

CHAPTER VII.

POPULAR BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

In the ancient wonderland of Egypt, according to the almost unanimous testimony of its inhabitants, there are still at the present day wonders upon wonders; and phenomena from the region of the supersensual, which extends without any obvious boundary from the dominion of faith to that of superstition and folly, are still of daily occurrence. At the present day it is generally considered superfluous to treat of these matters, but whoever has had an opportunity of mixing with the Moslimin for only a short time will admit how deeply penetrated by superstition *the whole people* are, and how they *cannot really be understood* unless by one who has a knowledge, not only of their religious beliefs, but also of their superstitions.

THE GINN.

Like the other countries of Islam (so the Koran teaches) Egypt is inhabited by a vast number of ginn or spirits (genii) in addition to the ordinary human race. These ginn are not spirits of the dead that have to "walk," as in other regions, but a distinct kind of beings, a sort of cobolds or elves, beings intermediate between angels and men. Like men they are born, grow up, become old, and die; they are male or female, black or white, high and low, free and slaves, Moslimin and Christian; they have each a personal name; there are among them kingdoms and governments, with rulers corresponding; in short, they are exactly parallel to mankind, from whom they are distinguished only by the want of flesh and blood, and by reaching a great age, namely, 300 years or more. To the human race they stand in the closest relationship. Every child of man has a companion belonging to the realm of the ginn, who is born at the same

hour with him, and attends him as his guardian angel, but more frequently makes him the victim of malicious tricks, nay, even renders him sick and causes his death. This companion, the *karina*, is female in the case of a male child and *vice versa*; and when the child dies of spasms or the like while still receiving suck from its mother, it is generally the *karina* that kills it. Even in the official registers of deaths kept by the physicians the *karina* was till lately a regular variety of disease, exactly corresponding to our convulsions. As people grow up these companions lose more and more their influence over them, and latterly they only visit their human mates now and again when the latter are asleep.

Usually these beings are invisible, but they can assume all kinds of intangible and shadowy forms, with the outlines of persons, animals, and monsters, and as such they appear to many people. When a proper view is obtained of them they may at once be distinguished by their perpendicular eye. Many of the inhabitants of the country, indeed the majority of them, have experienced such encounters, and can tell gruesome stories about the "afrit" exactly similar to our ghost-stories. If any one wishes to be sure of seeing these beings he must impart to his material earthly fleshy nature a kind of half ethereal strain by preparations for months beforehand, by mortifications, and fasts, and by eating nothing but unsalted bread and water.

THE MAN OF SCIENCE AND THE MAGICIANS.

The "man of science" is able to call up these beings, to drive them away, and to make them do his bidding by invoking them by name,¹ by reading certain chapters of the Koran (especially the *Kurzi*) a certain number of times—perhaps several thousand times—by writing down mysteriously arranged letters, figures, words, and numbers (taken from the so-called *Abjed*). This science, although not recommended by the Prophet, is cultivated throughout the whole

¹ These names generally sound unlike Arabic, and may afford the philologist not uninteresting hints regarding the origin of this "science."

of the Mohammedan world by a great number of men, and also by women. The Moghrebins or Moors and the Fellatah of Soudan are reputed the most learned and skilful in it. They draw their knowledge from tradition or from written books, which form a great body of occult literature; in scope, importance, and popular esteem only the religious literature proper can vie with it. By the instrumentality of the ginn, the "servants of the secret," or by the knowledge, however gained, of one of the "secret names of God," those acquainted with occult lore can perform all sorts of miraculous feats, though it is very remarkable that they are generally as poor as beggars. Poverty, however, we are told, is in many cases the essential condition in a compact with a genie, in others celibacy, or such like self-denial. With regard to some, however, it is maintained that, although genuine men, they are formally married to a ginnee or female ginn, and perform their wonders by means of this wife, who is invisible to other people; they themselves, of course, do not admit this.

Men are sometimes met with who spend a great deal of money, though nobody knows how they procure it. Such persons are also said to have a compact with a ginnee, who supplies them with money. A few years ago a mysterious Mohammedan gentleman of this kind travelled about in Egypt, calling himself the Seyid Abd er-rahman el Adaros from India. He sailed up the Nile with a vessel and a large retinue, had a medical attendant of his own, and intended to travel in the Soudan. Travelling without a definite object is something extraordinary among the Mohammedans, and accordingly he attracted a great deal of notice, especially as he worked wonders, and was very open-handed. Eye-witnesses asserted and swore that he could take pieces of money from below his carpet whenever he wished, that he could with a breath change silver coins into gold ones, salt into sugar, &c. This was quite enough, he was denounced to the government as a magician, and the authorities courteously requested him, instead of going to the Soudan, to change his route to the nearest sea-port (Koscir), and there embark for some other country, supplying him at the same time with an escort.

These people maintain that they practise only the higher and innocent kind of magic, and that their ginns are good, and not given to commit evil deeds, such as robbery and murder, while the "magicians" are in alliance with devilish beings, wicked ginns. The good ginns, who are all Moslimin, serve Moslimin only. Such Christians and Jews as practise magic are able to do so only by the assistance of the evil and degraded ginns or devils (*sheitan*). These unbelievers, on the other hand, charge the Mohammedans with enchantment and exorcise their genii with psalms. "Let a Christian beware of calling up a Moslim ginn," is the warning given by an old authority, "the ginn will revenge himself for this affront and immediately put his summoner to death."

Maskat is regarded as the home and native country of magic. There at the present day men are still changed into animals, especially donkeys and apes, as in the times of the Caliphs and in the Thousand and One Nights.

THE MAGIC-BOOKS.

The written books of magic teach how a person must proceed in order to gain any one's affections, to awake at will, to unloose chains, to bring back a fugitive, to keep a wife from faithlessness, to meet with any one, to keep birds away from crops, to cause the belly of a thief to swell up (!), to make a man or an ox run after him; but above all, to discover buried treasures, to find out a thief, to summon up ginns, or to find pieces of gold under one's pillow. In these books there are also a multitude of receipts against sickness in general, and against headache, restlessness, terror, wakefulness, fever, stoppage of milk both among women and animals, and scald-head in particular, as well as against serpents, scorpions, bugs, and other vermin, and for and against pregnancy.

THE COMPACT WITH IRON AND LEAD.

The triumph of this science, however, is due to the "compact with iron and lead," and we believe that we have earned

for ourselves the eternal gratitude of war-tormented mankind in copying it out of the magic-book and preserving it for the good of both friend and foe. Since every one will make haste to wear this talisman on his breast, henceforth no sword will cut or pierce, and no bullet penetrate, and the golden age has arrived. The celebrated Ibrahim Pasha, as any of his subjects will testify, came out of every battle uninjured, and reached an advanced age through wearing such a talisman, and the head of one of the ringleaders in the massacre of the Christians at Jeddah could not be struck off until a talisman that he had sewn under the skin of his arm was removed.

The following receipts occur among many others.

RECEIPT FOR SUMMONING SPIRITS.

Fast seven days, and let body and clothes be clean. Read first the chapter of the Koran called "the angel," to the word *lazir*, fourteen times after the night prayer; then pray with four genuflexions, uttering the *fatha* seven times at each genuflexion, and when in the seventh night you have read that chapter fourteen times, ask of God what you wish to receive. One of the spirits, who are the servants of this chapter, will now appear, and will give you information as to the treasure, and how you may get possession of it.

"And if you wish to see still more of the wonderful powers of this chapter, fast seven days in a lonely place, and take incense with you, such as benzoin, aloes-wood, mastic, and odoriferous wood from Soudan, and read the chapter 1001 times in the seven days—a certain number of readings, namely, for every one of the five daily prayers. That is the secret, and you will see indescribable wonders, drums will be beaten beside you, and flags hoisted over your head, and you will see spirits full of light and of beautiful and benign aspect. Enter into friendship with some of these, and they will show you treasures and reveal to you secret knowledge, and will initiate you into the mysteries of religion."

An interesting and characteristic remark was made by one of our acquaintances, who asserted that he had undergone

such a course of self-mortification and spirit-seeking; he said he really saw all kinds of horrible forms in his magic circle. *but he saw them also when his eyes were shut*; at last he got quite terrified and left the place.

A LOVE-CHARM.

"On a Wednesday after the vesper prayer, and when your shadow measures twenty paces, write the following formula (*châtin*) with rose-water and sesame water on paper or parchment. Roll this up and throw it on the ground. Then write the formula on the palm of the left hand and fumigate with mastic, benzoin, and coriander. Say over the chapters, *Amran* and *Ichlâs*, while your hand is held above the smoke, and then pick up the talisman from the ground. Touch your body with it, and that of the person on whom you have designs. Hang it to the members of your right side, and you will see something wonderful; God's protection is with thee. But use the talisman only for what is lawful!"

The formula consists of certain words written so as to form a hollow square with words also written across the corners. Inclosed within the square on each side are the words *bil hâk ansilnah u bil hâk nésil*, that is, "in right (not unallowed) we have made him (the spirit) descend, and in right he descended." The words *Gabraïl*, *Mikaïl*, *Israfil*, *Israïl*, the names of the four archangels, are written so as to form the sides of the square; across the corners are *Abu bêkr*, *Omr*, *Olman*, *Ali*, the four chief companions of the Prophet. Outside the square on each side is *Biduh*, the name of a ginn, which is very often written on the addresses of letters, or else the corresponding numbers of the Abged, 2468.

THE MAGIC MIRROR.

The magic mirror is much employed. A "pure" innocent boy (not more than twelve years of age) is directed to look into a cup filled with water and inscribed with texts, while under his cap is stuck a paper, also with writing on it, so as

to hang over his forehead; he is also fumigated with incense, while sentences are murmured by the conjuror. After a little time, when the boy is asked what he sees, he says that he sees persons moving in the water, as if in a mirror. The conjuror orders the boy to lay certain commands on the spirit, as for instance to set up a tent, or to bring coffee and pipes. All this is done at once. The conjuror asks the inquisitive spectators to name any person whom they wish to appear on the scene, and some name is mentioned, no matter whether the person is living or dead. The boy commands the spirit to bring him. In a few seconds he is present, and the boy proceeds to describe him. The description, however, according to our own observation, is always quite wide of the mark. The boy excuses himself by saying that the person brought before him will not come right into the middle, and always remains half in the shade; but at other times he sees the persons really and in motion. When a theft is committed the magic mirror is also sometimes questioned, as we ourselves were witnesses on one occasion. (This is called *darb el mandel*.) The accusations of the boy fell upon a person who was afterwards proved to be quite innocent, but whom the boy, as it appeared, designedly charged with the crime out of malevolence. For this reason such experiments, formerly much in vogue, were strictly prohibited by the government, though they are still practised.

OTHER MAGICAL RITES.

Another magical rite is that of the revolving pitcher. Into a pitcher filled with water are murmured certain magic formulae. Two persons, sitting opposite each other, hold the pitcher lightly with the fingers and the thumb, and after some time it begins to turn either towards the right or towards the left, giving an affirmative answer in the former, a negative in the latter case. This reminds us of table-turning, and also of the key which turns when held by two people, who have a very slight grasp of it, or when it is hung between two books, &c. The latter experiment succeeds as well when

performed to the accompaniment of a merry song as to that of a pious psalm.

A proceeding similar to that of table-turning is often practised by the Egyptians. Those engaged in it squat round a man who stretches himself out on the ground as if dead; they join hands, and each two sitting opposite each other lay the hands or the points of the fingers under the man. Every one then whispers to his neighbour *er râgel mâl*, that is, "the man is dead." After a little time it is said that though the parties have only their fingers placed beneath the man they can raise him from the ground. It is said that other heavy weights may be easily lifted in this way also—an application of force which, in spite of faith, has not yet been adopted in practical life.

From this species of magic we must distinguish the *natural* magic (*zim*), which acts by natural means and sleight of hand, but differs from the ordinary art of the juggler. A master of this art, we are told, was able so to deceive the senses of his audience that he appeared to go in at a camel's mouth and come out at its other end. Another, however, is said to have played a trick upon him, and made use of means to counteract the delusion, so that the spectators saw him really passing along by the side of the camel.

FEAR OF SPIRITS.

Very few of the inhabitants of the country display much eagerness to come to close quarters with the spirits, but all firmly believe in them. Nobody ventures, therefore, to live in a house alone, to go out alone late at night, or to remain alone in a room at night; and when the husband wishes to go out in the evening to visit his friends, the wife takes refuge with her neighbours or relatives if she has no children or servants. It is only the night-watchmen, sextons, and soldiers whom familiarity relieves from the fear of the spirits, though certainly not from belief in them. On Friday, the Mohammedan Sabbath, the spirits are particularly fond of stationing themselves on the thresholds of doors and gates,

and nobody will then venture to remain at such spots. It is not considered as permissible to sweep out a house at night, since a ginn might be struck and injured, and so induced to revenge himself. For similar reasons people do not care to have anything to do with cats, as these may be gins in disguise. A Moslim is never heard whistling a tune or anything else, especially at night, since the spirits are attracted by whistling. The respect with which the people regard the gins is evidenced by the exclamation, in universal use, "with permission, ye blessed ones," when a person enters any room or pours out water. The intention is to attract the attention of the gins, and warn them to get out of the way, so that nothing may happen to them.

TALISMANS.

For the most part, however, people try to protect themselves against these beings, as causing sickness; and popular medicine is based almost entirely upon this view. Whoever feels himself unwell gets a schoolmaster, a scribe, or any other person who has a "blessed hand" to read a chapter or some verses from the Koran over him, and the seat of the disease in particular; or he gets such a verse written down on a piece of paper, and, tying it up in a little leather bag, perhaps sewing it in, attaches it to his person. He may also get a text written with ink in a plate or other dish, when, having washed off the writing with water, he drinks up the nauseous inky mixture, and sometimes recovers. If this religious cure proves of no avail he has recourse to magic. There is scarcely a town, scarcely even a small village, in which there is not one "doctor" at least who professes this art, and who, for a trifle, will write out a valuable talisman for the invalid, after having first determined whether the sickness proceeds from spirits, from the evil eye, from God, or from some material cause. Most people do not allow matters to go so far, but wear themselves, and make their children wear from the first day of their existence, one or more amulets against all evil influences in general.

THE ENVIOUS EYE.

In working mischief the evil eye competes closely with the ginn. Many men go about who are by no means sorcerers, and who have eyes like other people, but "empty, hollow." They cannot bear to see anything fine in the hands of another, and their envy falls with a blighting effect upon any creature they admire, which suddenly or gradually becomes ill, or meets with some accident, and often dies. This power of throwing an evil glance upon anything is by no means always voluntary, for even a father may cause the death of his own child by looking upon it with admiration! It would be impossible to quote all the proofs that the people bring forward in favour of this theory. If a she-goat retains its milk somebody will at once remember that an old woman (in other countries called a witch, a conception which is almost entirely unknown among Mohammedans) went out of the house a little ago; if an object that has not been put in a secure position falls down, the accident is caused by the eye of some person who covets it. The envious person can cause the dates to fall from his neighbour's trees, or even bring down the birds in the air. *A great number of the customs of the people are directed against this secret danger.* The dirty state in which children are kept, the usages of hospitality to some extent, such as the urgent invitation to a person present to partake of a repast served up, the practice of carefully concealing provisions while they are being carried home, the readiness with which an object is handed to the person that admires it, are based on this view; even the seclusion in which women are kept is the result, not merely of Mohammed's commands or of idle jealousy, but arises from the fear lest the evil eye may injure the beloved beings. Texts from the Koran and talismans are employed with success against the effects of the "eye," also both before and after its influence falls. When a person wishes to express admiration without causing injury the words of praise are concluded with the name of God—*ma sha Allah.*

THE PEOPLE OF BLESSING. THE SAINTS.

In opposition to these envious people, to these goblins and devilish magicians, there are fortunately men of such a character that they spread around them good luck and blessing; they are known as the *ahl el baraka* (people of blessing). These consist of the sheikhs or saints, especially silly, childish, crazy people, as well as ascetics and hermits. Most of them have no occupation, but live on alms, which they do not require to ask, since every one considers it to his interest and advantage to bestow something upon them and receive a blessing in return. Others support themselves by some occupation, and do not appear different from other people, but they belong to a family of blessing. Respect is paid to them as to a sherif or a man of position, and they are saluted with a kiss on the head and hand. These saints are usually harmless creatures who do no harm to anybody, and whom no one thinks of injuring. They presume upon this, and do many things that an ordinary man would not venture to do. Sometimes they offend against police regulations, but they are allowed to do as they please, their displeasure being dreaded as much as their blessing is sought for. The people believe in their power of working miracles. Such a saint, we are told, was caught breaking into a shop and was apprehended by the police and placed in confinement. Next morning, as a punishment for this forcible detention, every one of the officials awoke with an eruption over his whole body. Another saint set fire to the shop of a merchant. All the goods were burned, but the blessing of the wrong-doer enabled him in a few months to acquire three or four times as much as he had lost. An extraordinary personage of this kind, an old man, the celebrated Sheikh Selim, sits quite naked, year after year, at a certain spot on the bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt, and lives on the voluntary tribute of the passing mariners. If they give him nothing his curse arrests their vessel on its course, even though it be a steamer, and farther progress is impossible till the saint's tribute is paid. Another possesses the gift of omniscience, and will

answer a stranger accurately as to the latter's previous life, his name, and his family, though he never saw him before. Still greater is their miraculous power after death. The body of such saints, when on its way to its last resting-place, has such a mysterious power on those that carry the bier that they can do nothing of themselves, but are compelled to follow a certain route, and bury the saint in whatever spot he may choose. An old negro slave in Koseir, well known for his long, harmless, pious life, having died towards evening, would not, on any account, have himself buried the same evening, and the bearers, in spite of all their shouting of *la ilah ill Allah*, could not bring the corpse to the graveyard. It remained, therefore, all night in the house (though the people do not like to keep a corpse a night), watched by a multitude of people praying. Next morning also it could not be buried for a long time; the blessed dead compelled the bearers to go through all the streets of the town, till at last, on the recommendation of the more enlightened governor, the higher officials carried the bier to the grave; even the Turkish soldiers could not accomplish it. The whole town was in uproar. The Mohammedans say the angels exercise this coercive power, the Christians believe it is the devil. Deceit or practical joking is not always to be surmised in such cases; on the occasion just mentioned almost the whole male population tried what they could do, and among them many staid and serious men. It is the firm belief of these people that the deceased saint or the angels cause the pressure, and then they feel it too. Even in Cairo such occurrences are common as well as in the other parts of the country. Among the ancient Egyptians also the processions of the images of their deities did not direct themselves at pleasure, but by divine inspiration.

After burial the saint appears in a dream to some well-to-do persons and commands them to build a tomb for him, whereupon he gives them an effectual means for the cure of their diseases. When he obtains a temple wonder follows upon wonder. People stream to the spot to perform their vows, their wishes are granted, and offerings are brought, of which

the worthy sacrificial priest or saint's attendant (*nckib*) claims a half or a quarter, the rest being distributed among the poor. From gifts made to it the tomb gradually acquires costly ornaments, and a great jubilee is celebrated every year. In short, the worship of saints has gradually risen into importance, and now is not behind what is practised in the Christian-Catholic Church. It is unknown to the Koran, and therefore the Mohammedan Puritans, the Wahabites of Arabia, would have it expunged from the pure religion of Mohammed along with much else. It is very gratifying to some to stand in the odour of sanctity, to be honoured and feasted by everybody. Such prophets move from place to place, getting their former wondrous works proclaimed abroad, and playing the quack and mountebank. One of these men, whose father is said to have been able to satisfy a whole assembly with a meal that had been served up for himself alone, had the impudence to swindle some £7, 10s. out of a man who wished to have children, under the pretext that this preliminary outlay was necessary to procure drugs, whereupon the favoured of God set sail with the next ship and was never seen again.

STATES OF ECSTASY.

Among the Mohammedans, and perhaps throughout the East, it has always been an everyday occurrence for people to fall into a state of ecstasy. Such states are also ascribed to the ginns, who take possession of a person, transform his appearance or "ride" him, and speak and act through him. In the nature of all peoples lies an irresistible tendency towards intoxication, and if wine or spirits are strictly forbidden, as among the Mohammedans, they induce this state by means of opium and hashish, or if their religious scruples cause them to reject these also, they intoxicate themselves with religion itself. The religious dances or *zikrs*, of which we have repeatedly spoken, seem to have been invented for this purpose. After these exercises, which are accompanied by much flinging about of the head and body, and by in-

numerable repetitions of the name of Allah, it is a common occurrence for one or two to fall into an ecstasy. As in the case of alcoholic intoxication one will be in high good humour, another dull and silent, a third quite frantic. Those possessed in this way foam at the mouth, while laboriously persisting in trying to stammer out the name of Allah; at last they fall to the ground in a swoon, or remain standing as stiff and rigid as a pillar, or they rush frantically about and strike at whatever comes in their way. Certain dervishes are said on such occasions even to eat fire, glass, and serpents. The Soudanese are the most addicted to these strange performances; in their leisure hours they know of no better amusement than putting themselves into a state of ecstasy by songs and dances which have always a religious basis. They set some store by the reputation of quickly working themselves into this condition. Though here and there one or two may succeed in becoming really possessed, others merely pretend to be so, and accordingly it happens, that when the police appear upon the scene, the whole of those who immediately before were lying rigid and in ecstasy at once start up and take to their heels.

This ecstatic intoxication has no ulterior consequences. Those possessed awake either of themselves or are roused by the call *la ilah ill Allah Mohammed rasul Allah*, and they then appear as if nothing had happened. Many of the saints that are seen wandering about may have contracted their imbecility through their repeated ecstasies, and people of this sort are more disposed than others to fall down during these pious exercises.

THE SAR.

Among the women zikrs are not indulged in, but the tendency to ecstasies is even much greater among the more nervous sex, and to gratify this inclination they have adopted a practice which is said to have been introduced by Abyssinian female slaves, and which gradually spread to such an extent that the government felt itself called upon to forbid it. Nevertheless, it is still common among high and low, espe-

cially in Upper Egypt. The *sâr*, a certain ginn, is the powerful genie of sickness, who throws himself upon the women by preference. Whenever a woman is affected by any illness, the causes of which are not as clear as day, the *sâr* is blamed—*'alcha es-sâr*. It is immediately made known that the *sâr* is at so-and-so's house to-day, but the day must be a Saturday, or a Tuesday, or a Thursday. A multitude of women and girls stream to the house of the sick person, and are treated to buza, the half-fermented Arab beer, the favourite drink of the Abyssinians, and to tripe. Songs are now sung, and drums beaten, and the *sâr*-dance is danced—the women placing themselves in a squatting posture, or with their limbs bent under them, and rocking the upper parts of their bodies and their heads this way and that, as is done in the *zikrs*. Some of them are soon seized with the frenzy, and leap frantically about. All the proceedings are under the superintendence of the *shécha* of the *sâr*, who is a person well known for her tendency towards ecstatic states, and generally a slave, and who earns a good deal of money in this way. When she, as well as others, is in a state of ecstasy she is asked as to the means to be employed to remove the disease. The cure always consists in a simple thick silver finger-ring without a stone, sometimes also bracelets and anklets, and as soon as the greedy *sâr* is satisfied with this the sickness is said to cease. So great is the faith in this remedy that many spend their last penny to procure these silver ornaments, and in entertaining their numerous female visitors.

Like the tarantella dance of the middle ages, the *sâr* is contagious. One woman after another in the company rises up and seems to begin dancing involuntarily, and boys and even men, who are sometimes admitted to these orgies, are affected in the same way. The features of some become altered, they slap their own faces, knock their heads against the wall, weep, howl, and try to strangle themselves, being difficult to restrain; they also give themselves out for other persons, for saints, and especially for the *sâr* himself. They may be asked what it is they wish, and may be shown a silver ring, some henna paste, or buza. They fix a furious

glance upon them, seize them suddenly with wild haste, put on the ring, clutch the henna-paste in their hand, or drink buza. With this as a rule the sâr is satisfied and appeased, the party possessed wipes off the perspiration, and now speaks quietly and reasonably as before. On a day appointed for the sâr the attack is often repeated, ending as at first when the person's wish is gratified, and that is often strange enough.

These states are not pretended, that is clear—why indeed should the parties beat and often seriously injure themselves? They are cases of acute delirium, of ecstasy. The spiritualist will call these persons mediums, the believer in animal magnetism will say they are "magnetized." We remember reading in the report of a doctor attached to the English Abyssinian expedition that a girl suddenly conceived the idea that she was a wolf and ran off at such a rate that no one could catch her till at last she found a bone. This she devoured with the eagerness of a hungry wolf, whereupon she instantly returned to her senses. This case is quite similar to that of our sâr-possessed women, and Abyssinia is the native country of the sâr.

POPULAR MEDICINE.

Since all diseases cannot be cured by talismans, reading, dancing, and vows, an extensive system of popular medicine has developed itself side by side with these; which is based upon more tangible remedies. That a number of these are effective enough is not to be denied, and they agree pretty well with those that experience has taught physicians. For example, zinc or alum is a chief ingredient in all eye powders, compounds of lead in drugs applied to wounds and eczema, as well as astringent vegetable substances, especially fenugreek (*Trigonella farnum-græcum*). Among those much used are "good oil," that is, olive-oil (used as a lotion in rheumatism and skin diseases), fennel, coriander, caraway ("corn of blessing"), mallows, mint, opium, saltpetre, sal-ammoniac, sulphur, green and blue vitriol, and litharge; as purgatives are used, epsom salts, senna leaves, tamarinds,

riubarb, scammony, and gamboge, the native colocynth being less frequently employed and considered dangerous. As already mentioned, the Bedouins fill the rind of the last-mentioned in the evening with milk, which they drink in the morning. Bleeding with the lancet is common, as well as cupping by means of the razor and the horn, setons made of the chick-pea, the actual cautery, to cure a headache for instance (perhaps performed by a hot nail), boiling oil for fresh wounds, the seeds of the fenugreek for ulcers, the warm steam-bath in rheumatism, syphilis, and skin diseases; the use of the leech is less common, and the native leech (*Bdella nilotica*) causes painful wounds. When there is a pain on the left side blood must be taken from the left arm. Veins are also opened in the hand, the foot, and even the nose.

The majority of the medicines, however, are grossly empirical, and they contain the most absurd ingredients. Animal matters, some of which formerly flourished also in our *materia medica*, are very common, such as a goat's bile, dogs' and monkeys' dung, black-beetles, pearls, the bones of dogs and fishes, lizards, mummies, and the opercula of univalve shells, and all these either raw or boiled, baked or burned as incense. Many vegetable matters from all countries, and often with very unintelligible names, are also held in high repute for their curative properties. We give a few recipes: Burned dogs' bones, along with copperas and ox-gall, are good for piles, if the mixture is applied with a little saliva. Another specific for the same disease consists of black-beetles baked in oil, the hard covers, the head, and the intestines being then removed, and again softened in oil over a gentle fire. These black-beetles are looked upon as a universal panacea. Thus the soft white substance found in the inside of these insects, the flesh indeed, is rubbed on the eyes, and puts away spots on the cornea that are not yet hardened. It is good also against night-blindness. Similarly prepared scarabæi (*Atteuchus sacer*) inserted in the ear along with a little cotton, and blown out a day or two after by the pressure of the air of expiration expelled with closed mouth and nose, are considered an excellent remedy for difficulty of hearing. The following

is a recipe to enable women to become fat: Take some black-beetles, burn them and grind them down, add beef fat, sesame oil and *mufella*, that is a mixture of all the various wares sold by grocers, boil the whole together, and drink a cupful of the liquor every day. Earwigs are driven away by sprinkling onion juice (a very plausible remedy). A good preventive against abortion is for the woman to carry at the small of her back a small scorpion and a little piece of amber tied up together in a little bag; pearls or red coral may also be used instead. Women that do not wish to become pregnant must take fasting three mouthfuls of the powder of burned porcelain shells (*Cypræa*). When a hair of the eyelids grows inwards, it is pulled out with a pair of tweezers, and the spot is rubbed with a fly, the head of which has been pulled off, or with St. John's-bread powder made into a paste with oil. "No hairs will afterwards grow there." Eczema of the head or other parts is put away by aloe dissolved in vinegar, and well rubbed in. Ginger, preserved or unpreserved, is used as an aphrodisiac, as well as ambergris (a fatty waxy-like substance found in the intestines and bladder of the sperm whale, and sometimes floating on the sea) and honey, or cinnamon and carrot or radish seed boiled with honey, also the gall of a raven, and burned *Tridaena* shells with honey. To cure a scorpion's sting a piece of garlic is rubbed on the place, or the dirt from the ear of an ass; another common cure is to lay on the wound a polished gem, as jasper, ruby, or turquoise, or the operculum of a *Trochus* shell, or some remarkable coin, these things being said to adhere to the spot which has been stung. Others maintain that they are caused to adhere by rubbing with an ass's hoof. These gems have a high repute for their curative properties generally, and are often sold at high prices. The different varieties are credited each with special effects, and have as many names; thus the jaspers with red spots, and marblings that look like spots and streaks of blood, stanch blood. The bezoar-stone (a concretion found in the stomach of various animals, ruminants in particular) serves as an antidote to all poisons, that of serpents included. The bezoar-stones from

apes are in most repute. A cup made of rhinoceros horn also counteracts the effects of any poison that may happen to be drunk.

THE ANIMALS IN POPULAR BELIEF.

The frequent employment of animal substances as medicaments or talismans arises to a great extent from the belief in a metamorphosis, not allied to the Indian or Pythagorean transmigration of souls, which is quite foreign to Mohammedanism, but caused by magic. Many common stories of this kind may pass for myths or fables among the people themselves, but many are firmly believed by the majority.

While in the scientific circles of our more civilized countries man is held to be an ape modified by natural selection and time, among the Egyptians of the present day the ape is a metamorphosed man. The baboon, it is generally maintained and believed, was a wicked fellow who stole the Prophet's red shoes, and hid them behind him under his coat. The prophet noticed it, however, and uttered this curse over him: "Thief, may your form become a caricature of that of man, and may your buttocks, above which my shoes are hanging, be coloured red like them for all time coming, in memory of your evil deed." For the Moslems in general, the world properly begins only with the Prophet, and no one thinks whether the baboon existed previously, though it is frequently figured on the Egyptian monuments. To keep an ape in the house "is not good," it brings ill luck. Ape's dung, however, is a valuable ingredient in many medicines.

The hyena is generally regarded as a vile enchanter, transformed by the anger of God; and for this very reason its hair, teeth, skin, and flesh possess miraculous powers. The animal having been slaughtered according to the rules of the Koran (such a slaughtered animal is always a rarity, however), the flesh is sold in the market, and goes off rapidly, and at a good price; the ulema, who are at the head of religion, are the chief lovers of it. It imparts strength, especially masculine strength. Lying on a hyena's skin drives away pains in the back. The teeth also are highly esteemed, and are used as

amulets for young and old. The tufts of hair from the mane are particularly prized, and whoever has a skin requires to guard it well from the covetous multitude, for the possession of this hair secures love and faithfulness on the part of a husband or wife, as well as the favour of the great.

The cunning of the fox has caused thousands of wonderful stories to pass current regarding him, but these are not believed, being regarded as fables. In the stories Master Reynard generally plays the rôle of a kadi. One story may be given as a specimen:—A man is carrying a basket of fowls to market. A fox who is anxious to get at the fowls lays himself down on the road and pretends to be dead. The man with the fowls is surprised, but passes on. Somewhat farther on the man finds a second fox lying dead, and farther on again a third. "Now," thinks the man, "three fox skins are worth the trouble of taking with me to sell," so he sets down his basket and goes back to pick up the foxes. Of course he finds nothing, and when he gets back to his basket the fowls have disappeared.

Like the hyenas, other animals also, especially injurious animals, are looked upon as transformed villains—serpents, scorpions, and the large pinching ants (*Myrmica*) for instance. The serpent charmer makes a business of enticing out serpents concealed somewhere in houses, and summons them in the name of some of the patriarchs, as Adam, Enoch (Edris), Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, and even David and Christ, but he does not fail to bring along with him a basket containing serpents. Scorpions are brought to a standstill with the cry *homâr*, that is ass, so as to let themselves be killed. People may have themselves rendered proof against the poison of scorpions and serpents through the initiated, but after this they must never kill one. An Abyssinian slave once brought us a scorpion in his hand, and on being told to do so dropped it into spirits himself. After some days the same slave was stung by a scorpion and wanted to get spirits of sal ammoniac. He had broken the conditions laid down.

Another sort of transformation is that which produced the flat fishes. Moses was once cooking a fish, and when it had

been broiled till it was brown on one side, the fire or the oil gave out and Moses angrily threw the fish into the sea, where although it had been half broiled, it came to life again, and its descendants have preserved up to the present day the same peculiar appearance, being white or colourless on one side and coloured on the other. In Constantinople a similar story is told of the flat fishes there, but in this case the actor was the Sultan Mohammed II., the conqueror of Stamboul.

To certain animals instincts and senses are ascribed for things that the human senses do not take cognizance of; for instance, at the time of the rising of the *Tureya* or Pleiades, the camel is said to see this constellation before it is visible to human eyes, and at this time (beginning of June) it is said not to lie down in any other direction than with its head towards the east. Fishes also are said to see this constellation first.

While some animals, namely, those that are mischievous or held to be so, and those that are regarded as game, are pursued and killed upon every opportunity, and others, such as the dog or the swine, are regarded with the deepest contempt as unclean, and are kept as far from the person as possible, the purposeless slaughter of harmless animals is generally regarded as a sin. On one occasion when we were preparing specimens for our collection, and had flung away some worms and other marine animals as useless, a Turk, rude enough otherwise, carefully picked them up and carried them back to their native element. By strictly orthodox theologians the formation of a collection of animals is condemned; for them natural history is not a science but a mere amusement. To shoot the useful and harmless vultures is looked upon as a piece of great barbarity.

But the person who kills the great black raven or raven of the desert (*Corvus umbrinus*) does not get off unpunished. This bird, called Noah's raven, as being the bird that he sent out of the ark and that did not return, is the *uncle* of the blacks, the Soudanese. On one occasion a hunter had been commissioned by us to procure a raven, which he did, and after carefully barring the door, proceeded to pull it out with

the utmost caution from the pocket of his coat. The affair had got wind, however, and we began to hear the sound of kettle-drums, accompanied by shrill cries, coming nearer and nearer to the house. In a short time the whole crew of the blacks were outside the door. For a long period the black Soudan slaves have formed a union for semi-religious semi-national entertainments. They now began drumming, clapping their hands, bellowing and yelling, and also performed a dance, in which the dancers had girdles of goats' horns. On our asking the president or sheikh of the blacks what was the matter, he replied in a friendly, but serious and decided tone, that blood-money must be paid, their "uncle," who from time to time brought them news of their relatives far separated from them in the Soudan, had been killed, and we ourselves were morally his murderers. The hired murderer in the meantime had fled, but was soon discovered and brought back to the house. We gave them a few coppers, believing the affair settled, and went on with the skinning of the bird. But the noise before the house, the lamentations for the dead, and the dance in his honour became more and more demonstrative; their uncle was worth more blood-money. At last, after long negotiations with the sheikh, who, from his solemn manner of conducting the business, appeared to be really in earnest, we were let off for three francs. Their uncle's body, minus the skin, was handed over to the horde, and being laid in a bier covered with coloured cloths, was solemnly carried to the graveyard, accompanied with flags and shouts of *la ill Allah*, as if it were some person's funeral, and finally was formally interred. The kadi himself having shot a raven was once treated in a similar way. At first he would pay nothing, but the blacks walled up his house-door, and at last he gave the blood-money demanded. Even a pasha at Jeddah is said to have been forced to pay blood-money.

ALCHEMY.

Alchemy, or the art of making gold from substances of little value, is intimately connected with popular medicine.

There are still people who occupy themselves with it, but none of them have as yet made their fortunes.

RELIGIO-ASTRONOMICAL FANTASIES.

Astrology is practised to a much greater extent. The astronomical conceptions of the people, and even of the educated, are those of the Prophet, and if any attempt is made to impress them with others, they shake their heads proudly or incredulously. The unfortunate sun still continues to revolve every day from east to west round the earth, which is of a disc-shape, and surrounded by a circular mountain inhabited by the *ginn* (Mount Kaf). Above it lie seven heavens and paradise, through which flow precious brooks of water; here the believers lead a life of rapturous bliss in the company of the virgin *houris*, "whose large black eyes resemble pearls that are yet concealed in their shells." These and the boys of paradise present them with cups of precious wine, "which neither causes headache nor clouds the reason." On the other hand unbelievers, condemned by anticipation from the beginning of the world, will suffer deep down in the fire of hell, howling and gnashing their teeth, and only when they have led a pious life are the pains of hell somewhat lessened. The sun and moon have their abode in the fifth heaven; in the course of their revolutions they rest at certain stations (*mensil*). In the uppermost of the seven heavens God sits upon a throne held by four archangels, namely, *Israfil*, *Gabrail*, *Michail*, and *Israil*.

Under these according to the secret books are the following great angels of heaven:—*Zemzemail*, *Kasfeail*, *Zarfeail*, *Rangail*. The following rule over the earth:—*Moshab*, *Murra*, *Almar*, *Baragan*, *Shamharish*, *Zaubaa*, and *Maimun*. They take the government in turn, each ruling one day of the week; on Saturday, the unlucky day, the ruler is the malignant *Maimun*. Among the ancient Egyptians also Saturday was the day of *Typhon*, or the evil principle. Each of these angels has as many attendants as the *Abged* can get numbers out of their names; *Moshab*, for instance, has 747.

Other angels or kings of the ginn (*mélek*) are—Jeltahtilin, Mahtahtilin, Kahtahtilin, Fabtahtilin, Nahtahtilin, Gellatahtilin, Lamakfengel—the last being the greatest. The initial letters of the others give the name of the last.

A certain angel or king of the ginn is called Meitataru; he dwells in one of the seven heavens. When incense is burned on the earth he smells it, and waving his rod, he commands his subjects to attend to the matter and stand at the service of the person offering the incense. Another, like the Christian ginn-king Kim, is attracted by the smell of the opercula of shells burned as incense.

Falling stars are wicked angels or devils hurled down by God. It is they who teach men the black art, the evil kind of magic. Accordingly it is a matter of duty for every believer to say, when he sees a shooting star, "I take refuge with God from the stoned devil."

ASTROLOGY.

The ever visible splendour of the tropical or subtropical starry firmament is a powerful inducement to its study. The stars also serve people in general as a nocturnal clock; to the traveller, and especially the mariner, they serve as guides. As in these latitudes the winds have a very regular course, corresponding to the season of the year, and the stars show what season it is, the seaman is perhaps right when he is afraid of such and such a star in a certain position (Lahemir, for instance, when in the west at evening), and looks upon it as an unlucky star, while he considers others lucky stars. Such views, however, lead gradually to the fantastic domain of astrology, and there are few who would venture to deny the influence of the stars upon the fate of mankind. Both Christians and Mohammedans occupy themselves with astrology. A special literature teaches how to detect this influence, one of the books among others being "the true and accurate book of the renowned Greek (?) philosopher, Abu Moshair, the great astronomer." More important for this science, however, than the knowledge of the starry vault is

that of the Abged. Every letter of the alphabet corresponds to a certain number; B, *biduh*, for example, corresponds to 2468, but the letters are not arranged as at present, not A, B, T, Th, &c, but A, B, G, D (hence Abged).

There are twelve constellations for men and twelve for women. The Abged number of the name of the man on whose behalf astrology is to be consulted has to be found, together with the name of his mother. From this number subtract 1212, and if the remainder is 1, the Ram is his constellation and his planet Mars; his temperament, therefore, is the sanguineous. If 2 is the remainder, his constellation is the Bull and his planet Venus; his temperament is "earthy," that is, phlegmatic; and so on. This art teaches also to know whether a sick person will die, whether something lost will be found, an affair turn out well, or what will be the general course of the coming year. Many earn their bread by making such calculations, and there is no lack of believers even among the higher ranks; numbers of people allow themselves to be guided in matters of the highest importance by these astrologers and calculators, who often have the effrontery to take a sum of money in advance, and when the time arrives for the fulfilment of their prophecy they are far enough away.

GEOMANTISTS AND GYPSIES.

Geomantists, who practise the *darb er-raml*, are generally Soudanese. At every yearly market may be seen a few of these black and half-naked prophets squatting on the ground, making holes and lines in the sand, throwing upon these a few stones as dice, and predicting therefrom for a few coppers the future joys and sorrows of the people. Gypsy women, too, may be seen sitting there, telling fortunes in their usual manner by the lines on the palm of the hand, or by shells, which here serve instead of a pack of cards.

THE FUTURE

Of all prophecies those of the Prophet are the most important. They are not openly set forth in "the perspicuous book,"

but the wise understand how to extract them from it, and everyone knows and believes in them, Islam will complete a thousand but not thousands of years (*el elf u la el ulâf*); others say not twelve hundred years. We are now at 1292 after the flight (or emigration, as the Mohammedans will have it that Hejra should be translated). Accordingly the world must soon come to an end, and the signs of this are always increasing, witness the railways, telegraphs, and balloons, and the ever-increasing preponderance of the Franks and Frankish ideas. Towards the end of this period the world will be in a sad condition—sovereigns will make war against each other, there will be great dearth, unbelief and profligacy will prevail. The hordes of the king of Abyssinia will descend from their mountains, and will subdue the sacred land of Islam and Egypt. The Mohammedan world accordingly watched with the most lively interest the last Abyssinian wars with England and Egypt. The sultan will be driven out of Constantinople, and will take refuge in Egypt. Then comes the Muhdi¹ (Reneg of the Koran?); from his Abged number (4253) he should be already born. The Muhdi, a kind of Messiah, will be sprung of an obscure family in Yemen, but will raise himself by his abilities, not, however till his fortieth year, and will soon acquire dominion over the whole world. During his reign Mohammedans and Christians will be reconciled, and all men will share their goods like brothers. An antichrist will, however, appear, and attempt to sow mistrust and dissension, but will be slain by Christ, who will now come upon the scene. After this the Moslimin will all die of plague and other diseases, and only Christians remain alive. These finally die also, and the earth is no longer inhabited by men.

DAY OF JUDGMENT.

At the end of all things the archangel Israïl blows his trumpet, and the whole earth becomes a firm and level field. A

¹ A false Muhdi who gained many adherents, and in a short time set all Egypt in an uproar, was shot about ten years ago. He was the Hâg Theyib of Gau in Upper Egypt.

rain falls which causes the remains of the dead of all times and peoples to begin to grow, like the seeds of a plant. As soon as the bodies are again formed, all human souls, who from the time of their death had been collected in a well at Jerusalem,¹ rise and reanimate their respective bodies, and the day of judgment comes. The judgment, as we are assured by authorities on the subject, will be held at Damietta in Egypt!

¹Regarding the abode of the souls between death and resurrection there are various views.

END.