose minds ran much on dreams, had special interpretations of some; thus to dream of lice or dogs betokened a visit of Russian travellers, &c.³ The Zulus, experience having taught them the fallacy of expecting direct fulfilment of dreams, have in some cases tried to mend

¹ See Cornelius Agrippa, 'De Occulta Philosophia,' i. 53; 'De Vanitate Scient.' 37; Grimm, 'D. M.' p. 1073; Hanusch, 'Slaw. Myth.' p. 285; Brand, vol. iii. pp. 184-227.

² Oldfield in 'Tr. Eth. Soc.' vol. iii. p. 241.

³ Steller, 'Kamtschatka,' p. 279.

matters by rushing to the other extreme. If they dream of a sick man that he is dead, and they see the earth poured into the grave, and hear the funeral lamentation, and see all his things destroyed, then they say, 'Because we have dreamt of his death he will not die.' But if they dream of a wedding-dance, it is a sign of a funeral. So the Maoris hold that a kinsman dreamt of as dying will recover, but to see him well is a sign of death.¹ Both races thus work out, by the same crooked logic that guided our own ancestors, the axiom that 'dreams go by contraries.' It could not be expected, in looking over the long lists of precepts of classic, oriental, and modern popular dream-interpretation, to detect the original sense of all their readings. Many must turn on allusions intelligible at the time, but now obscure. The Moslem dream-interpretation of eggs as concerning women, because of a saying of Mohammed about women being like an egg hidden in a nest, is an example which will serve as well as a score to show how dream-rules may turn on far-fetched ideas, not to be recognized unless the key happens to have been preserved. Many rules must have been taken at random to fill up lists of omens, and of contingencies to match them. Why should a dream of roasting meat show the dreamer to be a back-biter, or laughter in sleep presage difficult circumstances, or a dream of playing on the clavicord the death of relatives? But the other side of the matter, the still apparent nonsensical rationality of so many dream omens, is much more remarkable. It can only be considered that the same symbolism that lay at the root of the whole delusion, favoured the keeping up and new making of such rules as carried obvious meaning. Take the Moslem ideas that it is a good omen to dream of something white or green, or of water, but bad to dream of black or red, or of fire; that a palm-tree indicates an Arab, and a peacock a king; that he who dreams of devouring the stars will live free at some great man's table. Take the classic rules as in the 'Oneirocritica' of Artemidorus,

¹ Callaway, 'Rel. of Amazulu,' pp. 236, 241; R. Taylor, 'N. Z.' p. 334.

and pass on through the mediæval treatises down to such a dream-dictionary as servant-maids still buy in penny chap-books at the fair, and it will be seen that the ancient rules still hold their places to a remarkable extent, while half the mass of precepts still show their original mystic significance, mostly direct, but occasionally according to the rule of contraries. An offensive odour signifies annoyance ; to wash the hands denotes release from anxieties ; to embrace one's best beloved is very fortunate ; to have one's feet cut off prevents a journey ; to weep in sleep is a sign of joy ; he who dreams he hath lost a tooth shall lose a friend ; and he that dreams that a rib is taken out of his side shall ere long see the death of his wife ; to follow bees, betokens gain ; to be married signifies that some of your kinsfolk are dead ; if one sees many fowls together, that shall be jealousy and chiding ; if a snake pursue him, let him be on his guard against evil women ; to dream of death, denotes happiness and long life ; to dream of swimming and wading in the water is good, so that the head be kept above water ; to dream of crossing a bridge, denotes you will leave a good situation to seek a better ; to dream you see a dragon is a sign that you shall see some great lord your master, or a magistrate.¹

Haruspication belongs, among the lower races, especially to the Malays and Polynesians,² and to various Asiatic tribes.³ It is mentioned as practised in Peru under the Incas.⁴ Captain Burton's account from Central Africa perhaps fairly displays its symbolic principle. He describes the mganga or sorcerer taking an ordeal by killing

¹ Artemidorus, 'Oneirocritica ;' Cockayne, 'Leechdoms, &c., of Early England,' vol. iii. ; Seafield, 'Literature, &c., of Dreams ;' Brand, vol. iii. ; Halliwell, 'Pop. Rhymes, &c.,' p. 217, &c., &c.

² St. John, 'Far East,' vol. i. pp. 74, 115 ; Ellis, 'Polyn. Res.' vol. iv. p. 150 ; Polack, 'New Zealanders,' vol. i. p. 255.

³ Georgi, 'Reise im Russ.' Reich, vol. i. p. 281 ; Hooker, 'Himalayan Journals,' vol. i. p. 135 ; 'As. Res.' vol. iii. p. 27 ; Latham, 'Descr. Eth.' vol. i. p. 61.

⁴ Cieza de Leon, p. 289 ; Rivero and Tschudi, 'Peru,' p. 183.

and splitting a fowl and inspecting its inside : if blackness or blemish appears about the wings, it denotes the treachery of children and kinsmen ; the backbone convicts the mother and grandmother ; the tail shows that the criminal is the wife, &c.¹ In ancient Rome, where the art held so great a place in public affairs, the same sort of interpretation was usual, as witness the omen of Augustus, where the livers of the victims were found folded, and the diviners prophesied him accordingly a doubled empire.² Since then, haruspication has died out more completely than almost any magical rite, yet even now a characteristic relic of it may be noticed in Brandenburg ; when a pig is killed and the spleen is found turned over, there will be another overthrow, namely a death in the family that year.³ With haruspication may be classed the art of divining by bones, as where North American Indians would put in the fire a certain flat bone of a porcupine, and judge from its colour if the porcupine hunt would be successful.⁴ The principal art of this kind is divination by a shoulder-blade, technically called scapulimancy or omoplatoscopy. This art, related to the old Chinese divination by the cracks of a tortoise-shell on the fire, is especially found in vogue in Tartary. Its simple symbolism is well shown in the elaborate account with diagrams given by Pallas. The shoulder-blade is put on the fire till it cracks in various directions, and then a long split lengthwise is reckoned as the 'way of life,' while cross-cracks on the right and left stand for different kinds and degrees of good and evil fortune ; or if the omen is only taken as to some special event, then lengthwise splits mean going on well, but crosswise ones stand for hindrance, white marks portend much snow, black ones a mild winter, &c.⁵ To find this quaint art lasting on into modern times

¹ Burton, 'Central Afr.' vol. ii. p. 32 ; Waitz, vol. ii. pp. 417, 518.

² Plin. xi. 73. See Cic. de Divinatione, ii. 12.

³ Wuttke, 'Volksaberglaube,' p. 32.

⁴ Le Jeune, 'Nouvelle France,' vol. i. p. 90.

⁵ J. H. Plath, 'Rel. d. alten Chinesen,' part i. p. 89 ; Klemm, 'Cultur. Gesch.' vol. iii. pp. 109, 199 ; vol. iv. p. 221 ; Rubruquis, in Pinkerton,

in Europe, we can hardly go to a better place than our own country ; a proper English term for it is ' reading the speal-bone' (*speal* = *espaule*). In Ireland, Camden describes the looking through the blade-bone of a sheep, to find a dark spot which foretells a death, and Drayton thus commemorates the art in his *Polyolbion* :—

' By th' shoulder of a ram from off the right side par'd,
Which usually they boile, the spade-bone being bar'd,
Which when the wizzard takes, and gazing therupon
Things long to come foreshowes, as things done long agone.'¹

Chiromancy, or palmistry, seems much like this, though it is also mixed up with astrology. It flourished in ancient Greece and Italy as it still does in India, where to say, ' It is written on the palms of my hands,' is a usual way of expressing a sense of inevitable fate. Chiromancy traces in the markings of the palm a line of fortune and a line of life, finds proof of melancholy in the intersections on the saturnine mount, presages sorrow and death from black spots in the finger-nails, and at last, having exhausted the powers of this childish symbolism, it completes its system by details of which the absurdity is no longer relieved by even an ideal sense. The art has its modern votaries not merely among Gypsy fortune-tellers, but in what is called ' good society.'²

It may again and again thus be noticed in magic arts, that the association of ideas is obvious up to a certain point. Thus when the New Zealand sorcerer took omens by the way his divining sticks (guided by spirits) fell, he quite naturally said it was a good omen if the stick representing his own tribe fell on top of that representing the enemy, and vice versâ. Zulu diviners still work a similar process with their magical pieces of stick, which rise to say yes and

vol. vii. p. 65 ; Grimm, ' D. M.' p. 1067 ; R. F. Burton, ' Sindh,' p. 189 ; M. A. Walker, ' Macedonia,' p. 169.

¹ Brand, vol. iii. p. 339 ; Forbes Leslie, vol. ii. p. 491.

² Maury, ' Magie, &c.,' p. 74 ; Brand, vol. iii. p. 348, &c. See figure in Cornelius Agrippa, ' De Occult. Philosoph,' ii. 27.

fall to say no, jump upon the head or stomach or other affected part of the patient's body to show where his complaint is, and lie pointing towards the house of the doctor who can cure him. So likewise, where a similar device was practised ages ago in the Old World, the responses were taken from staves which (by the operation of demons) fell backward or forward, to the right or left.¹ But when processes of this kind are developed to complexity, the system has, of course, to be completed by more arbitrary arrangements. This is well shown in one of the divinatory arts mentioned in the last chapter for their connexion with games of chance. In cartomancy, the art of fortune-telling with packs of cards, there is a sort of nonsensical sense in such rules as that two queens mean friendship and four mean chattering, or that the knave of hearts prophesies a brave young man who will come into the family to be useful, unless his purpose be reversed by his card being upside down. But of course the pack can only furnish a limited number of such comparatively rational interpretations, and the rest must be left to such arbitrary fancy as that the seven of diamonds means a prize in the lottery, and the ten of the same suit an unexpected journey.*

A remarkable group of divining instruments illustrates another principle. In South-East Asia, the Sgau Karens, at funeral feasts, hang a bangle or metal ring by a thread over a brass basin, which the relatives of the dead approach in succession and strike on the edge with a bit of bamboo; when the one who was most beloved touches the basin, the dead man's spirit responds by twisting and stretching the string till it breaks and the ring falls into the cup, or at least till it rings against it.* Nearer Central Asia, in the

¹ R. Taylor, 'New Zealand,' p. 205; Shortland, p. 139; Callaway, 'Religion of Amazulu,' p. 330, &c.; Theophylact. in Brand, vol. iii. p. 332. Compare mentions of similar devices; Herodot. iv. 67 (Scythia); Burton. 'Central Africa,' vol. ii. p. 350.

* Migne's 'Dic. des Sciences Occultes.'

* Mason, 'Karens,' in 'Journ. As. Soc. Bengal,' 1865, part ii. p. 200; Bastian, 'Oestl. Asien,' vol. i. p. 146.

north-east corner of India, among the Bodo and Dhimal, the professional exorcist has to find out what deity has entered into a patient's body to punish him for some impiety by an attack of illness ; this he discovers by setting thirteen leaves round him on the ground to represent the gods, and then holding a pendulum attached to his thumb by a string, till the god in question is persuaded by invocation to declare himself, making the pendulum swing towards his representative leaf.¹ These mystic arts (not to go into the question how these tribes came to use them) are rude forms of the classical dactyliomancy, of which so curious an account is given in the trial of the conspirators Patricius and Hilarius, who worked it to find out who was to supplant the emperor Valens. A round table was marked at the edge with the letters of the alphabet, and with prayers and mystic ceremonies a ring was held suspended over it by a thread, and by swinging or stopping towards certain letters gave the responsive words of the oracle.² Dactyliomancy has dwindled in Europe to the art of finding out what o'clock it is by holding a ring hanging inside a tumbler by a thread, till, without conscious aid by the operator, it begins to swing and strikes the hour. Father Schott, in his '*Physica Curiosa*' (1662), refrains with commendable caution from ascribing this phenomenon universally to demoniac influence. It survives among ourselves in child's play, and though we are 'no conjurers,' we may learn something from the little instrument, which remarkably displays the effects of insensible movement. The operator really gives slight impulses till they accumulate to a considerable vibration, as in ringing a church-bell by very gentle pulls exactly timed. That he does, though unconsciously, cause and direct the swings, may be shown by an attempt to work the instrument with the operator's eyes shut, which will be found to fail, the directing power being lost. The action of the famous divining-rod with its curiously versatile sensibility to water, ore,

¹ Hodgson, '*Abor. of India*,' p. 170. See Macpherson, p. 106 (Khonds).

² Ammian. Marcellin. xxix. 1.

treasure, and thieves, seems to belong partly to trickery by professional Dousterswivels, and partly to more or less conscious direction by honest operators. It is still known in England, and in Germany they are apt to hide it in a baby's clothes, and so get it baptized for greater efficiency.¹ To conclude this group of divinatory instruments, chance or the operator's direction may determine the action of one of the most familiar of classic and mediæval ordeals, the so-called coscinomancy, or, as it is described in *Hudibras*, 'th' oracle of sieve and shears, that turns as certain as the spheres.' The sieve was held hanging by a thread, or by the points of a pair of shears stuck into its rim, and it would turn, or swing, or fall, at the mention of a thief's name, and give similar signs for other purposes. Of this ancient rite, the Christian ordeal of the Bible and key, still in frequent use, is a variation: the proper way to detect a thief by this is to read the 50th Psalm to the apparatus, and when it hears the verse, 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him,' it will turn to the culprit.²

Count de Maistre, with his usual faculty of taking an argument up at the wrong end, tells us that judicial astrology no doubt hangs to truths of the first order, which have been taken from us as useless or dangerous, or which we cannot recognize under their new forms.³ A sober examination of the subject may rather justify the contrary opinion, that it is on an error of the first order that astrology depends, the error of mistaking ideal analogy for real connexion. Astrology, in the immensity of its delusive influence on mankind, and by the comparatively modern period to which it remained an honoured branch of philo-

¹ Chevreur, 'De la Baguette Divinatoire, du Pendule dit Explorateur et des Tables Tournantes,' Paris, 1854; Brand, vol. iii. p. 332; Grimm 'D. M.' p. 926; H. B. Woodward, in 'Geological Mag.,' Nov. 1872; Wuttke p. 94.

² Cornelius Agrippa, 'De Speciebus Magiæ,' xxi.; Brand, vol. iii. p. 351; Grimm, 'D. M.' p. 1062.

³ De Maistre, 'Soirées de St. Petersburg,' vol. ii. p. 212.

sophy, may claim the highest rank among the occult sciences. It scarcely belongs to very low levels of civilization, although one of its fundamental conceptions, namely, that of the souls or animating intelligences of the celestial bodies, is rooted in the depths of savage life. Yet the following Maori specimen of astrological reasoning is as real an argument as could be found in Paracelsus or Agrippa, nor is there reason to doubt its being home-made. When the siege of a New Zealand 'pa' is going on, if Venus is near the moon, the natives naturally imagine the two as enemy and fortress; if the planet is above, the foe will have the upper hand; but if below, then the men of the soil will be able to defend themselves.¹ Though the early history of astrology is obscure, its great development and elaborate systematization were undoubtedly the work of civilized nations of the ancient and mediæval world. As might be well supposed, a great part of its precepts have lost their intelligible sense, or never had any, but the origin of many others is still evident. To a considerable extent they rest on direct symbolism. Such are the rules which connect the sun with gold, with the heliotrope and pæony, with the cock which heralds day, with magnanimous animals, such as the lion and bull; and the moon with silver, and the changing chamæleon, and the palm-tree, which was considered to send out a monthly shoot. Direct symbolism is plain in that main principle of the calculation of nativities, the notion of the 'ascendant' in the horoscope, which reckons the part of the heavens rising in the east at the moment of a child's birth as being connected with the child itself, and prophetic of its future life.² It is an old story, that when two brothers were once taken ill together, Hippokrates the physician concluded from the coincidence that they were twins, but Poseidonios the astrologer considered rather that they were born under the same constellation: we may add,

¹ Shortland, 'Trads., &c. of New Zealand,' p. 138.

² See Cicero, 'De Div.' i.; Lucian. 'De Astrolog.'; Cornelius Agrippa, 'De Occulta Philosophia'; Sibly, 'Occult Sciences'; Brand, vol. iii.

that either argument would be thought reasonable by a savage. One of the most instructive astrological doctrines which has kept its place in modern popular philosophy, is that of the sympathy of growing and declining nature with the waxing and waning moon. Among classical precepts are these: to set eggs under the hen at new moon, but to root up trees when the moon is on the wane, and after midday. The Lithuanian precept to wean boys on a waxing, but girls on a waning moon, no doubt to make the boys sturdy and the girls slim and delicate, is a fair match for the Orkney islanders' objection to marrying except with a growing moon, while some even wish for a flowing tide. The following lines, from Tusser's 'Five Hundred Points of Husbandry,' show neatly in a single case the two contrary lunar influences:—

'Sowe peason and beans in the wane of the moone
Who soweth them sooner, he soweth too soone:
That they, with the planet, may rest and rise,
And flourish with bearing, most plentiful wise.'¹

The notion that the weather changes with the moon's quarterings is still held with great vigour in England. Yet the meteorologists, with all their eagerness to catch at any rule which at all answers to facts, quite repudiate this one, which indeed appears to be simply a maxim belonging to popular astrology. Just as the growth and dwindling of plants became associated with the moon's wax and wane, so changes of weather became associated with changes of the moon, while, by astrologer's logic, it did not matter whether the moon's change were real, at new and full, or imaginary, at the intermediate quarters. That educated people to whom exact weather records are accessible should still find satisfaction in the fanciful lunar rule, is an interesting case of intellectual survival.

In such cases as these, the astrologer has at any rate a real analogy, deceptive though it be, to base his rule upon.

¹ Plin. xvi. 75; xviii. 75; Grimm, 'D. M.' p. 676; Brand. vol. ii. p. 169; vol. iii. p. 144. Digitized by Microsoft®

But most of his pseudo-science seems to rest on even weaker and more arbitrary analogies, not of things, but of names. Names of stars and constellations, of signs denoting regions of the sky and periods of days and years, no matter how arbitrarily given, are materials which the astrologer can work upon, and bring into ideal connexion with mundane events. That astronomers should have divided the sun's course into imaginary signs of the zodiac, was enough to originate astrological rules that these celestial signs have an actual effect on real earthly rams, bulls, crabs, lions, virgins. A child born under the sign of the Lion will be courageous ; but one born under the Crab will not go forward well in life ; one born under the Waterman is likely to be drowned, and so forth. Towards 1524, Europe was awaiting in an agony of prayerful terror a second deluge, prophesied for February in that year. As the fatal month drew nigh, dwellers by the waterside moved in crowds to the hills, some provided boats to save them, and the President Auriol, at Toulouse, built himself a Noah's Ark. It was the great astrologer Stoeffler (the originator, it is said, of the weather-prophecies in our almanacks) who foretold this cataclysm, and his argument has the advantage of being still perfectly intelligible—at the date in question, three planets would be together in the aqueous sign of Pisces. Again, simply because astronomers chose to distribute among the planets the names of certain deities, the planets thereby acquired the characters of their divine namesakes. Thus it was that the planet Mercury became connected with travel, trade, and theft, Venus with love and mirth, Mars with war, Jupiter with power and 'joviality.' Throughout the East, astrology even now remains a science in full esteem. The condition of mediæval Europe may still be perfectly realized by the traveller in Persia, where the Shah waits for days outside the walls of his capital till the constellations allow him to enter, and where on the days appointed by the stars for letting blood, it literally flows in streams from the

barbers' shops into the street. Professor Wuttke declares that there are many districts in Germany where the child's horoscope is still regularly kept with the baptismal certificate in the family chest. We scarcely reach this pitch of conservatism in England, but I happen to myself live within a mile of an astrologer, and I lately saw a grave paper on nativities, offered in all good faith to the British Association. The piles of 'Zadkiel's Almanack' in the bookseller's windows in country towns about Christmas are a symptom how much yet remains to be done in popular education. As a specimen at once of the survival and of the meaning of astrologic reasoning, I cannot do better than quote a passage from a book published in London in 1861, and entitled 'The Hand-Book of Astrology, by Zadkiel Tao-Sze.' At page 72 of his first volume, the astrologer relates as follows: 'The Map of the heavens given at page 45 was drawn on the occasion of a young lady having been arrested on a charge of the murder of her infant brother. Having read in a newspaper, at twenty-four minutes past noon on the 23rd July, 1860, that Miss C. K. had been arrested on a charge of the murder of her young brother, the author felt desirous to ascertain whether she were guilty or not, and drew the map accordingly. Finding the moon in the twelfth house, she clearly signifies the prisoner. The moon is in a moveable sign, and moves in the twenty-four hours, $14^{\circ} 17'$. She is, therefore, swift in motion. These things indicated that the prisoner would be very speedily released. Then we find a moveable sign in the cusp of the twelfth, and its ruler, φ , in a moveable sign, a further indication of speedy release. Hence it was judged and declared to many friends that the prisoner would be immediately released, which was the fact. We looked to see whether the prisoner were guilty of the deed or not, and finding the Moon in Libra, a humane sign, and having just past the $\times$ aspect of the Sun and γ , both being on the M. C. we felt assured that she was a humane, feeling, and honourable girl, and that it was quite im-

possible she could be guilty of any such atrocity. We declared her to be perfectly innocent, and as the Moon was so well aspected from the tenth house, we declared that her honour would be very soon perfectly established.' Had the astrologer waited a few months longer, to have read the confession of the miserable Constance Kent, he would perhaps have put a different sense on his moveable signs, just balances, and sunny and jovial aspects. Nor would this be a difficult task, for these fancies lend themselves to endless variety of new interpretation. And on such fancies and such interpretations, the great science of the stars has from first to last been based.

Looking at the details here selected as fair samples of symbolic magic, we may well ask the question, is there in the whole monstrous farrago no truth or value whatever? It appears that there is practically none, and that the world has been enthralled for ages by a blind belief in processes wholly irrelevant to their supposed results, and which might as well have been taken just the opposite way. Pliny justly saw in magic a study worthy of his especial attention, 'for the very reason that, being the most fraudulent of arts, it had prevailed throughout the world and through so many ages' (*eo ipso quod fraudulentissima artium plurimum in toto terrarum orbe plurimisque seculis valuit*). If it be asked how such a system could have held its ground, not merely in independence but in defiance of its own facts, a fair answer does not seem hard to give. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that occult science has not existed entirely in its own strength. Futile as its arts may be, they are associated in practice with other proceedings by no means futile. What are passed off as sacred omens, are often really the cunning man's shrewd guesses at the past and future. Divination serves to the sorcerer as a mask for real inquest, as when the ordeal gives him invaluable opportunity of examining the guilty, whose trembling hands and equivocating speech betray at once their secret and their utter belief in his power of

discerning it. Prophecy tends to fulfil itself, as where the magician, by putting into a victim's mind the belief that fatal arts have been practised against him, can slay him with this idea as with a material weapon. Often priest as well as magician, he has the whole power of religion at his back; often a man in power, always an unscrupulous intriguer, he can work witchcraft and statecraft together, and make his left hand help his right. Often a doctor, he can aid his omens of life or death with remedy or poison, while what we still call 'conjurers' tricks' of sleight of hand have done much to keep up his supernatural prestige. From the earliest known stages of civilization, professional magicians have existed, who live by their craft, and keep it alive. It has been said, that if somebody had endowed lecturers to teach that two sides of a triangle are together equal to the third, the doctrine would have a respectable following among ourselves. At any rate, magic, with an influential profession interested in keeping it in credit and power, did not depend for its existence on mere evidence.

And in the second place, as to this evidence. Magic has not its origin in fraud, and seems seldom practised as an utter imposture. The sorcerer generally learns his time-honoured profession in good faith, and retains his belief in it more or less from first to last; at once dupe and cheat, he combines the energy of a believer with the cunning of a hypocrite. Had occult science been simply framed for purposes of deception, mere nonsense would have answered the purpose, whereas, what we find is an elaborate and systematic pseudo-science. It is, in fact, a sincere but fallacious system of philosophy, evolved by the human intellect by processes still in great measure intelligible to our own minds, and it had thus an original standing-ground in the world. And though the evidence of fact was dead against it, it was but lately and gradually that this evidence was brought fatally to bear. A general survey of the practical working of the system may be made somewhat thus. A large proportion of successful cases belong to

natural means disguised as magic. Also, a certain proportion of cases must succeed by mere chance. By far the larger proportion, however, are what we should call failures; but it is a part of the magician's profession to keep these from counting, and this he does with extraordinary resource of rhetorical shift and brazen impudence. He deals in ambiguous phrases, which give him three or four chances for one. He knows perfectly how to impose difficult conditions, and to lay the blame of failure on their neglect. If you wish to make gold, the alchemist in Central Asia has a recipe at your service, only, to use it, you must abstain three days from thinking of apes; just as our English folk-lore says, that if one of your eyelashes comes out, and you put it on your thumb, you will get anything you wish for, if you can only avoid thinking of foxes' tails at the fatal moment. Again, if the wrong thing happens, the wizard has at least a reason why. Has a daughter been born when he promised a son, then it is some hostile practitioner who has turned the boy into a girl; does a tempest come just when he is making fine weather, then he calmly demands a larger fee for stronger ceremonies, assuring his clients that they may thank him as it is, for how much worse it would have been had he not done what he did. And even setting aside all this accessory trickery, if we look at honest but unscientific people practising occult science in good faith, and face to face with facts, we shall see that the failures which condemn it in our eyes carry comparatively little weight in theirs. Part escape under the elastic pretext of a 'little more or less,' as the loser in the lottery consoles himself that his lucky number came within two of a prize, or the moon-observer points out triumphantly that a change of weather has come within two or three days before or after a quarter, so that his convenient definition of near a moon's quarter applies to four or six days out of every seven. Part escape through incapacity to appreciate negative evidence, which allows one success to outweigh half-a-dozen failures. How few

there are even among the educated classes now, who have taken in the drift of that memorable passage in the beginning of the 'Novum Organum:'—'The human understanding, when any proposition has been once laid down (either from general admission and belief, or from the pleasure it affords), forces everything else to add fresh support and confirmation; and although most cogent and abundant instances may exist to the contrary, yet either does not observe or despises them, or gets rid of and rejects them by some distinction, with violent and injurious prejudice, rather than sacrifice the authority of its first conclusions. It was well answered by him who was shown in a temple the votive tablets suspended by such as had escaped the peril of shipwreck, and was pressed as to whether he would then recognize the power of the gods, by an inquiry, "But where are the portraits of those who have perished in spite of their vows?"'¹

On the whole, the survival of symbolic magic through the middle ages and into our own times is an unsatisfactory, but not a mysterious fact. A once-established opinion, however delusive, can hold its own from age to age, for belief can propagate itself without reference to its reasonable origin, as plants are propagated from slips without fresh raising from the seed.

The history of survival in cases like those of the folk-lore and occult arts which we have been considering, has for the most part been a history of dwindling and decay. As men's minds change in progressing culture, old customs and opinions fade gradually in a new and uncongenial atmosphere, or pass into states more congruous with the new life around them. But this is so far from being a law without exception, that a narrow view of history may often make it seem to be no law at all. For the stream of civilization winds and turns upon itself, and what seems the bright onward current of one age may in the next spin round in a whirling

¹ Bacon, 'Novum Organum.' The original story is that of Diagoras; see Cicero, 'De Natura Deorum,' iii. 37; Diog. Laërt. lib. vi., Diogenes, 6.

eddy, or spread into a dull and pestilential swamp. Studying with a wide view the course of human opinion, we may now and then trace on from the very turning-point the change from passive survival into active revival. Some well-known belief or custom has for centuries shown symptoms of decay, when we begin to see that the state of society, instead of stunting it, is favouring its new growth, and it bursts forth again with a vigour often as marvellous as it is unhealthy. And though the revival be not destined to hold on indefinitely, and though when opinion turns again its ruin may be more merciless than before, yet it may last for ages, make its way into the inmost constitution of society, and even become a very mark and characteristic of its time.

Writers who desire to show that, with all our faults, we are wiser and better than our ancestors, dwell willingly on the history of witchcraft between the middle and modern ages. They can quote Martin Luther, apropos of the witches who spoil the farmers' butter and eggs, 'I would have no pity on these witches; I would burn them all.' They can show the good Sir Matthew Hale hanging witches in Suffolk, on the authority of scripture and the consenting wisdom of all nations; and King James presiding at the torture of Dr. Fian for bringing a storm against the king's ship on its course from Denmark, by the aid of a fleet of witches in sieves, who carried out a christened cat to sea. In those dreadful days, to be a blear-eyed wizened cripple was to be worth twenty shillings to a witch-finder; for a woman to have what this witch-finder was pleased to call the devil's mark on her body was presumption for judicial sentence of death; and not to bleed or shed tears or sink in a pond was torture first and then the stake. Reform of religion was no cure for the disease of men's minds, for in such things the Puritan was no worse than the Inquisitor, and no better. Papist and Protestant fought with one another, but both turned against that enemy of the human race, the hag who had sold herself to Satan to ride upon a broomstick, and to