

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *FROM DIABOLISM TO HYSTERIA.*

#### I. THE EPIDEMICS OF "POSSESSION."

IN the foregoing chapter I have sketched the triumph of science in destroying the idea that individual lunatics are "possessed by devils," in establishing the truth that insanity is physical disease, and in substituting for superstitious cruelties toward the insane a treatment mild, kindly, and based upon ascertained facts.

The Satan who had so long troubled individual men and women thus became extinct; henceforth his fossil remains only were preserved: they may still be found in the sculptures and storied windows of mediæval churches, in sundry liturgies, and in popular forms of speech.

But another Satan still lived—a Satan who wrought on a larger scale—who took possession of multitudes. For, after this triumph of the scientific method, there still remained a class of mental disorders which could not be treated in asylums, which were not yet fully explained by science, and which therefore gave arguments of much apparent strength to the supporters of the old theological view: these were the epidemics of "diabolic possession" which for so many centuries afflicted various parts of the world.

When obliged, then, to retreat from their old position in regard to individual cases of insanity, the more conservative theologians promptly referred to these epidemics as beyond the domain of science—as clear evidences of the power of Satan; and, as the basis of this view, they cited from the Old Testament frequent references to witchcraft, and, from the New Testament, St. Paul's question as to the possible

bewitching of the Galatians, and the bewitching of the people of Samaria by Simon the Magician.

Naturally, such leaders had very many adherents in that class, so large in all times, who find that

“To follow foolish precedents and wink  
With both our eyes, is easier than to think.”\*

It must be owned that their case seemed strong. Though in all human history, so far as it is closely known, these phenomena had appeared, and though every classical scholar could recall the wild orgies of the priests, priestesses, and devotees of Dionysus and Cybele, and the epidemic of wild rage which took its name from some of these, the great fathers and doctors of the Church had left a complete answer to any scepticism based on these facts; they simply pointed to St. Paul's declaration that the gods of the heathen were devils: these examples, then, could be transformed into a powerful argument for diabolic possession.†

But it was more especially the epidemics of diabolism in mediæval and modern times which gave strength to the theological view, and from these I shall present a chain of typical examples.

As early as the eleventh century we find clear accounts of diabolical possession taking the form of epidemics of raving, jumping, dancing, and convulsions, the greater number of the sufferers being women and children. In a time so rude, accounts of these manifestations would rarely receive permanent record; but it is very significant that even at the beginning of the eleventh century we hear of them at the extremes of Europe—in northern Germany and in southern Italy. At various times during that century we get additional glimpses of these exhibitions, but it is not until the beginning of the thirteenth century that we have a renewal of them on a large scale. In 1237, at Erfurt, a jumping disease

---

\* As to eminent physicians' finding a stumbling-block in hysterical mania, see Kirchhoff's article, p. 351, cited in previous chapter.

† As to the Mænads, Corybantes, and the disease "Corybantism," see, for accessible and adequate statements, Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities* and Lewis and Short's *Lexicon*; also reference in Hecker's *Essays upon the Black Death and the Dancing Mania*. For more complete discussion, see Semelaigne, *L'Aliénation mentale dans l'Antiquité*, Paris, 1869.

and dancing mania afflicted a hundred children, many of whom died in consequence; it spread through the whole region, and fifty years later we hear of it in Holland.

But it was the last quarter of the fourteenth century that saw its greatest manifestations. There was abundant cause for them. It was a time of oppression, famine, and pestilence: the crusading spirit, having run its course, had been succeeded by a wild, mystical fanaticism; the most frightful plague in human history—the Black Death—was depopulating whole regions—reducing cities to villages, and filling Europe with that strange mixture of devotion and dissipation which we always note during the prevalence of deadly epidemics on a large scale.

It was in this ferment of religious, moral, and social disease that there broke out in 1374, in the lower Rhine region, the greatest, perhaps, of all manifestations of "possession"—an epidemic of dancing, jumping, and wild raving.

The cures resorted to seemed on the whole to intensify the disease: the afflicted continued dancing for hours, until they fell in utter exhaustion. Some declared that they felt as if bathed in blood, some saw visions, some prophesied.

Into this mass of "possession" there was also clearly poured a current of scoundrelism which increased the disorder.

The immediate source of these manifestations seems to have been the wild revels of St. John's Day. In those revels sundry old heathen ceremonies had been perpetuated, but under a nominally Christian form: wild Bacchanalian dances had thus become a semi-religious ceremonial. The religious and social atmosphere was propitious to the development of the germs of diabolic influence vitalized in these orgies, and they were scattered far and wide through large tracts of the Netherlands and Germany, and especially through the whole region of the Rhine. At Cologne we hear of five hundred afflicted at once; at Metz of eleven hundred dancers in the streets; at Strasburg of yet more painful manifestations; and from these and other cities they spread through the villages and rural districts.

The great majority of the sufferers were women, but there were many men, and especially men whose occupations

were sedentary. Remedies were tried upon a large scale—exorcisms first, but especially pilgrimages to the shrine of St. Vitus. The exorcisms accomplished so little that popular faith in them grew small, and the main effect of the pilgrimages seemed to be to increase the disorder by subjecting great crowds to the diabolic contagion. Yet another curative means was seen in the flagellant processions—vast crowds of men, women, and children who wandered through the country, screaming, praying, beating themselves with whips, imploring the Divine mercy and the intervention of St. Vitus. Most fearful of all the main attempts at cure were the persecutions of the Jews. A feeling had evidently spread among the people at large that the Almighty was filled with wrath at the toleration of his enemies, and might be propitiated by their destruction: in the principal cities and villages of Germany, then, the Jews were plundered, tortured, and murdered by tens of thousands. No doubt that, in all this, greed was united with fanaticism; but the argument of fanaticism was simple and cogent; the dart which pierced the breast of Israel at that time was winged and pointed from its own sacred books: the biblical argument was the same used in various ages to promote persecution; and this was, that the wrath of the Almighty was stirred against those who tolerated his enemies, and that because of this toleration the same curse had now come upon Europe which the prophet Samuel had denounced against Saul for showing mercy to the enemies of Jehovah.

It is but just to say that various popes and kings exerted themselves to check these cruelties. Although the argument of Samuel to Saul was used with frightful effect two hundred years later by a most conscientious pope in spurring on the rulers of France to extirpate the Huguenots, the papacy in the fourteenth century stood for mercy to the Jews. But even this intervention was long without effect; the tide of popular superstition had become too strong to be curbed even by the spiritual and temporal powers.\*

---

\* See Wellhausen, article *Israel*, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition; also the reprint of it in his *History of Israel*, London, 1885, p. 546. On the general subject of the demoniacal epidemics, see Isensee, *Geschichte der Medicin*, vol. i, pp. 260 *et seq.*; also Hecker's essay. As to the history of Saul, as a curious land-

Against this overwhelming current science for many generations could do nothing. Throughout the whole of the fifteenth century physicians appeared to shun the whole matter. Occasionally some more thoughtful man ventured to ascribe some phase of the disease to natural causes; but this was an unpopular doctrine, and evidently dangerous to those who developed it.

Yet, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, cases of "possession" on a large scale began to be brought within the scope of medical research, and the man who led in this evolution of medical science was Paracelsus. He it was who first bade modern Europe think for a moment upon the idea that these diseases are inflicted neither by saints nor demons, and that the "dancing possession" is simply a form of disease, of which the cure may be effected by proper remedies and regimen.

Paracelsus appears to have escaped any serious interference: it took some time, perhaps, for the theological leaders to understand that he had "let a new idea loose upon the planet," but they soon understood it, and their course was simple. For about fifty years the new idea was well kept under; but in 1563 another physician, John Wier, of Cleves, revived it at much risk to his position and reputation.\*

Although the new idea was thus resisted, it must have taken some hold upon thoughtful men, for we find that in the second half of the same century the St. Vitus's dance and forms of demoniacal possession akin to it gradually diminished in frequency and were sometimes treated as diseases. In the seventeenth century, so far as the north of Europe is concerned, these displays of "possession" on a great scale had almost entirely ceased; here and there

---

mark in the general development of the subject, see *The Case of Saul, showing that his Disorder was a Real Spiritual Possession*, by Granville Sharp, London, 1807, *passim*. As to the citation of Saul's case by the reigning Pope to spur on the French kings against the Huguenots, I hope to give a list of authorities in a future chapter on *The Church and International Law*. For the general subject, with interesting details, see Laurent, *Études sur l'Histoire de l'Humanité*. See also Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age*.

\* For Paracelsus, see Isensee, vol. i, chap. xi; also Pettigrew, *Superstitions connected with the History and Practice of Medicine and Surgery*, London, 1844, introductory chapter. For Wier, see authorities given in my previous chapter.

cases appeared, but there was no longer the wild rage extending over great districts and afflicting thousands of people. Yet it was, as we shall see, in this same seventeenth century, in the last expiring throes of this superstition, that it led to the worst acts of cruelty.\*

While this Satanic influence had been exerted on so great a scale throughout northern Europe, a display strangely like it, yet strangely unlike it, had been going on in Italy. There, too, epidemics of dancing and jumping seized groups and communities; but they were attributed to a physical cause—the theory being that the bite of a tarantula in some way provoked a supernatural intervention, of which dancing was the accompaniment and cure.

In the middle of the sixteenth century Fracastoro made an evident impression on the leaders of Italian opinion by using medical means in the cure of the possessed; though it is worthy of note that the medicine which he applied successfully was such as we now know could not by any direct effects of its own accomplish any cure: whatever effect it exerted was wrought upon the imagination of the sufferer. This form of “possession,” then, passed out of the supernatural domain, and became known as “tarantism.” Though it continued much longer than the corresponding manifestations in northern Europe, by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had nearly disappeared; and, though special manifestations of it on a small scale still break out occasionally, its main survival is the “tarantella,” which the traveller sees danced at Naples as a catchpenny assault upon his purse.†

But, long before this form of “possession” had begun to disappear, there had arisen new manifestations, apparently more inexplicable. As the first great epidemics of dancing and jumping had their main origin in a religious ceremony, so various new forms had their principal source in what were supposed to be centres of religious life—in the convents, and more especially in those for women.

---

\* As to this diminution of widespread epidemic at the end of the sixteenth century, see citations from Schenck von Grafenberg in Hecker, as above; also Horst.

† See Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 87-104; also extracts and observations in Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, London, 1888, pp. 312-315; also Maudsley, *Pathology of Mind*, pp. 73 and following.

Out of many examples we may take a few as typical.

In the fifteenth century the chroniclers assure us that, an inmate of a German nunnery having been seized with a passion for biting her companions, her mania spread until most, if not all, of her fellow-nuns began to bite each other; and that this passion for biting passed from convent to convent into other parts of Germany, into Holland, and even across the Alps into Italy.

So, too, in a French convent, when a nun began to mew like a cat, others began mewing; the disease spread, and was only checked by severe measures.\*

In the sixteenth century the Protestant Reformation gave new force to witchcraft persecutions in Germany, the new Church endeavouring to show that in zeal and power she exceeded the old. But in France influential opinion seemed not so favourable to these forms of diabolical influence, especially after the publication of Montaigne's *Essays*, in 1580, had spread a sceptical atmosphere over many leading minds.

In 1588 occurred in France a case which indicates the growth of this sceptical tendency even in the higher regions of the French Church. In that year Martha Brossier, a country girl, was, it was claimed, possessed of the devil. The young woman was to all appearance under direct Satanic influence. She roamed about, begging that the demon might be cast out of her, and her imprecations and blasphemies brought consternation wherever she went. Myth-making began on a large scale; stories grew and sped. The Capuchin monks thundered from the pulpit throughout France regarding these proofs of the power of Satan: the alarm spread, until at last even jovial, sceptical King Henry IV was disquieted, and the reigning Pope was asked to take measures to ward off the evil.

Fortunately, there then sat in the episcopal chair of Angers a prelate who had apparently imbibed something of Montaigne's scepticism—Miron; and, when the case was brought before him, he submitted it to the most time-honoured of sacred tests. He first brought into the girl's pres-

---

\* See citation from Zimmermann's *Solitude*, in Carpenter, pp. 34, 314.

ence two bowls, one containing holy water, the other ordinary spring water, but allowed her to draw a false inference regarding the contents of each: the result was that at the presentation of the holy water the devils were perfectly calm, but when tried with the ordinary water they threw Martha into convulsions.

The next experiment made by the shrewd bishop was to similar purpose. He commanded loudly that a book of exorcisms be brought, and, under a previous arrangement, his attendants brought him a copy of Virgil. No sooner had the bishop begun to read the first line of the *Æneid* than the devils threw Martha into convulsions. On another occasion a Latin dictionary, which she had reason to believe was a book of exorcisms, produced a similar effect.

Although the bishop was thereby led to pronounce the whole matter a mixture of insanity and imposture, the Capuchin monks denounced this view as godless. They insisted that these tests really proved the presence of Satan—showing his cunning in covering up the proofs of his existence. The people at large sided with their preachers, and Martha was taken to Paris, where various exorcisms were tried, and the Parisian mob became as devoted to her as they had been twenty years before to the murderers of the Huguenots, as they became two centuries later to Robespierre, and as they more recently were to General Boulanger.

But Bishop Miron was not the only sceptic. The Cardinal de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, charged the most eminent physicians of the city, and among them Riolan, to report upon the case. Various examinations were made, and the verdict was that Martha was simply a hysterical impostor. Thanks, then, to medical science, and to these two enlightened ecclesiastics who summoned its aid, what fifty or a hundred years earlier would have been the centre of a widespread epidemic of possession was isolated, and hindered from producing a national calamity.

In the following year this healthful growth of scepticism continued. Fourteen persons had been condemned to death for sorcery, but public opinion was strong enough to secure a new examination by a special commission, which reported

that "the prisoners stood more in need of medicine than of punishment," and they were released.\*

But during the seventeenth century, the clergy generally having exerted themselves heroically to remove this "evil heart of unbelief" so largely due to Montaigne, a theological reaction was brought on not only in France but in all parts of the Christian world, and the belief in diabolic possession, though certainly dying, flickered up hectic, hot, and malignant through the whole century. In 1611 we have a typical case at Aix. An epidemic of possession having occurred there, Gauffridi, a man of note, was burned at the stake as the cause of the trouble. Michaelis, one of the priestly exorcists, declared that he had driven out sixty-five hundred devils from one of the possessed. Similar epidemics occurred in various parts of the world.†

Twenty years later a far more striking case occurred at Loudun, in western France, where a convent of Ursuline nuns was "afflicted by demons."

The convent was filled mainly with ladies of noble birth, who, not having sufficient dower to secure husbands, had, according to the common method of the time, been made nuns.

It is not difficult to understand that such an imprisonment of a multitude of women of different ages would produce some woful effects. Any reader of Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*, with its wonderful portrayal of the feelings and doings of a noble lady kept in a convent against her will, may have some idea of the rage and despair which must have inspired such assemblages in which pride, pauperism, and the attempted suppression of the instincts of humanity wrought a fearful work.

What this work was may be seen throughout the Middle Ages; but it is especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that we find it frequently taking shape in outbursts of diabolic possession.‡

---

\* For the Brossier case, see Calmeil, *La Folie*, tome i, livre 3, c. 2. For the cases at Tours, see Madden, *Phantasmata*, vol. i, pp. 309, 310.

† See Dagron, chap. ii.

‡ On monasteries as centres of "possession" and hysterical epidemics, see Figuier, *Le Merveilleux*, p. 40 and following; also Calmeil, Längin, Kirchhoff,

In this case at Loudun, the usual evidences of Satanic influence appeared. One after another of the inmates fell into convulsions: some showed physical strength apparently supernatural; some a keenness of perception quite as surprising; many howled forth blasphemies and obscenities.

Near the convent dwelt a priest—Urbain Grandier—noted for his brilliancy as a writer and preacher, but careless in his way of living. Several of the nuns had evidently conceived a passion for him, and in their wild rage and despair dwelt upon his name. In the same city, too, were sundry ecclesiastics and laymen with whom Grandier had fallen into petty neighbourhood quarrels, and some of these men held the main control of the convent.

Out of this mixture of “possession” within the convent and malignity without it came a charge that Grandier had bewitched the young women.

The Bishop of Poitiers took up the matter. A trial was held, and it was noted that, whenever Grandier appeared, the “possessed” screamed, shrieked, and showed every sign of diabolic influence. Grandier fought desperately, and appealed to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, De Sourdis. The archbishop ordered a more careful examination, and, on separating the nuns from each other and from certain monks who had been bitterly hostile to Grandier, such glaring discrepancies were found in their testimony that the whole accusation was brought to naught.

But the enemies of Satan and of Grandier did not rest. Through their efforts Cardinal Richelieu, who appears to have had an old grudge against Grandier, sent a representative, Laubardemont, to make another investigation. Most frightful scenes were now enacted: the whole convent resounded more loudly than ever with shrieks, groans, howling, and cursing, until finally Grandier, though even in the agony of torture he refused to confess the crimes that his enemies suggested, was hanged and burned.

---

Maudsley, and others. On similar results from excitement at Protestant meetings in Scotland and camp meetings in England and America, see Hecker's *Essay*, concluding chapters.

From this centre the epidemic spread: multitudes of women and men were affected by it in various convents; several of the great cities of the south and west of France came under the same influence; the "possession" went on for several years longer and then gradually died out, though scattered cases have occurred from that day to this.\*

A few years later we have an even more striking example among the French Protestants. The Huguenots, who had taken refuge in the mountains of the Cevennes to escape persecution, being pressed more and more by the cruelties of Louis XIV, began to show signs of a high degree of religious exaltation. Assembled as they were for worship in wild and desert places, an epidemic broke out among them, ascribed by them to the Almighty, but by their opponents to Satan. Men, women, and children preached and prophesied. Large assemblies were seized with trembling. Some underwent the most terrible tortures without showing any signs of suffering. Marshal de Villiers, who was sent against them, declared that he saw a town in which all the women and girls, without exception, were possessed of the devil, and ran leaping and screaming through the streets. Cases like this, inexplicable to the science of the time, gave renewed strength to the theological view.†

Toward the end of the same century similar manifestations began to appear on a large scale in America.

The life of the early colonists in New England was such as to give rapid growth to the germs of the doctrine of possession brought from the mother country. Surrounded by the dark pine forests; having as their neighbours Indians, who were more than suspected of being children of Satan; harassed by wild beasts apparently sent by the powers of evil to torment the elect; with no varied literature to while away the long winter evenings; with few amusements save neighbourhood quarrels; dwelling intently on every text of Scripture which supported their gloomy theology, and

---

\* Among the many statements of Grandier's case, one of the best in English may be found in Trollope's *Sketches from French History*, London, 1878. See also Bazin, *Louis XIII.*

† See Bersot, *Mesmer et le Magnétisme animal*, third edition, Paris, 1864, pp. 95 *et seq.*

adopting its most literal interpretation, it is not strange that they rapidly developed ideas regarding the darker side of nature.\*

This fear of witchcraft received a powerful stimulus from the treatises of learned men. Such works, coming from Europe, which was at that time filled with the superstition, acted powerfully upon conscientious preachers, and were brought by them to bear upon the people at large. Naturally, then, throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century we find scattered cases of diabolic possession. At Boston, Springfield, Hartford, Groton, and other towns, cases occurred, and here and there we hear of death-sentences.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the fruit of these ideas began to ripen. In the year 1684 Increase Mather published his book, *Remarkable Providences*, laying stress upon diabolic possession and witchcraft. This book, having been sent over to England, exercised an influence there, and came back with the approval of no less a man than Richard Baxter: by this its power at home was increased.

In 1688 a poor family in Boston was afflicted by demons: four children, the eldest thirteen years of age, began leaping and barking like dogs or purring like cats, and complaining of being pricked, pinched, and cut; and, to help the matter, an old Irishwoman was tried and executed.

All this belief might have passed away like a troubled dream had it not become incarnate in a strong man. This man was Cotton Mather, the son of Increase Mather. Deeply religious, possessed of excellent abilities, a great scholar, anxious to promote the welfare of his flock in this world and in the next, he was far in advance of ecclesiastics generally on nearly all the main questions between science and theology. He came out of his earlier superstition regarding the divine origin of the Hebrew punctuation; he opposed the old theologic idea regarding the taking of interest for money; he favoured inoculation as a preventive of

---

\* For the idea that America before the Pilgrims had been especially given over to Satan, see the literature of the early Puritan period, and especially the poetry of Wigglesworth, treated in Tyler's *History of American Literature*, vol. ii, p. 25 *et seq.*

smallpox when a multitude of clergymen and laymen opposed it; he accepted the Newtonian astronomy despite the outcries against its "atheistic tendency"; he took ground against the time-honoured dogma that comets are "signs and wonders." He had, indeed, some of the defects of his qualities, and among them pedantic vanity, pride of opinion, and love of power; but he was for his time remarkably liberal and undoubtedly sincere. He had thrown off a large part of his father's theology, but one part of it he could not throw off: he was one of the best biblical scholars of his time, and he could not break away from the fact that the sacred Scriptures explicitly recognise witchcraft and demoniacal possession as realities, and enjoin against witchcraft the penalty of death. Therefore it was that in 1689 he published his *Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions*. The book, according to its title-page, was "recommended by the Ministers of Boston and Charleston," and its stories soon became the familiar reading of men, women, and children throughout New England.

Out of all these causes thus brought to bear upon public opinion began in 1692 a new outbreak of possession, which is one of the most instructive in history. The Rev. Samuel Parris was the minister of the church in Salem, and no pope ever had higher ideas of his own infallibility, no bishop a greater love of ceremony, no inquisitor a greater passion for prying and spying.\*

Before long Mr. Parris had much upon his hands. Many of his hardy, independent parishioners disliked his ways. Quarrels arose. Some of the leading men of the congregation were pitted against him. The previous minister, George Burroughs, had left the germs of troubles and quarrels, and to these were now added new complications arising from the assumptions of Parris. There were innumerable wranglings and lawsuits; in fact, all the essential causes for Satanic interference which we saw at work in and about the monastery at Loudun, and especially the turmoil of a petty village where there is no intellectual activity, and where men and

---

\* For curious examples of this, see Upham's *History of Salem Witchcraft*, vol. i.

women find their chief substitute for it in squabbles, religious, legal, political, social, and personal.

In the darkened atmosphere thus charged with the germs of disease it was suddenly discovered that two young girls in the family of Mr. Parris were possessed of devils: they complained of being pinched, pricked, and cut, fell into strange spasms and made strange speeches—showing the signs of diabolic possession handed down in fireside legends or dwelt upon in popular witch literature—and especially such as had lately been described by Cotton Mather in his book on *Memorable Providences*. The two girls, having been brought by Mr. Parris and others to tell who had bewitched them, first charged an old Indian woman, and the poor old Indian husband was led to join in the charge. This at once afforded new scope for the activity of Mr. Parris. Magnifying his office, he immediately began making a great stir in Salem and in the country round about. Two magistrates were summoned. With them came a crowd, and a court was held at the meeting-house. The scenes which then took place would have been the richest of farces had they not led to events so tragical. The possessed went into spasms at the approach of those charged with witchcraft, and when the poor old men and women attempted to attest their innocence they were overwhelmed with outcries by the possessed, quotations of Scripture by the ministers, and denunciations by the mob. One especially—Ann Putnam, a child of twelve years—showed great precocity and played a striking part in the performances. The mania spread to other children; and two or three married women also, seeing the great attention paid to the afflicted, and influenced by that epidemic of morbid imitation which science now recognises in all such cases, soon became similarly afflicted, and in their turn made charges against various persons. The Indian woman was flogged by her master, Mr. Parris, until she confessed relations with Satan; and others were forced or deluded into confession. These hysterical confessions, the results of unbearable torture, or the reminiscences of dreams, which had been prompted by the witch legends and sermons of the period, embraced such facts as flying through the air to witch gatherings, partaking of witch sacraments, signing

a book presented by the devil, and submitting to Satanic baptism.

The possessed had begun with charging their possession upon poor and vagrant old women, but ere long, emboldened by their success, they attacked higher game, struck at some of the foremost people of the region, and did not cease until several of these were condemned to death, and every man, woman, and child brought under a reign of terror. Many fled outright, and one of the foremost citizens of Salem went constantly armed, and kept one of his horses saddled in the stable to flee if brought under accusation.

The hysterical ingenuity of the possessed women grew with their success. They insisted that they saw devils prompting the accused to defend themselves in court. Did one of the accused clasp her hands in despair, the possessed clasped theirs; did the accused, in appealing to Heaven, make any gesture, the possessed simultaneously imitated it; did the accused in weariness drop her head, the possessed dropped theirs, and declared that the witch was trying to break their necks. The court-room resounded with groans, shrieks, prayers, and curses; judges, jury, and people were aghast, and even the accused were sometimes thus led to believe in their own guilt.

Very striking in all these cases was the alloy of frenzy with trickery. In most of the madness there was method. Sundry witches charged by the possessed had been engaged in controversy with the Salem church people. Others of the accused had quarrelled with Mr. Parris. Still others had been engaged in old lawsuits against persons more or less connected with the girls. One of the most fearful charges, which cost the life of a noble and lovely woman, arose undoubtedly from her better style of dress and living. Old slumbering neighbourhood or personal quarrels bore in this way a strange fruitage of revenge; for the cardinal doctrine of a fanatic's creed is that his enemies are the enemies of God.

Any person daring to hint the slightest distrust of the proceedings was in danger of being immediately brought under accusation of a league with Satan. Husbands and children were thus brought to the gallows for daring to dis-

believe these charges against their wives and mothers. Some of the clergy were accused for endeavouring to save members of their churches.\*

One poor woman was charged with "giving a look toward the great meeting-house of Salem, and immediately a demon entered the house and tore down a part of it." This cause for the falling of a bit of poorly nailed wainscoting seemed perfectly satisfactory to Dr. Cotton Mather, as well as to the judge and jury, and she was hanged, protesting her innocence. Still another lady, belonging to one of the most respected families of the region, was charged with the crime of witchcraft. The children were fearfully afflicted whenever she appeared near them. It seemed never to occur to any one that a bitter old feud between the Rev. Mr. Parris and the family of the accused might have prejudiced the children and directed their attention toward the woman. No account was made of the fact that her life had been entirely blameless; and yet, in view of the wretched insufficiency of proof, the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty. As they brought in this verdict, all the children began to shriek and scream, until the court committed the monstrous wrong of causing her to be indicted anew. In order to warrant this, the judge referred to one perfectly natural and harmless expression made by the woman when under examination. The jury at last brought her in guilty. She was condemned; and, having been brought into the church heavily ironed, was solemnly excommunicated and delivered over to Satan by the minister. Some good sense still prevailed, and the Governor reprieved her; but ecclesiastical pressure and popular clamour were too powerful. The Governor was induced to recall his reprieve, and she was executed, protesting her innocence and praying for her enemies.†

Another typical case was presented. The Rev. Mr. Burroughs, against whom considerable ill will had been ex-

---

\* This is admirably brought out by Upham, and the lawyerlike thoroughness with which he has examined all these hidden springs of the charges is one of the main things which render his book one of the most valuable contributions to the history and philosophy of demoniacal possession ever written.

† See Drake, *The Witchcraft Delusion in New England*, vol. iii, pp. 34 *et seq.*

