

IV

WITCHCRAFT

[1909]

IN the first half of the fifteenth century, when the Church considered its victory over heresy complete, the doctrine of witchcraft was perfected. Complaint was made in 1340 that Thomas Aquinas had not stated when witchcraft was heresy. The Inquisition undertook the solution of this question, using the results of the scholastics to sustain the different notions and ward off the objections of common sense until the juristic notion of the witch was developed, which led directly to epidemic persecution.¹ Mediæval philosophy never felt the necessity of modifying a position on account of a concession which it had been obliged to make. It left the inconsistent statements side by side until they became familiar and current together. About 1430, from the confessions of witches, a comprehensive statement was made up of the tenets of the "new sect," as witches were called: the sabbath, the flight on a broomstick, the renunciation of God, the scorn of the eucharist and the cross, the worship of the devil, and the sex-crime with him, the homage to him, the murder and eating of infants, the various kinds of witchcraft; in short, the entire inventory of witch-traits, which remained the standards of witch-persecutions for three hundred years.²

The old tradition was that witchcraft was especially

¹ Hansen, J.: *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozesse*, etc., 211.

² *Ibid.*, 416.

an art of women. When the notion of sex-commerce between demons and women was invented and made commonplace, the whole tradition was directed against women as basely seductive, passionate, and licentious by nature. Then the Inquisition made processes of detection and trial by torture, and these were applied against witches. The cruelest punishment known, burning alive, was applied to them. The inquisitors Institoris and Sprenger prepared a book, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches). A Roman Catholic historian maintains that their purpose was to silence the priests who denied that there were any witches.¹ The two inquisitors mentioned had already been at work for five years in Constance, and had caused forty-eight confessed witches to be executed by the civil authority.² The *Malleus* "is to be reckoned amongst the most mischievous productions in all the literature of the world"³; "it was the most portentous monument of superstition which the world has produced."⁴ Between 1487 (the date of first publication) and 1669 twenty-five editions of it were published: sixteen in Germany, seven in France, and two in Italy; none elsewhere. A forged approval by the theological faculty of Cologne was published with it. This won its way for it everywhere.⁵ The writers profess a venomous and malignant hostility to women; they present women as extravagantly sensual and libidinous, and so as dangerous to men, and subject to seduction by demons.⁶ This is their major premise, which they perhaps exaggerated on account of the deductions to be built on it. It is now not believed that women are more

¹ Janssen, J.: *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, etc., VIII, 510, 511, n. 2.

² *Ibid.*, 517.

³ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 473.

⁴ Lea, H. C.: *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, III, 543.

⁵ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 475.

⁶ *Malleus*, 76 (ed. 1576; Venice); Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 482-485.

sensual than men, but decidedly the contrary. Chrysostom on Matt. 19 is quoted in the *Malleus* as if it was he who said: "It is not expedient to marry," and then a diatribe against women is added, which seems, partly on account of the typographical arrangement, to be also quoted from Chrysostom, although it cannot be found in his works. It is added that a woman is superstitious and credulous, and that she has a *lubricam linguam*, so that she must tell everything to another woman. That women are deceitful is proved by Delilah. This view of women had been growing for centuries, especially while asceticism was in fashion. The *Malleus* was intended to be a text-book for judges of secular courts, who were charged to conduct witch-trials.¹ In Germany it met with opposition, and the witch-persecutors were forced to go back to Rome for a ratification of their authority. This led to the publication of a bull by the Pope, Innocent VIII, in 1484,² in which he referred to the great amount of sorcery reported from Germany — which may show that persecution was going on there at that time.³ This bull, with the *Malleus*, formed a new point of departure in the witch-delusion in 1485, for in the bull Innocent gave the witch-prosecutors full authority in the premises and ordered the Bishop of Strassburg to support and help them, and to call in the secular arm, if necessary. After that, to question the reality of witchcraft was to question the utterance of the Vicar of Christ, and to aid anyone accused was to impede the Inquisition.⁴

For three hundred years, in all countries of Christendom, the *Malleus* was the codex used by jurists and ecclesiastics, Protestants and Catholics. It was a codification

¹ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 495.

² Text in Hoensbroech, Graf von: *Das Papstthum in seiner sozial-kulturellen Wirksamkeit, etc.*, I, 384.

³ Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 508, n.

⁴ Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, III, 540.

of the whole mass of fables and myths, with ridiculous and obscene attachments, which had come down through the whole course of history. It is amazing that the male half of the human race should have thus calumniated the female half of it. There may have been some reaction against the equally senseless adoration of women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but the *Malleus* supported its denunciation of women by scholastic methods and theological arguments. "It caused on this domain an immeasurable harm to the human race."¹ All the material in the *Malleus* is heaped together without criticism. From the second half of the thirteenth century popular tales and superstitions had been taken up by the Church and incorporated in Christian theology, and as a consequence sex-commerce between demons and women had been made a crime. Jurists were now charged to detect and punish it.² Innocent VIII, in his bull of 1484, asserts the reality of such commerce in the most positive manner. "The only result of the school theology of the Middle Ages had been to give to the popular delusions a learned drapery and to incorporate them in the Christian world-philosophy. This made them capable of dangerous application in the administration of justice. The notion of sex-commerce between demons and women had ceased to be a popular delusion. It was a part of learned theology."³ "The reaction on each other of theological thinking and of omnipotence, without any appeal, in the administration of justice led to the combination of Church faith and popular delusion and produced the witch-mania. Under the cloak of religion and in the name of justice, that mania became a senseless rage against supposed witch-persons."⁴

¹ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 490.² *Ibid.*, 187.³ *Ibid.*, 187.⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

“There is nothing fouler in all literature than the stories and illustrative examples by which these theories were supported.”¹ Many persons accused of witchcraft were vicious, immoral, criminals, or justly unpopular; but inasmuch as there is no such thing as a witch, or witchcraft, they suffered, although innocent of the charge. The total suffering endured under this charge it is impossible to conceive.

The jurists accepted the charge to detect and exterminate witches, and fulfilled it, as it appears, heartily. The witch-trials were worse than the heresy trials by the Inquisition; there was less chance for the accused.² The system of trial, preceded by imprisonment and petty torture of mind, which wore out the courage and nerve-resistance of the accused, consisted in torture which led the victim to assent to anything in order to get a speedy death. Mediæval dungeons are now shown to tourists, who can judge how long an old woman could bear imprisonment there in cold, darkness, and dampness, in contact with rats and vermin. They “confessed” anything. They often said that the devil first appeared to them as a handsome young cavalier, with a poetical name, who seduced them. Scherr interprets these instances as cases in which shameless mothers sold their daughters to men for pleasure.³ “He who studies the witch-trials believes himself transferred into the midst of a race which has smothered all its own nobler human instincts — reason, justice, shame, benevolence, and sympathy — in order to cultivate devilish instincts. Out of that domain which seems to men the most precious and most elevated in life, that of religion, a Medusa-head grins at the spectator and arrests his blood in his veins. Amongst

¹ Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, III, 385.

² *Ibid.*, 515.

³ Scherr, J.: *Deutsche Kultur- und Sittengeschichte*, 372.

Christian people, in the bosom of a culture one thousand years old, judicial murder is made a permanent institution, hundreds of thousands of innocent persons, after refined torture of the body and nameless mental sufferings, are executed in the most cruel manner. These facts are so monstrous that all other aberrations of the human race are small in comparison."¹

It is a pleasant task to gather such cases as can be found of resistance by ecclesiastics to the prevalent mania. In 1279, at Ruffach, in Alsatia, a Dominican nun was accused of baptizing a wax image, either to destroy an enemy or to win a lover. The peasants carried her to a field and would have burned her, but she was rescued by the friars.² The Bishop of Brixen, in the Tyrol, in 1485, met the inquisitor Institoris, when he came to begin the persecution, and forced him to leave the country.³ At Arras and Amiens, in 1460, the ecclesiastics suppressed a witch-persecution at its beginning.⁴ At Innsbrück the bishop's representative arrested the work of Institoris as not conformable to the rules of legal practice; the questions about sex-practice were suppressed as irrelevant, and a protest was made against the superficial proceedings of the inquisitor.⁵ The state of Venice resisted witch-persecutions more successfully than it resisted heresy, although it never satisfied the Church authorities; the self-centered and suspicious republic had mores of its own which withstood outside interference. In 1518 the Senate was officially informed that the inquisitor had burned seventy witches in Valcamonica; that he had as many more in prison, and that those suspected or accused numbered five thousand, or one-fourth of the population

¹ Hoensbroech, *l.c.*, I, 382, citing from Riezler, *Hexenproz.* in Baiern, I.

² Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, III, 484.

³ Hoensbroech: *l.c.*, I, 516.

⁴ Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, III, 533.

⁵ Flade, P.: *Das römische Inquisitionsverfahren in Deutschland*, etc., 102.

of the valleys. The Signoria stopped all proceedings, but Leo X ordered the inquisitor to use excommunication and interdict if he was interfered with.¹

If it be asked what can explain the phenomena of aberration both of thought and feeling which underlay the witch-mania, perhaps the suggestion of Scherr² is the best explanation. The German ecclesiastics were won by the increase of power which the delusion offered to the hierarchy. The civil authorities were won by the chance of pecuniary gain, for the fortunes of witches were confiscated. Two-thirds were given to the territorial sovereign, while the other third was divided between judges, magistrates, minor ecclesiastics, spies, delators, and executioners, by a ratio adjusted to their rank. During the Thirty Years' War, when everybody else in Germany underwent impoverishment, witch-judges grew rich. Therefore half the witch-murders may well be accredited to greed for money, while the other half must be charged to fanaticism and credulous simplicity.³

"Epidemic witch-persecution never appeared except in the dominions of the Church of Rome. It never broke out in the lands of the Greek Church, although in them also the ancient notions about magic were widely held, and the environment contained the same circumstances and forces." "In Servia and Bulgaria there is not even any legend of witch-burning, which is a proof that the Turks did not allow any such usage to come into existence."⁴ Nevertheless, the Balkan peoples had inherited the whole tradition of antiquity and barbarism quite as directly as the peoples of the Romish Church.

The Protestant reformers broke with the Church on

¹ Lea, H. C.: *L.c.*, III, 546.

² *L.c.*, 374.

³ Janssen, J.: *L.c.*, VIII, 539, 633.

⁴ Krauss, F. S.: *Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Südslaven*, 123.

one or another point of dogma and morals, but they accepted all the traditions which did not involve the dogmas which seemed to them false. They laid great stress on the authority of Scripture, and therefore thought the existence of demons and witches quite beyond question. They accepted and used the *Malleus* as the codex of witchcraft, and they outstripped the Inquisition in cruelty and wrong-headedness. The witchcraft notion had now been formulated and given back to the popular classes with ecclesiastical sanction, and for two centuries it was a part of the mores of Christendom in which all churches and sects agreed. In fact it was after the reformation-schism took place that witch-persecutions became a great mania throughout Christendom, and especially in Germany.¹ Under Calvin, at Geneva, in 1542, many witches were executed.² In Italy witchcraft was confined, for the most part, to mountain regions. In other provinces it was confounded with crimes of poisoning, abortion, or the fomentation of conspiracies in private families.³ Luther was distinguished for his faith in the devil; Satan was to him quite as real as God, and far more familiar; he saw satanic agency in whatever annoyed him.⁴ Sin and Satan were conjoined; the one presupposed the other. Luther explained a cretin as the offspring of a demon and a woman, and on his own responsibility⁵ ordered that it be drowned.

Early in the sixteenth century the secular authorities of Protestant and Catholic countries employed the utmost severity in the extirpation of witches, of whose existence and horrible activity everybody was convinced. The cumulative notion of witches was no longer a spe-

¹ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 369, 372.

² Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 546.

³ Symonds, J. A.: *The Catholic Reaction*, I, 435.

⁴ Lecky, W. E. H.: *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, I, 82.

⁵ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 375.

cial possession of inquisitors, but it had penetrated all cultivated and uncultivated classes, and was embodied in a great literature. The fine arts, in their most popular forms, combined with printing, seized on the fantastic notions of witchcraft which the witches' flight and witches' sabbath offered. These were represented in copper and wood engravings.¹ About 1490 or 1500 Molitoris published a *Dialogus de pythonicis mulieribus*, the conclusions of which are thus summed up: (1) Satan cannot of his own power do evil deeds, but God sometimes lets him do them, to a limited extent; (2) he cannot exceed the limit; (3) by permission of God he presents illusions of men transformed into beasts; (4) witch-flights and sabbath are illusions; (5) incubes and succubes cannot procreate; (6) the devil can only conjecture and use his knowledge of stars; (7) nevertheless, witches by worshipping Satan are real heretics and apostates; (8) therefore they ought to be burned.

One of the earliest literary expressions of opposition to the witch-doctrine was by Jehan de Meung in the *Romaunt de la Rose*.² De Meung has been called the Rabelais and the Voltaire of the thirteenth century. He was a critic and skeptic and ridiculed the notions in the current demonism, the witch-flights and "straying with Dame Habundia,"³ as well as the devils with claws and tails. He says that some attribute nature's war, storms, etc., to demons, but "such tales are not worth two sticks, being but vain imagining." He refers the notions of the devil's action on men to sleep-walking and dreams. He believed in astrology and hallucinations, which he thought explained the alleged witch-phenomena. But he distrusted and hated women as much as Institoris

¹ Hansen, J.: *L.c.*, 520.

² Pt. II.

³ Verses, 18, 565; 19, 110; 19, 302.

or Sprenger. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries some theologians expressed doubt about witches and witchcraft ¹: in 1505 Samuel de Cassinis, a Minorite, published a tract against witch-flights as untrue, although he said that evil by sorcery and witch-adulteries with demons were true; this is said to have been the first systematic attempt to oppose the witch-mania.² Janssen is able to affirm that the writers for and against witchcraft and witches are equal in all sects and professions.³ Bodin, one of the leaders of the sixteenth century, especially in political philosophy, political economy, and the doctrine of money,⁴ wrote a book ⁵ in which he described witch-doings as if upon his own knowledge of facts, when he was, like the popes, only rehearsing the popular stories. He believed that the early death of Charles IX was due to the fact that he spared the life of a sorcerer on condition that he would inform on his colleagues. Kepler, the astronomer, believed in witches and had great difficulty in saving his mother, who was a shrew,⁶ from execution as one. Opposition to the mania was dangerous, for it was a proof that the objector was a sorcerer. At Treves, in 1592, several Jesuits, a Carthusian, a Carmelite, and some magistrates were accused; one magistrate, who had himself condemned many, was accused and executed, and another died under the seventh torture.⁷ Laymann, Tanner, and Von Spee are three Jesuits who, in the first part of the seventeenth century, resisted the delusion, although in vain.⁸ Von Spee wrote his *Cautio Criminalis*

¹ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 103.

² Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 510.

³ *l.c.*, VIII, 585. See a list of them, Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 105, and Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 551.

⁴ Baudrillart, H. : J. Bodin et son Temps, 167, 183, 494; Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 88, 107.

⁵ De Magorum Daimonomania.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 637-639.

⁶ Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 667.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 654.

because he was especially outraged by the fact that the judges dared not acquit and free anyone whom they had tortured, because to do so would publish the fact that they had acted hastily and erroneously. In spite of the frightful treatment to which they were subjected, some women held out through the torture and were entitled to acquittal; in the logic of the times this proved that the devil helped them.¹ Von Spee was born in 1591, wrote his book in 1627, when he was a professor at Würzburg, and published it anonymously. He had been confessor to condemned witches, and was led to remonstrate against the irrationality of the proceedings. "Treat the heads of the Church," said he, "treat the judges, or treat me, as you treat these unhappy persons — subject us to the same tortures, and you will find wizards in us all."² Montaigne had more success; in 1588 he led the reaction in France, treating the delusion with scorn. Hobbes, in England, followed him, but Sir Matthew Hale, a distinguished judge, and Sir Thomas Browne, a prominent physician, held the proofs of the reality of witchcraft to be indisputable.³ The former wrote a book to defend the doctrine of witches.⁴ The whole Puritan party was carried into great excess in this matter, apparently by their fanatical doctrine of the Scriptures. Witch persecution reached the highest point of cruelty and inhumanity in Scotland, as it seems, and the invention of instruments of torture seems there to have reached its

¹ Hoensbroech: *l.c.*, I, 551.

² Ebner, T.: *Friedrich von Spee und die Hexenprozesse seiner Zeit*; Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 445.

³ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 128.

⁴ *Witchcraft. A Collection of Modern Relations of Matter of Fact Concerning Witches and Witchcraft Upon the Persons of People. To which is prefixed a Meditation Concerning the Mercy of God in Preserving Us from the Malice and Power of Evil Angels. Written in 1661. 12mo, pp. 64.* It is very rare and is insignificant.

highest point. An iron frame was locked on the head of a witch, upon which there were four large prongs, which were put in her mouth. The frame was fastened to the wall of the dungeon so that she could neither sit nor stand nor lie. A man on each side of her prevented her from sleeping for four or five nights in succession. In 1596 Alison Balfour withdrew a confession which she had made, explaining it by saying that when she made it she had been tortured several times in the caspieclaws (iron frame for the legs heated from time to time over a brazier), from which she had been taken several times dead and "without remembrance of good or evil." Her husband had been in the stocks and her son tortured in the boots, and her daughter in the thumb-screws, so that they had all been so tormented that, partly to escape greater torture, and upon promise of her life, she had made confession "falsely against her soul and conscience, and not otherwise."¹ Stoll² quotes part of a poem by Nicolas Remy, a witch-judge, in which he described a woman under trial who saw devils in the room. The last execution for witchcraft in Scotland occurred in 1722, at Dornoch; this witch had ridden on her own daughter, transformed into a pony and shod by the devil, which made the girl lame in hands and feet.³

The witch-persecutions were at their height in Germany about 1600. They were popular; the crowd enjoyed the executions, and they clung to the notion of witchcraft to account especially for calamities which affected only a few. Hailstorms and whirlwinds, which are of great evil effect on a narrow area, were attributed to witches. Barrenness of beasts and women was attributed to witches.

¹ Sharpe, C. K.: *A Historical Account of the Belief in Witchcraft in Scotland*, 86.

² *Suggestion und Hypnotismus in der Völkerpsychologie*, 429.

³ Sharpe, C. K.: *Id.*, 199.

If a man got a good crop by careful farming, he was accused of transferring his neighbor's crops to his own ground. Passionate love and hate were thought to be due to witchcraft,—in fact, the whole life-philosophy as to the aleatory element was built upon this belief. The crowd treated the executions as a spectacle and hooted at the victims.¹ Old women, witches, accused young women whom they named of bearing infants from their necks of the size of a finger.² In 1816 witches confessed, under torture, that they had, by witchcraft, introduced fifty-seven bushels of fleas into Vienna.³ That such assertions obtained a hearing and belief shows that "the minds of men were imbued with an order of ideas which had no connection with experience."⁴ It also shows that pure skepticism, instead of being wrong, is a necessary protection against folly. Sidonie von Bork was a beautiful girl whom the Duke of Stettin wanted to marry, though she was of lower rank than he. His family objected to the match and she was put in a convent. In 1618, at the age of eighty, she was burned as a witch, women having named her, under torture, as one of their companions at a witches' sabbath. At Wolfenbüttel, in 1591, a woman one hundred and six years old was burned after being dragged over the ground for a time.⁵ The trials and torture were attended by degrading and insulting treatment of the accused.⁶ The devil was supposed to help his own; therefore, if an accused woman endured the torture, it was not inferred that she was innocent, but that the devil was helping her, and new and more hideous torture was necessary to solve the doubt. Shearing was introduced by the inquisitors, about 1460, in France

¹ Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 532.

² *Ibid.*, 620.

³ *Ibid.*, 687.

⁴ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 102.

⁵ Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 677.

⁶ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 469; Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 517.

and Italy.¹ The German writers say that it was too hostile to German mores to be allowed in Germany. In 1679, in the Tyrol, a woman was tortured until she accused her own children of witchcraft. After her execution her son, fourteen years old, and her daughter, twelve years old, were beheaded and their bodies were burned, while another son, nine years old, and a daughter, six years old, were flogged and forced to witness the execution of their older brother and sister.²

Scherr³ says that it is not an exaggerated estimate, but a very moderate one, that the witch-persecutions cost one hundred thousand lives in Germany. Remigius, a witch-judge, boasted that, between 1580 and 1595, in Lothringia, he had executed eight hundred witches.⁴ "Paramo boasts that, in a century and a half from the commencement of the sect in 1404, the Holy Office had burned at least thirty thousand witches who, if they had been left unpunished, would easily have brought the whole world to destruction"; Lea inquires, most reasonably, "Could any Manichean offer more practical evidence that Satan was lord of the visible universe?"⁵ This figure is far more trustworthy than those which are in the books about the number of persons executed for heresy.⁶ The witch-persecutions covered two centuries, from 1450 to 1650, so the above estimate would mean that, on an average, five hundred were executed in a year. The executions often included a great number at once — such was especially the case during the century of greatest activity, from 1580 on.⁷ The last mass burning in Germany was in 1678, when ninety-seven persons

¹ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 463.

² Hoensbroech: *l.c.*, I, 515.

³ Geschichte der deutschen Frauenwelt, II, 187.

⁴ Scherr, J.: Deutsche Kultur- und Sittengeschichte, 379.

⁵ Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, III, 549.

⁶ Flade, P.: *l.c.* 90

⁷ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 381.

were burned together.¹ There were notorious cases in which witches under torture had confessed things which the whole neighborhood knew to be false. For instance, a woman confessed that she had put her husband to death by witchcraft, when it was a matter of public notoriety that he was run over by a heavily laden wagon.² It must be supposed that such cases gradually affected popular faith about witch-doctrines, although that faith was never directly affected by anything. The belief in witches was due to hysteria and suggestion. The books, dramas and preaching of the later Middle Ages and the sixteenth century were full of it, and they fed the daimonistic notions which are at the basis of all popular religion.³ Witchcraft became the popular philosophy for the whole aleatory element in life. This put it into the heads of a class of people to be witches if they could; hysterical women, for instance, courted the notoriety and power and loved the consciousness of causing fear, in spite of the risk. Many perfectly sound-minded and innocent women could not be sure that they were not witches. They had had dreams suggested by the popular notions, or had suffered from nervous affections which fell in with the popular superstitions. The whole subject and the mode of treatment of witchcraft is thoroughly popular, and the suggestion in it is clear. Western Europe was overrun by persons who offered cures for all the ills of life, and the cures were always magical or partly magical. No one would have believed in any other. People of both sexes of the criminal, vicious, and vagabond classes enacted, sometimes in costume, what they had heard about witch-orgies.⁵ Many herbs were in com-

¹ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 382.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 529.

² Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 633.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 533.

³ *Ibid.*, 531.

mon use to produce sleep, or visions, or nerve excitement, or abortion, or to cure sterility and impotence. The notion that any desired result could be reached by swallowing something, especially if it was nasty, had scarcely any limits. Somnambulists were often supposed to be caught on their way to the witches' sabbath. Friedmann testifies, from his own experience as a physician, that hallucinations by night, but waking, occur in the case of elderly persons, especially females; they are nervous excitements due to slight decrease of mental power, such as a layman would hardly notice, and grotesque figures or black men are the most common forms of these frightful illusions.¹ "Witchcraft depended on general causes and represented the prevailing modes of religious thought."² "Witch-persecution is a problem in the history of civilization which, although it may now be regarded as settled, yet has closer connection with our time than one might think upon only superficial consideration. The elementary notions on which the delusion was based are even yet continued in the doctrines of almost all the accepted religious systems."³ Witchcraft issued out of the most ancient and fundamental popular faiths, and it seized on all which the religion offered and appropriated it. Then it produced such imitations as the perverted mass idea, and the notion that Satan begot Merlin, the magician in the Arthur legend, with a virgin woman.⁴ The interlacing of witchcraft with popular world-philosophy and life-policy is evident at every step, and the contributions of suggestion are easily seen. Its combination with criminal purposes and acts must never be overlooked, for private malice and enmity, the desire to extort money, and various political and personal

¹ Ueber Wahnideen im Völkerleben, 249.

² Lecky, W. E. H.: Rationalism, I, 123.

³ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, vii.

⁴ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 359.

projects made use of the witch-delusion. One of the most striking cases is that of Erich II of Braunschweig-Kalenberg, who, being heavily indebted, turned Catholic, in 1572, in order to enter the Spanish service. He accused his wife and four of her ladies of bewitching him to punish him for his apostasy; his wife ran away to her family home, but the ladies were repeatedly tortured to the extremest limit. As they knew nothing and could say nothing, they were held to have proved their innocence.¹

No argument ever made any way against this delusion. Lecky² thinks that "its decline presented a spectacle, not of argument or conflict, but of silent evanescence and decay." The credit of putting an end to it belonged to a series of great skeptics and free thinkers from Montaigne to Voltaire, who killed it with scorn and contempt. In England this view of it got strong help from the skeptical reaction against Puritanism, after the restoration of the Stuarts. The great men led the intelligent classes to this view, and they led the masses to understand that that was the proper view, just as now all intelligent people treat spiritualism. The Evangelical and Puritan parties kept up the faith in witchcraft: Richard Baxter wrote against witchcraft, but John Wesley reaffirmed the faith in it³; King James I presided at the torture of Doctor Fian (John Cunningham) for causing a storm which hindered the king from returning from Denmark. The victim never confessed, but was burned. Agnes Sampson is otherwise said to have done the harm; she, it appears, went to sea in a sieve.⁴ In 1720 F. Hutchinson's *Witchcraft* was published, in which the author tries to explain the texts of the Bible about witches, and interprets the witches as impostors; he tells a story of an Anglican

¹ Janssen, J.: *l.c.*, VIII, 646.

² *Ibid.*, 140.

³ Rationalism, I, 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 123; Sharpe, C. K.: *l.c.*, 64.

clergyman, eighty years old, who was executed for witchcraft.

In the reign of Queen Anne the rural population still believed in witchcraft. Addison tells how he and Sir Roger de Coverley visited Moll White and found a broomstick and a cat. Sir Roger said that Moll had often been brought before him for making children spit pins and giving maids the nightmare, and "that the country people would be tossing her into a pond and trying experiments with her every day if it was not for him and his chaplain." Several witches were executed during the reign of Anne, but capital punishment for witchcraft was abolished in 1736.¹ Gibbon says that "the French and English lawyers of the present age allow the theory and deny the practice of witchcraft."²

Witchcraft was a recognized crime in the laws of the New England colonies. There were several isolated cases in Massachusetts before the Salem outbreak, some of them very sad and outrageous.³ The persecutions all had a popular character and all showed the passion and cruelty of which a village democracy is capable against an unpopular person. Cotton Mather stands personally responsible for using his great personal influence, in connection with the Glover case (1688), to spread faith in witchcraft. Increase Mather published, in 1693, *An Account of the Tryals of the New England witches, with cases of conscience concerning witchcrafts and Evil Spirits personating Men*. A doctrine which he formulated and which destroyed some excellent people who were accused at Salem was that Satan could just as well appear in the person of a pious man or woman as in that of a wicked

¹ Ashton, J.: *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, 93.

² *Decline and Fall*, Chap. XXV, n. x.

³ Upham, C. W.: *Salem Witchcraft*, I.

one, to work his harm; therefore the character of the accused went for nothing. Cotton Mather was befooled by a clever girl, who played on his vanity. While the mania raged no one could oppose it, and those who tried to do so became victims of it. The notion of sex-intercourse between Satan and women came out again at Salem, and Glanvil and Sir Matthew Hale were treated as great authorities. The ministers were warned to be careful, but they could not deny the reality of witchcraft.¹ The New England case is especially important because it shows how limited in space and time an outburst of a popular mania may be.

The fundamental notion of this delusion is that men, with the help of demons whom they invoke for that purpose, can do harm, and that the attempts to invoke the demons are now actually made. This notion belongs to-day to the acknowledged doctrine of the Catholic Church, and has its place in all the authoritative Catholic books on ethics. Perhaps it has adherents amongst Protestants.² Leo XIII ordered every priest to read aloud a prayer on the steps of the altar after every mass in which occurs the petition: "Holy Archangel Michael, throw Satan and all other spirits of hell, who roam in the world to destroy men, back into hell."³

In 1749 Mia Renata, a nun seventy years old, who had entered the convent at the age of nineteen, was beheaded and her body was burned as a witch at Würzburg, under the authority of the prince-bishop of that place. She was accused of trying to seduce the nuns and bewitching them with gout and neuralgia,⁴ and all the old witch-

¹ Hutchinson, T.: *The Witchcraft Delusion of 1692*, I. in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, XXIV, 381.

² Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 6; on page 88 authorities are quoted from the Catholic writers on ethics.

³ Hoensbroech: *l.c.*, I, 358.

⁴ Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 384 and Appendix.

doctrines are in the twelve findings of the court. In 1756 a fourteen-year-old girl was beheaded as a witch at Lands-hut, in Bavaria, because she had made a wager with the devil. In 1782, at Glarus, in Switzerland, a maid-servant was executed for witchcraft; she had given pin-seed to a child, which germinated in its stomach so that it spat pins. The last witch execution in Germany was in 1775, a woman charged with carnal intercourse with Satan.¹ In Poland and Hungary witch-persecutions continued until the end of the eighteenth century.² In 1672 Colbert directed the judges in France to receive no accusation of sorcery against anyone,³ but in 1718 the Parliament of Rouen burned a man for that crime.⁴ In 1781 the Inquisition burned a witch at Seville for making a pact with Satan and practicing fornication with him.⁵ "Incredible to relate, on the 22d of April, 1751, a rabble of about five thousand persons beset the workhouse at Tring, in Hertfordshire, where, seizing Luke Osborne and his wife, two persons suspected of witchcraft, they ducked them in a pond till the old woman died; after which her corpse was put to bed to her husband by the mob, of whom only one person was hanged for this detestable outrage."⁶ The last law about witchcraft in the British Islands was an Irish statute, which was not repealed until 1821.⁷ In 1823 a court in the island of Martinique condemned a man to the galleys for life for "vehement suspicion" of sorcery.⁸ In 1863 an old man was put to death by a mob, as a wizard, at Essex, England.⁹ In 1873 a witch was burned in Spanish South America.¹⁰ In 1874, in Mexico, several persons were

¹ Hoensbroech: *l.c.*, I, 551.⁶ Sharpe, C. K.: *l.c.*, 176.² Scherr, J.: *l.c.*, 387.⁷ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 70.³ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 117.⁸ Lea, H. C.: *l.c.*, I, 561.⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.⁹ Lecky, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 139.⁵ Hansen, J.: *l.c.*, 532.¹⁰ Umschau, VII, 241.

publicly burned as sorcerers. In 1885 Christian negroes in Hayti practiced the old rites of sorcery, killing and eating children.¹ In the early history of Illinois some negroes were hanged at Cahokia for witchcraft.² In 1895 a woman was tortured to death, as a witch, by her relatives in Tipperary, Ireland.³ An Associated Press dispatch of July 11, 1897, described the act of two men, in Mexico, who dragged a woman eighty years old to death, tied to their horses by the feet, for bewitching the sister of one of them. In Lyme, Connecticut, in October, 1897, a band of religious fanatics attempted to drive the devil out of a rheumatic old woman by bruising and immersing her.⁴ In a cablegram in the *New York Times*, December 14, 1900, it was stated that an Italian in London burned a pin-studded wax image of President McKinley on the steps of the American Embassy. In 1903 a mountaineer in North Carolina, whose wife could not make the butter come, thought that a neighboring woman had bewitched the milk. He pinned up a portrait of her on the wall and shot a silver bullet through it.⁵

These cases show that belief in witchcraft is not dead. It is latent and may burst forth anew at any moment. "The difference [from age to age] is not so much in the amount of credulity as in the direction it takes."⁶ At the present day it is in politics. Lecky thought that the cause of persecution was the intensity of dogmatic opinion⁷; that may be a cause, for no man is tolerant about anything about which he cares very much and

¹ *Globus*, XLVII, 252, 264.

² Reynolds, J.: *History of Illinois*, 51; date of the execution not given. Many modern cases are collected in the *Popular Science Monthly*, XLVII, 73.

³ *New York Times*, March 31 and April 7, 1895.

⁴ *Ibid.*, October 26, 1897.

⁵ *Harper's Magazine*, No. 637.

⁶ *Lecky*, W. E. H.: *Rationalism*, I, 101.

⁷ *Rationalism*, II, 39.

in regard to which he thinks that he has "the truth." Struggles for political power, however, cause even intenser rage, and it is political faction which, in the future, may return to violent repression of dissent. In the history of city after city we meet with intensest rancor between classes and factions, and we find this rancor producing extremes of beastly cruelty, when interest seems to call for it. Socialism is, in its spirit and programme, well capable of producing new phenomena of despotism and persecution in order to get or retain social power. Anarchists who are fanatical enough to throw bombs into theaters or restaurants, or to murder kings and presidents just because they are such, are capable of anything which witch-judges or inquisitors have done, if they should think that party success called for it. If bad times should come again upon the civilized world, through overpopulation and an unfavorable economic conjuncture, popular education would decline and classes would be more widely separated. It must then be expected that the old demonism would burst forth again and would reproduce the old phenomena.