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Samuel Taylor

ARTICLE I.—*The Works of Thomas Reid, D. D.* Preface, Notes, and Supplementary Dissertations. By Sir William Hamilton, Bart. Edinburgh: 1846.

Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Education and University Reform. By Sir William Hamilton, Bart. Second Edition, enlarged. London: 1853.

THOUGH of Lord Bacon it was said, by his friend Dr. Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, "he writes philosophy like a Lord Chancellor," it must be admitted, Sir William Hamilton writes it like a philosopher. For he both thinks and writes, more like a pure intelligence, than any man in the history of speculation. In the first place, his diction is the most concise, the most accurate, the most direct, the most compact, and the most vigorous ever used by any writer on philosophy. Familiar with all systems of philosophy ever proposed, and their criticisms expository, supplementary and adverse, and a master of the languages, in which both the philosophies and the criticisms have been written; he has discovered how much of their errors can be ascribed to the deficiencies of language, both as an instrument and as a vehicle of philosophical thought; and he has, accordingly, formed a language for

its heretical disciples have made it, and may embrace all the grand problems of thought which Sir William Hamilton has brought within the philosophy of common sense, and which Bacon certainly intended his philosophy to embrace.

Geo. Dighton Wilson.

ART. II—*Religious Belief, Superstitious Notions, and Idolatrous Practices of Northern Guinea.*

IT is not an easy task, to give a full and satisfactory exposition of the religious creed of the Pagan tribes of Africa. Those who have lived longest in the country, and have had the best opportunities to make themselves acquainted with the subject, have not always been able to satisfy their own minds, in relation to what they really believe and hold as their religious creed. This arises from a variety of causes. One of the principal of which, undoubtedly, is that there is no well defined system of false religion, which is generally received by the people. There are a few leading notions or outlines of a system that prevail in all parts of the country. But all the details necessary to fill up these outlines are left to each man's fancy, and the answers given to inquirers on the subject, are almost as various as the characters of the persons to whom they are submitted. And such is the predominancy of the imagination in the mental constitution of the negro, that he can scarcely discriminate between what is traditionary in his religious creed and what is the result of his own fanciful imaginings. Another difficulty arises from the extreme reluctance of the people to make known their superstitious notions. This may arise from their characteristic dread of ridicule, for they seem not to be insensible of the weakness and puerility of their systems of religion, and naturally shun the scrutiny of white men.

Close observation, and prolonged experience have, however, thrown some light on this intricate subject, and the following outlines may be regarded as fully and satisfactorily established.

The belief in one great Supreme Being, who made and up-

holds all things, is universal. Nor is this idea imperfectly or obscurely developed in their minds. The impression is so deeply engraved upon their moral and mental nature, that any system of atheism strikes them as too absurd and preposterous to require a denial. Every thing which transpires in the natural world beyond the power of man, or of spirits, who are supposed to occupy a place somewhat higher than man, is, at once and spontaneously, ascribed to the agency of God. All of the tribes in the country, with which the writer has become acquainted, (and they are not few,) have a name for God, and many of them have two or more, significant of his character as a Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor.* The people, however, have no correct idea of the character or attributes of the Deity. Destitute of revelation, and without any other means of forming a correct conception of his moral nature, they naturally reason up from their own natures, and in consequence, think of him as a being like themselves. Nor have they any correct notion of the control which God exercises over the affairs of the world. The prevailing notion seems to be, that God, after having made the world and filled it with inhabitants, retired to some remote part of the universe, and has allowed the affairs of the world to come under the control of evil spirits; and hence the only religious worship that is ever performed is directed to these spirits, the object of which is to court their favour, or ward off the evil effects of their displeasure.

On some rare occasions, as at the ratification of an important treaty, or when a man is condemned to drink the "red wood ordeal," the name of God is solemnly invoked; and what is worthy of note, is invoked *three times* with marked precision. Whether this involves the idea of a Trinity, we shall not pretend to decide; but the fact itself is worthy of record. Many of the tribes speak of the Son of God. The Grebos call him *Greh*, and the Amina people, according to Pritchard, call him *Sankombum*.

The belief in a future state of existence is equally prevalent.

* In the Grebo country, *Nyiswa* is the common name for God; but he is sometimes called *Geyi*, indicative of his character as a Maker. In Ashanti he has two names, viz., *Yankumpon*, which signifies, "my Great Friend," and *Yemi*, "my Maker."

A native African would as soon doubt his present as his future state of being ; but he has no clear or satisfactory notions of the place, circumstances, or conditions of his future life. The belief itself is implied in the intercourse which they profess to maintain with the spirits of their deceased friends, the clothing, furniture, and ornaments, which are deposited at their graves at the time of their burial, and the food which they stately take them for years afterwards, and in their dreams, which they always construe as visits from the dead. The only idea of a future state of retribution is implied in the use of a separate burial place for those who have died by the "red-wood ordeal," or who have been guilty of grossly wicked deeds.

The doctrine of transmigration is very common. Hence animals, inhabiting certain localities, as the monkeys near Fish-town, crocodiles near Dixcove, snakes at Whydah, are sacred, because they are supposed to be animated by the spirits of the dead. Where a child bears a strong resemblance, either physical or mental, to a deceased relative, it is said to have inherited his soul. Native priests pretend to hold intercourse with the spirits of children, who are too young to talk, or to make known their wants. Their crying is often ascribed to dissatisfaction at the name that has been given them, unsuitable nature of their food, or something else of a similar nature.

The Grebos, as well as other tribes along the seaboard, have a vague notion of a purgatorial state. But this they undoubtedly borrowed from the Roman priests, who visited the country during the seventeenth century, for the purpose of planting Christianity among the newly discovered inhabitants of the continent.

The spirits of the dead are supposed to mingle freely with the living. Any sudden or strong impressions made upon the imagination, or any striking fancies that may arise in their minds, are supposed to be brought about by the agency of attendant spirits.

Any admonitions, warnings, or cautions that may come to them through their dreams, are regarded as coming from the same source, and they seldom fail to avail themselves of these hints and cautions, however preposterous they may be. Unac-

customed as they are to rely upon their own judgments in the ordinary affairs of life, and without any superhuman revelation to guide them in the path of duty, it is not surprising that they are eager to receive communications from the spirits of their deceased friends, especially as they are supposed to have emerged from the uncertainties and darkness of this to the clearer light of another world.

Men are prone enough to court this intercourse even with the light of a divine revelation in their hands. How much stronger does this propensity naturally become where they are entirely destitute of it!

Fetichism and *Demonolatry* are undoubtedly the leading and prominent forms of religion among the Pagan tribes of Africa. They are entirely distinct from each other, but they run together at so many points, and have been so much mixed up by those who have attempted to write on the subject, that it is no easy matter to keep them separated.

A fetich,* strictly speaking, is little else than a charm or amulet, worn about the person or set up at some convenient place, for the purpose of guarding against some apprehended evil or securing some coveted good.

In the Anglo-African parlance of the coast, they are variously called *grisgris* (greegrees) *jujus* (jeujeus) and *fetiches*, but all signifying the same thing. A fetich may be made of a piece of wood, the horn of a goat, the hoof of an antelope, a piece of metal or ivory, and needs only to pass through the consecrating hands of a native priest to receive all the supernatural powers which it is supposed to possess. It is not always certain that they possess extraordinary powers. They must be tried, and give proof of their efficiency before they can be implicitly trusted.

If a man, while wearing one of them, has some wonderful escape from danger, or has had good luck in trade, it is ascribed to the agency of his fetich, and it is cherished henceforward as a very dear friend, and valued beyond price. On the other hand, if he has been disappointed in some of his speculations, or been overtaken by some sad calamity, his fetich is thrown away, as a worthless thing, without however impairing his con-

* From the Portuguese word *fetico*, a charm, amulet.

fidence in the efficacy of fetiches in general. He has simply been unfortunate in having trusted to a bad one, and with unimpaired confidence he seeks another that will bring him better luck.

Where a person has experienced a series of good luck, through the agency of a *fetich*, he contracts a feeling of attachment and gratitude to it; begins to imagine that its efficiency proceeds from some kind of intelligence in the fetich itself, and ultimately regards it with idolatrous veneration. Hence it becomes a common practice to talk familiarly with it as a dear and faithful friend, pour rum over it as a kind of oblation, and in times of danger call loudly and earnestly upon it, as if to wake up its spirit and energy.

The purposes for which fetiches are used are almost without number. One guards against sickness, another against drought, and a third against the disasters of war. One is used to draw down rain, another secures good crops, and a third fills the sea and rivers with fishes, and makes them willing to be taken in the fisherman's net. Insanity is cured by fetiches, the sterility of women is removed, and there is scarcely a single evil incident to human life which may not be overcome by this means; the only condition annexed is that the right kind of fetich be employed. Some are intended to preserve life, others to destroy it. One inspires a man with courage, makes him invulnerable in war, or paralyzes the energy of an adversary.

Sometimes they are made for the express purpose, and are commissioned with authority to put any man to death who violates a law that is intended to be specially sacred and binding.

There are several classes of fetiches, for each of which there is a separate name. One of these classes embraces such as are worn about the person, and are intended to shield the wearer from witchcraft and all the ordinary ills of human life. They are expected to bring him good luck, inspire him with courage and wisdom. Another class are such as are kept in their dwellings, having a particular place assigned them, and correspond in the offices they perform, to the penates of old Romans. They have also national fetiches to protect their towns from fire, pestilence, and from surprise by enemies. They have others to procure rain, to make fruitful seasons, and to cause

abundance of game in their woods, and fish in their waters. Some of these are suspended along the high-ways, a larger number are kept under rude shantees at the entrance of their villages, but the most important and sacred are kept in a house in the centre of the village, where the Bodeh or high-priest lives and takes care of them. Most of these, and especially those at the entrances of their villages, are of the most uncouth forms—representing the heads of animals or human beings, and almost always with a formidable pair of horns. Large earthen pots filled with bees, are frequently found among these fetiches—the bees being regarded somewhat as a city guard.

The practice of using fetiches is universal, and is so completely inwrought into the whole texture of society, that no just account can be given of the moral and social condition of the people that does not assign this a prominent place.

One of the first things which salutes the eyes of a stranger after planting his feet upon the shores of Africa, are the symbols of this religion. He steps forth from the boat under a canopy of fetiches, not only as a security for his own safety, but as a guaranty that he does not carry the elements of mischief among the people; he finds them suspended along every path he walks; at every junction of two or more roads; at the crossing place of every stream; at the base of every large rock or overgrown forest tree; at the gate of every village; over the door of every house, and around the neck of every human being which he meets. They are set up on their farms, tied around their fruit trees, and are fastened to the necks of their sheep and goats, to prevent them from being stolen. If a man trespasses upon the property of his neighbour in defiance of the fetiches he has set up to protect it, he is confidently expected to suffer the penalty of his temerity at some time or other. If he is overtaken by a formidable malady or lingering sickness afterwards, even should it be after the lapse of twenty, thirty, or forty years, he is known to be suffering the consequence of his own rashness.

And not only are these fetiches regarded as having power to protect or punish men, but they are equally omnipotent to shield themselves from violence. White men are frequently challenged to test their invulnerability, by shooting at them;

and if they are destroyed in this way, (and this is a very common occurrence,) the only admission is, that that particular fetich had no special virtues, or it would have defended itself.

It is almost impossible for persons who have been brought up under this system ever to divest themselves fully of its influence. It has been retained among the blacks of this country, and especially at the South, though in a less open form, even to the present day, and probably will never be fully abandoned, until they have made much higher attainments in Christian education and civilization. On some of the plantations at the South, as well as in the West Indies, where there has been less Christian culture, egg shells are hung up in the corner of their chimneys to cause the chickens to flourish; an extracted tooth is thrown over the house or worn around the neck to prevent other teeth from aching; and real fetiches, though not known by this name, are used about their persons to shield them from sickness, or from the effects of witchcraft.

The natives of Africa, though so thoroughly devoted to the use of fetiches, acquire no feeling of security in consequence of using them. Perhaps their only real influence is to make them more insecure than they would have been without them. There is no place in the world where men feel more insecurity. A man must be careful whose company he keeps, what path he walks, whose house he enters, on what stool he seats himself, where he sleeps. He knows not what moment he may place his foot or lay his hand upon some invisible engine of mischief, or by what means the seeds of death may be implanted in his constitution.

The parings of their finger nails and the hair of the head must be carefully concealed, or they may be converted into a fetich for the destruction of the person to whom they belong.

A *fetich*, like a sharp instrument, if unskillfully used, or if applied otherwise than in strict accordance with the directions given by the priest, may be the ruin of the very man who has procured it for the destruction of some one else.

The use of fetiches which have the power of taking away life is justifiable under certain circumstances. A man is justified in setting up one about his premises to destroy the life of any one who should attempt to take away his own. He may guard

his property in the same way, or use a fetich to recover it when stolen.

But fetiches are chiefly used as a defence against witchcraft, and probably had their origin in connection with this. But of this we will speak more fully in another place.

The belief in the existence of spirits, who are supposed to control the affairs of men, is co-extensive with the use of charms and fetiches. Whether the natives of the country have the Jewish distinction between *diaboloï* and *daimonia* in Northern Guinea is not certainly known, but the inhabitants of Southern Guinea undoubtedly have. It is universally admitted however, that there is great diversity of character among the spirits with which they have to deal, whatever may have been their origin. Some are regarded as good spirits, and their kindly offices are earnestly sought. Houses are built for their accommodation, and frequent offerings of food, drink, clothing, and furniture are taken to them. Native priests pretend to hold intercourse with them, and become *media* between the dead and the living. The means by which this intercourse is held is always veiled in mystery, but quite as satisfactory proofs are given of the reality of the intercourse, as are furnished by our modern spiritualists; and it is highly probable that the latter might have their wits sharpened by making a visit to Africa, and availing themselves of the experience of the brotherhood there. Undoubtedly it is a much older practice in Africa than in America, it commands almost universal assent there, and on this account, at least, it ought to command the respect of the more modern explorers of the art here.

There are other spirits, however, whose presence and influence are greatly deprecated; and all sorts of means are employed to expel them from their houses and villages. They are supposed to cause drought, famine, pestilence, war, and all sorts of evil. Offerings are tendered to them, to cause them to withdraw their wrath, and the utmost cautiousness is practised not to provoke their displeasure. Indeed, the idea seems to be, though not very definitely put forth in their religious creed, that there are two great spirits, or classes of spirits, which preside over the affairs of men; one of which is good and benevolent, and the other stern and resentful; and that

the spirits of dead men take rank with one or the other of these, according as they have been virtuous or wicked in this world. They are more particular about the religious worship they offer to the evil spirits than to the other, which is to be accounted for from the fact, that their sense of guilt, and dread of punishment, is a much stronger feeling in their minds, than any emotions of love, or gratitude for favours received.

On the Gold coast there are stated occasions, when the people turn out *en masse*, (generally at night) with clubs and torches, to drive away the evil spirits from their towns. At a given signal, the whole community start up, commence a most hideous howling, beat about in every nook and corner of their dwellings, then rush into the streets, with their torches and clubs, like so many frantic maniacs, beat the air, and scream at the top of their voices, until some one announces the departure of the spirits through some gate of the town, when they are pursued several miles into the woods, and warned not to come back. After this the people breathe easier, sleep more quietly, have better health, and the town is once more cheered by an abundance of food.

Demoniacal possessions are common, and the feats performed by those who are supposed to be under such influence, are certainly not unlike those described in the New Testament. Frantic gestures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, feats of supernatural strength, furious ravings, bodily lacerations, gnashing of teeth, and other things of a similar character, may be witnessed in most of the cases which are supposed to be under diabolical influences. In a few cases of the kind, it is very evident that some of these wonderful feats were effected by the action of powerful narcotics. But there were other things that could not be accounted for in this way. These extraordinary manifestations, however, are more common among the inhabitants of Southern than Northern Guinea. All of these spirits, whether good or evil, are supposed to inhabit certain great rocks, large hollow trees, mountains, caverns, deep rivers, and dense groves. These places are sacred, and no one ever passes them, except in silence, and without dropping some kind of an offering, though it be but a leaf, or a shell, picked up on the beach. Food is stately sent

to them, by the hands of a priest, who acts as proxy to the spirit, and eats it up. A deep cavern, with an echo, is always fixed upon as a favourite residence for these spirits, and oracular answers are given on all subjects, provided a suitable offering is presented at the same time. The priests are often suspected of imposture; but no man has the hardihood to test the matter by actual observation. Were any one to venture near enough to ascertain whether there was not a veritable human being to give these responses, a legion of spirits might fall upon him, and destroy him for his presumption. He would, therefore, rather remain in doubt and uncertainty, than risk his life by so perilous an undertaking.

These spirits are also supposed to take up their abode in animals; and all such, in consequence, are considered sacred. Monkeys, found near a grave-yard, are supposed to be animated by the spirits of the dead. On some parts of the Gold coast, the crocodile is sacred; a certain class of snakes, on the Slave coast, and the shark at Bonny, are all regarded as sacred, and are worshipped, not on their own account perhaps, but because they are regarded as the temples, or dwelling places of spirits. Like every other object of the kind, however, in the course of time, the thing signified is forgotten in the representative, and these various animals have long since been regarded with superstitious veneration, whilst little is thought of the indwelling spirit.

The indulgence extended to sacred animals makes them tame and docile, which contrasts so strangely with the disposition of other wild animals, that it greatly confirms the superstitious notions of the aborigines regarding them. The monkey, in certain localities, will venture almost near enough to receive food from the hand of a man; the alligator at Dixcove, will come up from his watery bed at a certain whistle, and will follow a man a half mile or more, if he carries a white fowl in his hands; the snake at Popo has become so tame that it may be carried about with impunity, and is so far trained that it will bite, or refrain from biting, at the pleasure of its keeper; the shark at Benin, comes to the edge of the river every day, to see if a human victim has been provided for his repast.

The practice of offering human sacrifices to appease evil

spirits is common; but in no place more frequent, or on a larger scale, than in the kingdoms of Ashanti and Dahomy, and in the Bonny river. Large numbers of victims, chiefly prisoners of war, are stately sacrificed to the manes of the royal ancestors in both of the first mentioned places, and under circumstances of shocking, and almost unparalleled cruelty. At the time of the death of a king, a large number of his principal wives and favourite slaves are put to death, not so much, however, as sacrifices to appease his wrath, as to be his companions and attendants in another world; a practice, which, though cruel and revolting in itself, nevertheless keeps up a lively impression of a future state of existence.

A deranged man is one who is supposed to be prematurely deserted by his soul. The imbecility of extreme old age, or second childhood as it is called, is regarded in the same light. Sleep is supposed to be the temporary withdrawal of the soul from the body, and spirits wandering about without the body, sometimes come in conflict with each other. If a man wakes up in the morning with pains in his bones or muscles, he infers that his spirit has been wandering about in the night, and received a castigation at the hands of some other spirit.

It is common for the living to send messages to the spirits of their deceased friends, by some one who is on the point of dying, informing them of their circumstances in life, and asking their advice and assistance in certain emergencies.

In Southern Guinea the worship of ancestors is one of the leading features of their religious system; but we shall have occasion to give a more minute account of this in another place.

Mixed up with these pagan notions and customs, there are many obvious traces of Judaism, both in Northern and Southern Guinea; and in the latter, some undoubted traces of a corrupted form of Christianity, which have probably travelled across the continent from ancient Ethiopia, where Christianity was once firmly established.

The African race have a wonderful capacity for conforming themselves to any circumstances, in which they may be placed, and they can adopt almost any number of religious creeds, without being disturbed by their incongruity, or the direct antagonistic character which may exist among them. The

religion of Senegambia is a complete medley of Paganism, Judaism, and Mohammedanism; and it is difficult to say which of the three occupies the most prominent place, or exerts the greatest influence upon the character of the people. The prevailing philosophy on the subject, is that by combining the three, they are sure to secure the aggregate good of the whole. In Northern Guinea, Paganism and Judaism are united; and in Southern Guinea, Paganism, Judaism, and some imperfect traces of a corrupted form of Christianity. In the former region of country, Judaism is more prominently developed; some of the leading features of which are circumcision, the division of tribes into separate families, and very frequently into the number twelve; the rigid interdiction of marriage between families too nearly related; bloody sacrifices, with the sprinkling of blood upon their altars and doorposts; the formal and ceremonial observance of new moons; a specified time for mourning for the dead, during which they shave their heads, and wear soiled and tattered clothes; demoniacal possessions, purifications, and various other usages, probably of a Jewish origin. Some of these usages, especially the rite of circumcision, might be supposed to have been of a Mohammedan origin, if it were not for the entire absence of all other traces of this religion among the pagan tribes of both Guineas.

Although the natives of Africa retain these outward rites and ceremonies, with the utmost tenacity, they have little, or no knowledge of their origin, or the particular object which they are intended to commemorate. Many of them are performed to shield themselves from some threatened evil, or to secure some coveted good. But in the great majority of cases, they are attended to merely as a matter of habit; and the only reason assigned for observing them, is that their ancestors did the same before them.

Witchcraft is a prominent, and leading superstition among all the races of Africa, and may be regarded as one of the heaviest curses which rests upon that benighted land. This superstition, it is true, has prevailed, to a less or greater extent, among most of the nations of the earth, and may be regarded as almost inseparably connected with a low and barbarous state

of society. In Africa, however, all the absurdities and extravagances belonging to it, are egregiously exaggerated, and in this respect it scarcely has any parallel.

A person endowed with this mysterious art, is supposed to possess little less than omnipotence. He exercises unlimited control, not only over the lives and destiny of his fellow men, but over the wild beasts of the woods, over the sea and dry land, and over all the elements of nature. He may transform himself into a tiger, and keep the community in which he lives, in a state of constant fear and perturbation; into an elephant, and desolate their farms; or into a shark, and devour all the fish in their rivers. By his magical arts, he can keep back the showers, and fill the land with want and distress. The lightnings obey his commands, and he need only wave his wand, to call forth the pestilence from its lurking place. The sea is lashed into fury, and the storm rages to execute his behests. In short, there is nothing too hard for the machinations of witchcraft. Sickness, poverty, insanity, and almost every evil incident to human life, are ascribed to its agency. Death, no matter by what means, or under what circumstances it takes place, is spontaneously, and almost universally ascribed to this cause. If a man falls from a precipice, and is dashed to pieces, or if he accidentally blows out his own brains with a musket, it is, nevertheless, inferred that he must have been under some supernatural influence, or no such calamity could have occurred. A man is supposed to have been transformed into an elephant, and killed, simply because his death occurred the same day that one of these animals was killed in the same neighbourhood. The arts of witchcraft may be exerted with or without any material agency. Poisonous substances are included under this general head, simply because the people cannot understand the process, *modus operandi*, by which they occasion death. Extended observation has convinced them, that certain substances, taken into the stomach, invariably produce death. The process is mysterious, however, inasmuch as other substances, of equal bulk, will not produce the same result. One therefore, according to their modes of reasoning, has intrinsic powers which the other has not—and why may not some other substance, by a process not more inexplicable,

produce the same result without being brought in contact with the body? If the process in one case is inexplicable, it is not less so in the other. If you appeal to actual experiment, they are ready to meet you on this ground. They have known death to follow the machinations of witchcraft, without any material agency, as surely as the use of poisons. If it is alleged that poisons act promptly, uniformly, and with certainty; it is replied, that the arts of witchcraft, from their nature, operate more slowly, but not less certainly.

How any one comes in possession of this mysterious art nobody certainly knows. By some it is supposed to be obtained by eating the leaves or roots of a forest tree. By others it is believed to be conferred by evil spirits.

It is regarded as one of the most hateful accomplishments to which any man can attain. There is nothing more heartily or universally deprecated, than even the suspicion of possessing this odious art. The imputation of it, is the most serious stigma that can possibly be affixed to a man's character, and almost any one would prefer death to remaining under the suspicion of practising it for any length of time.

And yet, deprecated as it is, any man is liable to be charged with it. Every death which occurs in the community is ascribed to witchcraft, and some one consequently is guilty of the wicked deed. The priesthood go to work to find out the guilty person. It may be a brother, a sister, a father, and in a few extreme cases, even mothers have been accused of the unnatural deed of causing the death of their own offspring. There is in fact no effectual shield against the suspicion of it. Age, the ties of relationship, official prominence and general benevolence of character are alike unavailing. The priesthood, in consequence of the universal belief in the superstition, have unlimited scope for the indulgence of the most malicious feelings, and in many cases it is exercised with unsparing severity. They are not exempt themselves, however, from the same charge, and may fall under public condemnation as well as others. It is difficult to say whether men have a greater dread of the machinations of witchcraft against themselves, or the suspicion of practising it against others. There is nothing against which they guard with such constant and sedulous care. The *fetiches* which

they wear about their persons, which they suspend over their doors and at the gates of their towns, are intended to shield them from this dangerous foe. Nor are they less careful to avoid everything that could in any way expose them to the suspicion of practising this art against others. Everything in look, word or deed, that is liable to misconstruction, is carefully avoided. A man must avoid all places and associations that would look like participation in evil designs against any of his fellow-men. In case of the extreme sickness of any one of his townsmen, he must avoid excessive levity, lest he be regarded as taking real pleasure in his anticipated death; and too much feeling and solicitude on the other hand, lest he be suspected of hiding his guilt by a cloak of hypocrisy. For the same reason a woman will not allow her husband, or any of her male guests, to partake of the food she sets before them, until she herself has taken the first mouthful, to assure them that she is practising none of the arts of witchcraft.

But terrible as witchcraft is, in either of these aspects, there is a complete remedy for it, in the "red-wood" ordeal. This, when properly administered, has the power not only to wipe off the foulest stain from injured innocence, but can detect and punish all those who are guilty of practising this wicked and nefarious art. And from the results of this ordeal there is and can be no appeal. Public opinion has long since acknowledged its perfect infallibility, and no man ever thinks of gainsaying or questioning the correctness of its decisions. The "red-water" is a decoction made from the inner bark of a large forest tree of the *mimosa* family.* The bark is pounded in a wooden mortar and steeped in fresh water, until its strength is pretty well extracted. It is of a reddish colour, has an astringent taste, and in appearance is not unlike the water of an ordinary tan vat. A careful analysis of its properties, shows that it is both an astringent and a narcotic, and when taken in large quantity, is also an emetic.

A good deal of ceremony is used in connection with the administration of the ordeal. The people who assemble to see it administered, form themselves into a circle, and the pots containing the liquid are placed in the centre of the enclosed space.

* In Southern Guinea a shrub which has red roots is used in this ordeal. At the Gaboon it is known by the name of *nkazy*.

The accused then comes forward, having the scantiest apparel, but with a cord of palm-leaves bound round his waist, and sets himself in the centre of the circle. After his accusation is announced, he makes a formal acknowledgment of all the evil deeds of his past life, then invokes the name of God three times, and imprecates his wrath in case he is guilty of the particular crime laid to his charge. He then steps forward and drinks freely of the red-water. If it nauseates and causes him to vomit freely, he suffers no serious injury, and is at once pronounced innocent. If, on the other hand, it causes vertigo and he loses his self-control, it is regarded as evidence of guilt, and then all sorts of indignities and cruelties are practised against him. A general howl of indignation rises from the surrounding spectators. Children and others are encouraged to hoot at him, pelt him with stones, spit upon him, and in many instances he is seized by the heels and dragged through the bushes and over rocky places, until his body is shamefully lacerated and life becomes extinct. Even his own kindred are required to take part in these cruel indignities, and no outward manifestation of grief is allowed in behalf of a man who has been guilty of so odious a crime.

On the other hand, if he escapes without injury, his character is thoroughly purified, and he stands on a better footing in society than he did before he submitted to the ordeal. After a few days, he is decked out in his best robes; and, accompanied by a large train of friends, he enjoys a sort of triumphal procession over the town where he lives, receives the congratulations of his friends, and the community in general; and not unfrequently, presents are sent to him by friends from neighbouring villages. After all this is over, he assembles the principal men of the town, and arraigns his accusers before them, who, in their turn, must submit to the same ordeal, or pay a large fine to the man whom they attempted to injure. It is fortunate that this check exists, otherwise there would be little else than erimination and reerimination, until the remedy would become ten times worse than the disease.

There is seldom any fairness in the administration of the ordeal. No particular quantity of the "red-water" is prescribed, and the amount administered always depends upon the

state of feeling in the community towards the accused. If they are indignant towards him, and are intent upon his destruction, they compel him to swallow enough of the red-water to endanger life, even if it had no poisonous qualities. In many cases, a man is dismissed, after drinking the usual quantity, the people caring very little whether he lives or dies. If he dies, it is clear evidence of his guilt, and they care no more about it. A strong emetic, administered soon after, always brings on vomiting, and at once relieves the patient. The people entertain singular notions about the nature and power of this ordeal, and sometimes use it in other cases than those where a man is accused of witchcraft. They are not fond of examining witnesses, or scrutinizing the evidences that may be adduced in ordinary cases of litigation. They suppose that the "red-water" itself possesses intelligence, and is capable of the clearest discrimination, in all these doubtful cases. They suppose, that when it is taken into the stomach, it lays hold of the element of witchcraft, and at once destroys the life of the man. This power, or instrument of witchcraft, they suppose to be a material substance; and I have known native priests, after a *post mortem* examination, to bring forth a portion of the *aorta*, or some other internal organ, which the people would not be likely to recognize, as belonging to the body, as proof that they had secured the veritable witch. Natives of the Grain coast have another ordeal, known as the "hot oil ordeal," not often applied to cases of witchcraft; but used to find out theft, or cases of infidelity among married women. The suspected person, is required to plunge her hand into a pot of boiling oil; if she suffers no pain, it is a decisive mark of innocence; but, on the other hand, if she is scalded, she is guilty, and receives a castigation, over and above the pain and inconvenience of having a burnt hand. There are cases where the hand is plunged into this boiling liquid, without occasioning pain, or apparent injury. In such cases, some application, no doubt, is made to the hand, to prevent the immediate effect of the heat; but what it is, is not certainly known. If a woman is subjected to this ordeal, at the requisition of her husband, and sustains no injury, she exacts a handsome present from him, as a penalty for his unjust suspicions; and she is, no

doubt, gratified to have her character thus raised above the imputation of guilt.

Although the inhabitants of Northern Guinea have no written literature, they have large stores of what may be called unwritten lore in their traditions, legends, fables, allegories and proverbial sayings, which if reduced to writing, would constitute a very respectable library of themselves. Their allegories and proverbial sayings are inwoven into all their ordinary conversation; and indeed an uneducated native African can scarcely make himself understood, or give point or force to his discourse without the constant use of these. Their fables are highly dramatic. Wild animals are made to personate men, and no one can ever acquire a thorough knowledge of the character of the people, without a knowledge of their fables.

Their traditions involve some outlines of historic truth, but are so much mixed up with their own fancies, that they can be received only with the greatest caution. Some of their traditions have evidently been borrowed from the Bible, but whether they have travelled across the continent and been handed down through many successive generations, or been borrowed from the Roman Catholic missionaries who visited the country in the sixteenth century, it is scarcely possible to determine.

They believe in the unity of the race, and account for the difference in complexion, energy and intelligence which characterizes the different branches of the human family, by the following story. God set before the two sons of the original progenitors of the race, one of whom was black, and the other white, the choice between *gold* and a *book* (the symbol of intelligence.) The oldest son seized upon the gold, and left the book to his younger brother. The latter, by some mysterious process, was immediately transferred to a remote and cold country, where he perpetuated his original complexion, developed his intelligence, and has made himself so respectable and powerful. The older brother remained where he was born, retained his dark complexion, and has lived long enough to see, that wisdom and intelligence are far superior to riches. This tradition may have had its origin in the Bible account of Solomon's choosing wisdom in preference to wealth or power. Or it may be a

merely fanciful mode of accounting for the superiority of the white men, on the score of their possessing the arts of reading and writing. There is, also, a tradition of a great deluge, which once overspread the face of the whole earth; but it is coupled with so much that is marvellous and imaginative, that it can scarcely be identified with the same event recorded in the Bible. There are, also, many and extravagant stories about the advent of the Son of God; but so much disfigured and caricatured, that one almost feels pained at the thought of their having had their origin in connection with the real advent of the blessed Saviour.

African funerals are always attended with extraordinary pomp and display. The corpse is washed, painted, and decked in the handsomest clothes, and the greatest profusion of beads that can be procured, and is then placed in a rude coffin, in some conspicuous place, whilst the ordinary funeral ceremonies are performed. The character and pomp of the ceremonies, of course, depend upon the age, and the standing of the man before death. If he has been a man of importance, in the community, his friends and the townspeople assemble at an early hour in front of the house where the corpse reposes, and form themselves into a circle, inclosing a large open space. A live bullock, tied by the four feet, is placed in the centre of the circle, and is to be slaughtered at the proper time, nominally, for the dead; but really, for the visitors who come to participate in the ceremonies. Everybody is expected to bring some kind of present for the dead, which may be a string of beads, a knife, a plate, a pipe, or a looking-glass; all of which are laid in the coffin, or by its side, to be taken to the grave. Most of the men are expected to bring with them a good supply of powder, and testify their respect for the dead, by the number of times they fire their guns in the open square, and the amount of ammunition with which their guns are loaded. Sometimes fifty, or a hundred men are discharging their muskets at the same time, not only stunning the ears of all around, but enveloping themselves so completely with the smoke, as not to be seen, except by the flash from the fire-pan. The only precaution observed, is merely to elevate the muzzles of their guns above the head of those in the circus with themselves.

When these ceremonies are concluded, two persons take up the coffin (which, among the Grebos, is usually a section of a canoe boxed up at the two ends) to carry it to the grave-yard. Sometimes, the dead refuses to leave the town, and the bearers are driven hither and thither, by a power which they affect not to be able to control. They go forward for a few moments, and then are suddenly whirled around, and carried back at the top of their speed. The head-man of the family then approaches the bier, and talks plaintively and soothingly to the corpse—inquires why he is unwilling to go to the grave-yard—reminds him that many of his friends and kindred are already there—and assures him that every attention will be given by his surviving friends, that all of his future wants will be attended to.

Under the influence of this persuasion, the restraints which were imposed upon the bearers are relaxed, and they set out once more to the place of burial. They have not gone far, however, when they are thrown violently against some man's house, which is tantamount to an accusation, that the proprietor, or some other member of his household, has been the cause of his death. The suspected person, is at once arrested, and must undergo the "red-wood" ordeal. The corpse, after this, is borne quietly to its resting place, when the bearers rush to the water side, and undergo a thorough ablution before they are permitted to return to the town. Guns are fired, morning and evening, for some weeks afterwards, in honour of the dead, provided he has been a man of prominence and influence in the community. Food is occasionally taken to the place of his burial for months and years afterwards: where a small house is built over the grave, furnished with a chair or mat, a jug to hold water, a staff to use when he walks abroad, a looking-glass, and almost every other article of furniture or dress that a living man would need. All blood relations are required to shave their heads, and wear none but the poorest and most tattered garments for one month. The wives are required to come together every morning and evening, and spend an hour in bewailing their husband.

A stranger, witnessing their wailings for the first time, would think their grief was unfeigned and most intense. A more

thorough acquaintance with their character and customs, however, would soon convince him that their pretended grief was but a disguise to shield themselves from the suspicion of having caused the death of their husband.

This term of mourning is continued for one month, after which, the male relations come together, and the wives of the deceased are distributed among them just as any other property would be. They are then permitted to wash themselves, put away the ordinary badges of mourning, and before taking up with their new husbands, they are permitted to visit their own relations, and spend a few weeks with them.

Wm. Henry Green

ART. III.—*Monuments of the Umbrian Language; an Essay toward their Explanation.* By S. Th. Aufrecht and A. Kirchhoff, 4to. Vol I. pp. 169. Vol. II. pp. 423.

[Die Umbrischen Sprachdenkmäler u. s. w.]

THE Umbrian is one of the primitive Italian dialects supplanted by the Latin, their affinity to which, by revealing the genesis of its grammatical forms, constitutes their chief claim upon the attention of philologists. The Umbrian remains, though less scanty than the Oscan, are by no means considerable; the most important, and interesting by far, are the inscriptions upon the metallic plates, known as the Eugubian Tables. These were found in the year 1444, in a subterranean vault, near the ruins of an old theatre at the modern Gubbio, the ancient Eugubium or Iguvium. There appear to have been, originally, nine of these plates; only seven, however, are known to exist at present, and these are all that are mentioned in the deed, which records their purchase in 1456, at an enormous price, by the church at Gubbio, where they are still preserved. The other two are said to have been taken to Venice, beyond which, there is no further trace of them. The writing upon five of these plates is in a native alphabet of nineteen letters, which was read from right to left: upon the sixth, seventh, and a part of the fifth, Roman letters are employed. Two of them