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MYTHS OF VOODOO WORSHIP AND CHILD SACRIFICE IN HAYTI.

IN a book, lately published, entitled "The English in the West Indies," Mr. J. A. Froude makes incidental reference to the existence of certain superstitious practices in Hayti, the character of which he pictures in the darkest colors, as may be judged by the following extract:—

Behind the immorality, behind the religiosity, there lies active and alive the horrible revival of the West African superstitions: the serpent worship, the child sacrifice, and the cannibalism. There is no room to doubt it. A missionary assured me that an instance of it occurred only a year ago within his own personal knowledge. The facts are notorious; a full account was published in one of the local newspapers, and the only result was that the president imprisoned the editor for exposing his country. A few years ago persons guilty of these infamies were tried and punished; now they are left alone, because to prosecute and convict them would be to acknowledge the truth of the indictment (p. 344).¹

Mr. Froude considers that if the government of the United States forbids any other power to interfere, the republic must itself find some way in which a stop may be put to "cannibalism and devil worship," affirming that the negroes, when left to themselves, "fall back upon the superstitions and habits of their ancestors." He found the people of the island irritated against his own countrymen, the chief complaint being on account of the book of Sir Spenser St. John, which, as he says, they cry out against "with a degree of anger which is the surest evidence of its truth."

In the work referred to,² the writer, for many years British Minister Resident and Consul-general in Hayti, devotes a chapter to "Vaudoux Worship and Cannibalism" (pp. 182-228). Declaring in his introduction that he has endeavored to paint these practices in the least sombre colors, he nevertheless affirms that a great part of the population of the island, including several of its past rulers and many of its present notables, have belonged, or still belong, to the sect of the Vaudoux, whose ceremonies he asserts to be frequently accompanied by cannibalism, and further expresses his conviction that these usages are not declining, but making headway.

This sect of the Vaudoux — a word which in the title of this article I have spelt as it is commonly written in the United States,

¹ *The English in the West Indies; or, The Bow of Ulysses*, by James Anthony Froude. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1888.

² *Hayti; or, The Black Republic*, by Sir Spenser St. John. London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1884.

Voodoo — is first mentioned by Moreau de Saint-Méry, in his “Description de l’Isle Saint Dominique,” a work printed in 1797, but describing the state of the island in 1789; that is, before the insurrection of 1791. The passage in question is referred to by many writers on Hayti, and cited at length by Sir Spenser St. John in the book mentioned.

Saint-Méry attributes the introduction and maintenance of this worship to the Aradas, a tribe of negroes from the slave coast of Africa. Vaudoux, according to his statement, signifies an omnipotent and omniscient being, who is supposed to exist in the form of a non-venomous snake, revealing himself only through the medium of a priest and priestess, who are regarded by the votaries of the order with the greatest reverence, and exercise over their actions the most absolute control.

At the meetings of the sect, which are always held at night and in private, the ceremonies consist of a solemn oath of secrecy, of exhortation on the part of the priest and priestess, who are also called king and queen,¹ and of prayer to the divine snake, who is kept in a box. These rites are followed by a dance, called the dance of the Vaudoux, designed especially for the admission of novices. Finally, the king and queen go into a delirious condition, intensified by abundance of strong drink. The adepts alternate between spinning round in the dance and fainting-fits, and the evening is concluded with a debauch in an adjacent dark chamber.

Sir Spenser St. John adds: —

I have been struck with how little change, except for the worse, has taken place during the last century. Though the sect continues to meet in secret they do not appear to object to the presence of their countrymen who are not yet initiated; in fact, the necessity of so much mystery is not recognized, when there are no longer any French magistrates to send these assassins to the stake (p. 192).

The account of Saint-Méry has also been said to apply to Louisiana; and the name is familiar in the United States, where it is written Voodoo, and often softened into the form Hoodoo.² In the present article, however, I shall confine myself to the Haytian stories.

Although all the writers who have alluded to these superstitions

¹ Or papa and mama: whence the names papaloi (papa-roi) and mamanloi (mama-roi), now applied to the priest and priestess of the Vaudoux.

² At the time and place of my writing (as I am informed by a young friend), Hoodoo is much in vogue as a term of college slang: it is used either as a noun or a verb, signifying a person or thing whose influence is (in jest) supposed to bring good luck, or the act of exercising such influence. It is nearly a synonym of *Mascot*.

have assumed that they are an inheritance from Africa, I shall be able to make it appear: first, that the name Vaudoux, or Voodoo, is derived from a European source; secondly, that the beliefs which the word denotes are equally imported from Europe; thirdly, that the alleged sect and its supposed rites have, in all probability, no real existence, but are a product of popular imagination.

To arrive at a right understanding of the subject, it is necessary to go back more than eight hundred years. After the middle of the twelfth century, Peter Valdo,¹ a merchant of Lyons, having undergone religious conversion, resolved to put in practice the theory of Christian perfection which he supposed the Gospels to require. There does not seem to have been anything either novel or obscure in his doctrine. Self-surrender, voluntary poverty, chastity, non-resistance, love alike of friend and enemy, — such were the ethics of Peter of Lyons. Desirous in all things to follow his divine example, he sold his goods that he might give them to the poor, and sent forth disciples, two and two, to proclaim the evangel. The new teaching found welcome; but the council of Verona, in 1184, condemned lay ministrations. The followers of Peter, called after the name of their leader, Waldenses or Vaudois, were banished from Lyons, but multiplied in many parts of Europe, and especially established themselves in the Alpine valleys, where, in 1655, they suffered that massacre which is kept fresh in the minds of English readers by Milton's sonnet: —

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold.”

Now, etymologically, the cannibalistic Voodoos of Hayti are identical with the devout Waldenses of Piedmont.²

“In the fifteenth century,” writes M. Felix Bourquelot, in an article entitled “Les Vaudois du Quinzième Siècle,”³ “it was bruited abroad that there existed in France, in Flanders, in Savoy, an abominable heresy, dangerous to religion and society, a sect infernal and worthy of the hatred of all good Christians: it was called the heresy or sect of the *Vaudois*. Proceedings were begun, especially in Artois and Picardy; soon it became a persecution. Many persons under torture confessed, as was said, that they had belonged to the sect, and denounced new heretics to the judges. . . . According to

¹ The surname perhaps indicates that Peter was a native of the canton of Vaud.

² The best account of the various Waldensian communities, and of their sufferings from persecution, will be found in the excellent work of H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1888. The third volume, which would include the prosecutions hereafter mentioned, has not yet appeared.

³ *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 2d ser. vol. iii. pp. 81-109.

those who wished to discover the guilty, a third of Christendom, and more, shared the errors of the Vaudois: ecclesiastics, bishops, cardinals were infected with *vauderie*. The city of Arras, then under the government of the Duke of Burgundy, was the principal theatre of the persecution, and the officers of the church, in the absence of the bishop, prosecuted with un pitying severity persons suspected of *vauderie*, whether belonging to the populace, the burgesses, or the nobility."

M. Bourquelot, however, shows that these accusations had nothing to do with theological considerations; that the accused persons did not belong to the sect of the Waldenses, but that they were tried and executed solely for witchcraft.

The word *vaudois*, feminine *vaudoise*, had in fact come to mean a witch, as its abstract *vauderie* or *vauldoyerie* signified sorcery.¹ It is easy to understand how this confusion came about. As the Waldenses were a particularly active and dangerous sect, their name became representative of that connection with Satan which, according to mediæval ideas, was implied in heresy, and which involved the practice of witchcraft.

At the same time that the name Vaudois was applied, in France and Burgundy, to an imaginary sect of witches, other prosecutions took place, in which doctrinal errors formed the onus of the accusation.² No wonder, therefore, that in the popular mind the real and fanciful offences were blended, and that the respectable Waldenses, even in the judgment of intelligent persons, were regarded as guilty of all the horrible crimes laid to the account of sorcerers.³

The word survives in dialect. In the canton of Vaud the form is *vaudai*, a sorcerer; in the Morvan (departments of the Yonne and the Nièvre) it is *vaudoué*, feminine *vaudouelle*, a witch, and the corresponding verb is *einvaudoueuiller*, to bewitch, *voodoo*.

The term conveys a strong moral reproach: for this reason the inhabitants of Vaud object to the name Vaudais, by which they would naturally be designated, and endeavor to maintain the original vowel and use the form Vaudois, contrary to the practice of the dialect; The folk of the surrounding cantons, however, do not observe this distinction.⁴

¹ The first example cited by Bourquelot is from the bull of Pope Eugenius, in 1439. The English grammarian Palsgrave (1531) defines *vaudoysse* as "witche" (according to Chambure, *Gloss. du Morvan*).

² For example, in Freiburg, 1430, Ochsenbein, *Aus dem Schweiz. Volksleben*, Bern, 1881, gives the processes.

³ Thus the prior Rorengo, of Turin, in the seventeenth century, though a learned man, knew no better than to believe his neighbors, the Waldenses, guilty of the vilest debauchery in their meetings.

⁴ Bridel, *Gloss. du Patois de la Suisse Romane, Vaudai: Gloss. du Morvan, Vaudoué*.

The word had precisely the same form in the fifteenth century. In 1408, the authorities of Freiburg, in order to prevent scandal, provided that any man who should call a man of any condition thief, murderer, traitor, robber, or *voudeiz*, should be banished for six weeks and pay a fine of sixty sols; and any woman who should call an honest woman harlot, ribald, procurer, *voudeise*, or murderer, should be banished for a month and pay a fine of twenty sols.¹

In the same sense the epithet appears to be used in the famous Waldensian poem called "La Nobla Leyczon" (about 1400). "Scripture says, and we can see it, that if there is any good man who loves and serves Jesus Christ, who does not wish to curse and swear and lie, or commit adultery, kill, and rob, or avenge himself upon his enemies, they say that he is *vaudes*, and worthy to be punished." Thus, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, we find the word established in the evil signification explained.

Hayti, originally Spanish, passed in the seventeenth century into the hands of French buccaneers. The colony was peopled chiefly by males, when Ogéron (after the middle of the century), becoming governor, bethought himself of introducing wives from France. His first cargo was composed of fifty orphan girls; the second party, voluntary emigrants, were made up of the less reputable part of the community. These the rude settlers apportioned by lot, and received without nice questions. There is therefore no difficulty in understanding how the word Vaudoux was introduced into the island.² The negroes, who began to be imported about the same time, must have borrowed the term from the Europeans; and little more than a century later Saint-Méry, writing in French, but unaware that the name was equally current in France, supposed the strange sound to indicate primitive barbarism, and went so far as to name the particular African tribe by which the alleged rites had been introduced, a stretch of fancy in which he has been followed by subsequent narrators.

To establish my second proposition, that the characteristic practices ascribed to the alleged Haytian sect, as well as the name, are of European origin, it will only be necessary to compare the charges now made against the Vaudoux of Hayti with those which in the fifteenth century were made against the Vaudois of France and Switzerland.

1. The secret ceremonies of the sect of the Vaudois (Vaudoux) are accompanied with cannibalism, especially the eating of children.

¹ Ochsenbein, *op. cit.* p. 149.

² In a similar way the word obtained currency in the French settlement of Louisiana. In the States, under English influence (as Virginia), the equivalent expression seems to be *conjured*.

The following will serve as an example of the Haytian stories :—

A white cock and then a white goat were killed, and those present were marked with their blood. . . . Presently an athletic young negro came and knelt before the priestess and said : “O Maman, I have a favor to ask.” “What is it, my son ?” “Give us, to complete the sacrifice, the goat without horns.” She gave a sign of assent ; the crowd in the tent separated, and there was a child sitting with its feet bound. . . . There was a short pursuit, but the priest got safely back to the town. He tried to rouse the police to hasten to the spot, but they would do nothing. In the morning they accompanied him to the scene of the sacrifice. They found the remains of the feast, and, near the shed, the boiled skull of the child. (Narrative of the Archbishop of Hayti concerning a French priest who had been present in disguise at a Vaudoux ceremony, as reported by Sir Spenser St. John, pp. 193, 194.)

The Vaudoises of the fifteenth century also feasted on children :—

Alas ! is it not a great shame that the infant or suckling should be roasted on a spit, and then all (the Vaudoises) with one accord make haste to eat it. (“Le Champion des Dames,”¹ A. D. 1440, in Bourquelot, *op. cit.* p. 85.)

2. The victims intended for these rites are often disinterred after having received burial. A crime of this sort is reported, on official authority, to have occurred at Port-au-Prince, July, 1860 :—

Two days after my arrival at Port-au-Prince, a woman who had been put to sleep by means of a narcotic drug, and interred at night in the cemetery of the town, was exhumed during the night. She still breathed. They killed her, then removed the brains, heart, and lungs of the victim, the remains of which were found near the tomb. Next morning an inquiry was ordered. Many arrests were made ; among others, those of a priestess of the Vaudoux (Mamanloi). This woman made revelations ; even offered to deliver over to justice the authors of the murder and profanation in attracting them to the prison by an irresistible power, or by beating her drum in a particular fashion. The authorities and the police, already terrified by the number and importance of the persons compromised, recoiled from this new test, the journals were ordered to keep silence, and the matter was hushed up. It is supposed that the principal motive of the crime was revenge ; but it is considered certain that the mutilated portions were destined for the celebration of some Vaudoux mystery of African fetichism, which, whatever people say, is still practised by the great majority of Haytians. (Letter of the Marquis de Forbin Janson, French Minister in Hayti at the time, cited in the original French by St. John, pp. 218, 219.)

Sir Spenser St. John quotes a second account of this affair from

¹ In this poem, by Martin Le Franc, provost of the church of Lausanne, two interlocutors are represented as discussing the merits and demerits of woman. One, who is called “the Adversary,” cites the wicked practices of the *Vaudoises*, or *Faicturières* ; that is, *makers*, or witches.

the report of the Spanish *chargé d'affaires*, Don Mariano Alvarez. The crime, which had occurred before the arrival of St. John, was related to him by one of the most eminent medical men in Port-au-Prince, and confirmed by another, who had been an eye-witness of some of the details, and pledged his word as to the truth of the story. The author, however, was still skeptical until he had inspected the official archives of the French and Spanish legations.

New-born infants are believed to be in especial danger of such treatment: —

This communication makes mention . . . of the midwives who render new-born babes insensible that are buried, dug up, restored to life, and then eaten. (Reference to a letter in "Vanity Fair," August 13, 1881, St. John, p. xiii.)

Such was also the case in the fifteenth century: —

Then came the aforesaid judge, who examined her, and she admitted and confessed many homicides accomplished by her after a similar fashion, and also many other murders of little children killed in the mother's womb, . . . and in so doing she made herself invisible, in order to see whether the said infants pleased her, and in order to touch them that she might cause their death; and after they had been buried she caused them to be disinterred, and the like do others who belong to her sect, in order to carry them to their assembly, in which assembly they roast and eat them. (Report concerning the arrest of an unnamed foreigner accused of *vauderie*, sworn before Jean Rabusteau, procureur of the commune of Dijon, 18th August, 1452, in Bourquelot, *op. cit.* p. 91.)

3. To accomplish these murders, the Vaudois (Vaudoux) take the shape of wolves.

Though the Haytians believe in the mythical "*loup garou*," they also have the fullest faith in his counterpart among his fellow-countrymen. It is the *loup garou* who is employed by the Papaloi to secure a child for sacrifice, in case the neighborhood does not furnish a suitable subject, and they are supposed to hang about lonely houses at night, to carry off the children. I have often heard my young Haytian servants rush into my country-house, laughingly saying that they had seen a *loup garou* — their laugh, however, tinged with a sort of dread. They have often said that these human monsters prowl about the house at night, and that nothing but the presence of my dogs kept them in respect. I have occasionally seen the object of their fear in an ill-looking negro hanging about the gate, but the sight of my dogs was enough to induce him to move on. The negroes have fortunately an almost superstitious terror of dogs.¹ There is no doubt

¹ Dogs, in France, have also an especial hostility to *loup garous*. A rustic tale relates how the mistress of a household asked a young girl in her service why the dogs made such a clamor on a certain night. "Oh," she said incautiously, "we were in our skins." Being urged, she confessed that her family were in the habit of wandering at night in the shape of beasts. To satisfy curiosity, she changed herself into a wolf, and her mistress was too frightened to effect the re-transfor-

that these *loup garous* do carry off many children, not only for the priests, but for cannibals. (St. John, p. 277.)

The Vaudoises of the fifteenth century often transformed themselves into wolves: —

Tell us whether they the (Vaudoises) are *varous* (wehr-wolves) or *luitons* (goblins); whether they go on foot or on sticks; whether they fly in the air like birds; whether they eat little children. (“Le Champion des Dames,” in Bourquelot, *op. cit.*)

4. The members of the sect of the Vaudois (Vaudoux) may be known by their fondness for ornamented head-gear, and on their feet they wear sandals.

The Papalois may generally be distinguished by the peculiar knotting of their curly wool, which must be a work of considerable labor, and by their profusion of ornaments. We noticed the former peculiarity at the trial of some sorcerers, whilst the jailers probably had relieved them of the latter. I have frequently remarked these knotted-headed negroes, and the attention they received from their sable countrymen. (St. John, p. 196.)

In the fifteenth century, also, it was supposed that the Vaudois could be recognized by the ornaments they wore: —

Item. The aforesaid woman has acknowledged that there are in France and in Burgundy more than fifty or sixty persons of her sect, the greater part wearing mirrors¹ in their caps; among whom there is one who has a very large right leg, and is a great man and one of the principal masters of the sect. In view of the depositions made by said woman, there have been arrested in the said town of Provins three men and two women wearing mirrors in their hats, who, having been interrogated, have all confessed the things above mentioned, and worse, which it would be tedious to relate. (Report above mentioned, 1452, Bourquelot, p. 92.)

In respect to the wearing of sandals, the correspondence is much more curious, since it seems to cast some reflected light on the early history of the Waldenses.

Saint-Méry, describing the meetings of the Vaudoux, says: “Each initiated person puts on a pair of sandals, and places round his body a more or less considerable number of handkerchiefs, or handkerchiefs in which this color is dominant.”

Red handkerchiefs, just what might be expected of cannibal savages; but why sandals?

There can scarcely be any doubt that the repute of sandal-wearing in the manner directed. After this the evil grew worse, but was finally cured by a bullet of consecrated lead from the roof of a church, any other charge being a waste of ammunition. These nightly roving are called *courir le loup-brou*. (Laisnel de la Salle, *Croyances et Légendes du Centre*, i. 182-189. Paris, 1875.)

¹ *Mireurs*: perhaps glittering pieces of glass, or other gauds.

must be explained by the earliest popular designation of the Waldenses, who went, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, by the name of the *sabatati*,¹ or the sandalled. When Peter of Lyons sent forth his disciples, he bade them go as the first apostles, who were bid to take no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse, but be shod with sandals.

Such an injunction might now appear fanatical, but it would not make that impression in Peter's own day, inasmuch as such imitation was considered as suitable to ministers of religion, and sandals were universally worn both by the officiating priest and by the bishop on his diocesan visits.² Their use, in connection with religious teaching, was a clerical peculiarity; the effect of wearing sandals was, therefore, to claim the right of lay ministration, and this peculiarity of costume probably attracted popular attention, and procured for the Waldenses the name mentioned.

Peter de Vaux Cernay, a monk who accompanied Simon de Montfort on his crusade, writing of the Waldenses about A. D. 1217, says:—

To omit the greater part of their infidelities, their errors consisted principally in these four particulars, to wit: in that they wore sandals, after the fashion of the apostles; and in that they said it was never right to swear or kill; and in this, moreover, that they asserted, in case of necessity, provided any one of them had sandals on, that he could perform the sacrament (*conficere corpus Christi*) without ordination from the bishop.

This means no more than that the followers of Waldo, by such fashion of dress, affirmed their right to that lay ministering, the assertion of which was, in the outset, their only heresy.

That the sect established by Peter should be represented in popular lore, at a date six centuries later, as putting on sandals when about to engage in their wicked rites, both shows the persistency of oral tradition and indicates the unreasoning aversion with which the population of France, in the Middle Age, regarded the new teachers.

5. The Vaudois (Vaudoux) can, by their skill in using herbs, produce health and sickness, wealth and poverty, storm and rain, hail and tempest.

¹ The word has been explained as signifying that the poor Waldenses wore wooden shoes (*sabots*); so Milman, *Lat. Christ.* v. 151; but the *sabbatum* was sewn: "Sutores sotularium, sive sabbaterii." *Sotularis* was the usual, *sandalia* the literary, term. See Ducange on the words. The Waldensian sandals are said to have had a peculiar form. They may have been marked with a cross or a crown: "sotulares cruciant . . . calcamenta coronant;" but the name is sufficiently intelligible without bringing in such considerations.

² Est autem genus calcamenti, quo induuntur ministri ecclesiæ . . . quo jussi sunt apostoli a domino indui . . . episcopi est huc illuc que discurrere per parochiam: ne forte cadant sandalia de pedibus, ligata sunt. (Alcuin, *Lib. de Div. Offic.* c. 39.)

They (that is, the Papaloi, or priests of the Vaudoux) produce death — apparent, slow, or instantaneous — madness, paralysis, impotence, *riches, or poverty*, according to their will. . . .

And if it be doubted that these individuals, without even common sense, can understand so thoroughly the properties of herbs and their combinations as to be able to apply them to the injury of their fellow-creatures, I can only remark that tradition is a great book, and that they receive these instructions as a sacred deposit from one generation to another, with the further advantage that in the hills and mountains of this island grow in abundance similar herbs to those which in Africa they employ in their incantations. (From the official report of Don M. Alvarez, St. John, pp. 215, 216.)

The last statement is undoubtedly correct. It is not only in the Dark Continent that grows

The insane root
That takes the reason prisoner.

In the fifteenth century the Vaudoises were no less skilful in making use of herbs:—

Likewise, the old woman related that when she had offered homage to the devil, he brought her an ointment composed of various poisons, by which she ruined many a man, and made idiot and deformed many a pleasing innocent. Likewise, the wicked creature (*la male beste*) averred that, by means of the powder which she blew, she caused to rise a tempest which ruined the corn and vines, destroyed trees, and laid waste a country; and if any one was vehement against her, he was immediately tempest-stricken. (“Le Champion des Dames,” Bourquelot, p. 87.)

With regard to the confection of such powders, the most valuable recipe will be found in the tragedy of “Macbeth,” by William Shakespeare, London, 1623.

If it were desirable to go beyond the limits of the sect of the Vaudois, the Haytian tales might be more fully illustrated.

Thus, according to the confession of sorcerers tried at Logrogno, Spain, in 1610, the great festivals of their sect were presided over by the devil in person, under the form of a black man crowned with small horns, and having a large horn on the forehead, which gave light to the assembly. (We have here, it may be, the reason why certain glittering head-ornaments were supposed to be characteristic of wizards.) At his right hand stood the king and queen of the order. The ceremonies consisted of adoration, confession, and penance, inflicted by the hand of the fiend. (In the Haytian account it is the priest who chastises the recalcitrant.) Then followed a diabolical parody of the mass, with an exhortation, in which Satan inculcated fidelity, and promised a better paradise. The offertory was

taken up in a basin (Saint-Méry makes the receptacle a hat), and the meeting, which could not be prolonged beyond cock-crow, ended in a general debauch.¹

The correspondence makes it sufficiently plain that the rites of the Haytian narrative are a form of the witches' sabbath, a parody of Christian worship, not a heathen orgy.

Vaudoux, or Voodoo, as already mentioned, is said to be employed in Hayti and Louisiana as the title of an omnipotent deity. By this is probably to be understood that it is a Haytian and Louisianian title for the devil. This is not unlikely, though insufficiently attested; for such is actually the case, not in Hayti, but in the Protestant canton of Vaud, Switzerland, where a form of the same word is actually so employed. Here *Vaudai* is a name of the Wild Huntsman; he causes the Rhone to overflow, and is seen to descend that river when in flood; he has so much the character of a nature deity that his title has been taken for a corruption of Woden or Odin.² But the origin of the use is clear; *Vaudai*, signifying sorcerer, is applied to the evil spirit, who is a sorcerer *par éminence*.

What a destiny for a name, and how Peter would have been amazed if he could have foreseen his celebrity! On the one hand, to supply the denomination of a gentle and simple body of worshippers, a band of mountaineers living in primitive simplicity; on the other, to ride the air with the wild hunt, to swell rivers in destructive inundation, to blow over the fair lake of Geneva as the southern blast, to imitate the mighty Woden so closely that scholars have failed to draw the distinction; then, again, to preside over the diabolical orgies of witches, and be esteemed the father of their tribe; to become a sound of terror in a continent beyond his ken; to inspire dread in the souls of mothers of a dusky race, alarmed for the safety of their little ones, of whose tender flesh his namesakes are supposed cannibalistically desirous; to move the indignation of travelers, to point the paragraphs of a politician, to assist in blackening the character of a people by the dire and barbarous ring of a title which, after all, has perhaps no worse significance than to denote the pleasant and peaceful country in which the aforesaid Peter first drew the breath of this fugitive being: verily, if all this could have been revealed to the good man, his soul would have been astonished within him.

¹ Llorente, *Hist. Crit. de l'Inquisition en Espagne*, 1818, iii. 433.

² Vulliemin, *Le Canton de Vaud*, 3d ed., Lausanne, 1885. This author takes him for Woden, as does Rochholz, *Schweitzersagen*, ii. 211. Probably *Bôdet*, a name of the Wild Huntsman in Berry (Laisnel de la Salle, i. 172), whose train is composed of lost souls, has the same derivation, though the writer takes this form also for Woden. Another form of the name is *Odet*.

In respect to the Vaudoux dance, the narratives of those Peeping Toms to whom the Haytian *raconteurs* owe their knowledge of that festival may be supplemented by another tale o' truth, to which they bear a singular resemblance : —

And, vow ! Tam saw an unco sight !
Warlocks and witches in a dance ;
Nae cotillion brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast ;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge :
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.
Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses ;
And by some devilish cantrip slight
Each in its cauld hand held a light, —
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's bane in gibbet airns ;
Twa span-lang, wee unchristened bairns ;
A thief, new-cuttet frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape ;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted ;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted ;
A garter, which a babe had strangled ;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft ;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

I will not affirm that the correspondence with the Haytian account so establishes the truth of the Scotch story that it is impossible to doubt it.

Temples of the Vaudoux are affirmed to exist everywhere in Hayti, but the accounts given of them do not inspire confidence, inasmuch as they appear to be only local chapels or oratories of the Catholic Church, which are popularly imagined to be used as meeting-places by the fabulous sect.

It appears to me that it has now been sufficiently demonstrated that the Haytian stories contain little or nothing which is not of European origin.

It may be thought, however, that a further question may arise concerning the actual occurrence of some of the alleged crimes. What shall be said, for example, of the celebrated case of Jeanne Pellé, who was executed, together with eight accomplices, at Port-

au-Prince, February 13, 1864, for partaking of the flesh of her murdered niece, Claircine, butchered in order to perform a Vaudoux rite?

It may be answered, that the parallel with mediæval conceptions, which makes these Haytian superstitions so interesting in a historical point of view, holds in this respect also. The prisoners were convicted of sorcery as well as murder, and their confessions extracted by torture. Sir Spenser St. John, who was present at the trial, writes:—

I can never forget the manner in which the youngest female prisoner turned to the public prosecutor and said: "Yes, I did confess what you assert, but remember how cruelly I was beaten before I said a word." And it was well known that all the prisoners had at first refused to speak, thinking that the Vaudoux would protect them, and it required the frequent application of the club to drive this belief out of their heads. That prisoners are tortured to make them confess is known to be a common practice in Hayti. (Pp. 201, 202.)

It is obvious that in Hayti a few years since, as in France three centuries ago, a person accused of witchcraft was already lost, and to secure his condemnation was considered a pious duty. In a case of alleged cannibalism, the author remarks that one of the prisoners died under the pressure of the cord tightened round his forehead. Under these circumstances it is plain that the human remains produced in court prove nothing, any more than the mutilated corpse of little Hugh of Lincoln, in the thirteenth century, proved all the Jews in England guilty of his murder.

Very likely, in some of the prosecutions, there was a motive of revenge or self-interest. It is mentioned that most of the discoveries of cannibals have been made by a rival sect; that is, by jealous neighbors. In mediæval persecutions such motives certainly existed. It was declared by persons accused of vauderie at Arras, in 1462, that the judges had extorted from them considerable sums of money. This declaration did not save them; but in 1491 the parliament of Burgundy annulled the sentences pronounced against the alleged Vaudois, and condemned the judges of Arras to make good out of their own property the damage which had been caused by their acts, directing that an assessment should be levied on these fines, in order to found, in the cathedral of Arras, a mass for the souls of the victims, and to erect a cross at the place of execution.

That the Haytian authorities are growing disinclined to proceed against assumed sorcerers and cannibals will, I think, be generally regarded as an evidence of advance in civilization.

Considering that the Waldenses, against whom charges so shocking were brought and believed, were a singularly pure people, I think it may safely be concluded that the accusations against their namesakes, the Vaudoux, are equally imaginary.

At all events, to establish even the smallest part of these accusations requires evidence of a character very different from that hitherto presented.¹

¹ The *New York World* of Sunday, December 5, 1886, for a copy of which I am indebted to the courtesy of the editors, contains an account, purporting to come from an eye-witness, of the sacrifice of a child at a Vaudoux ceremony in Hayti, said to have taken place in that year. The want of signature renders it unnecessary to examine the relation; but its publication led to a correspondence, in the columns of the same paper (December 6-13), which possesses singular interest as a study in evidence, since the writers, who signed their own names, had lived in the island, and had possessed opportunities of judging at first hand.

A visitor in 1879 thought that the acts alleged would be more likely to occur in San Domingo than in Hayti: "In San Domingo the natives are more lawless than in Hayti. Fetichism and Voodooism prevail in all that section."

On the other hand, a lady from San Domingo *knew* that children were unsafe in Hayti: —

"I come from San Domingo, and I know that cannibalism existed in Hayti to a fearful extent. The Voodoo priests have great knowledge of the power of herbs, and do things that would seem to us here impossible. No mother would dare leave her child in the street or out of her sight a moment, knowing what would await it should she do so. . . . I have known instances where a child was fed sweet cakes containing powerful herbs which would make the child appear as if dead. It would be buried, and immediately dug up by the Voodoo priests, and kept to offer up as a sacrifice. Its flesh would be cooked and eaten."

Mr. Bassett, Haytian consul-general, wrote: —

"I have lived in Hayti as United States minister for nine years, and there is just about as much cannibalism there as there is in the city of New Haven."

A well-known author, who considered that he had investigated the stories, and ascertained their truth, had seen, in the town of Jacmel, in 1875, eighteen men who had been arrested as members of a band of cannibals, the den where they met being strewn with remnants of their orgies. The foreign residents clamored for the execution of these men, but the authorities reprieved and afterwards pardoned them. This lenity was attributed to the political influence of the Vaudoux priests, an assumption which the writer appears to consider well founded.

A doctor of divinity, a native West Indian, wrote: —

"From my own knowledge I can testify that the Voodoo worship and the snake dance are practised in Hayti, but cannibalism, I am sure, is not a custom of the Haytians. . . . I feel quite sure that President Salomon is not a Voodoo worshipper."

Some indignant citizens desired that the United States officials be instructed to look into these horrors, with a view to armed intervention if necessary.

Mr. Preston, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Hayti, denied all the charges.

"I was born in Hayti, and spent about half my life in that country, and I never saw any person who had seen anything there in the shape of cannibalism. . . . I have seen persons who were known serpent worshippers, but no such thing exists as Voodooism."

The son of the Protestant Episcopal bishop, while not prepared to deny all cases of cannibalism in his country, affirmed that the snake was quite as extensively worshipped in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Dominica.

Consul Bassett, in a second letter, while denying the existence of child-sacrifice, declared: —

As to sporadic acts of human sacrifice or of cannibalism, the criminal courts of other countries furnish examples ; and I do not see any reason to suppose that child sacrifice is more common in Hayti than in Massachusetts, where a notorious case has occurred within a few years, or cannibalism for the purpose of satisfying appetite more frequent than in various European countries, where similar acts are matters of record.

It will be understood that I am far from intending to cast either reproach or ridicule on the observers who have accepted and reported the alleged practices of the Vaudoux in Hayti. We observe that the charges have grown out of a general superstition, which, as is always the case, creates its own testimony ; we see the diplomatic corps, foreign residents, native officials, clergy, and medical faculty equally convinced of the truth of rumors, the absurdity of which only appears when their history and origin are comprehended. We find like tales credited and repeated by travellers, missionaries, and historians. It may thus be perceived with what weight public belief presses on the individual mind. To a Frenchman of the fifteenth century the evidence against the maligned Waldenses would probably have appeared more conclusive than that against the Haytians at present appears.

In discrediting the existence of Voodoo worship, I by no means intend to deny that charms and spells supposed to possess magical efficacy are employed in Hayti and elsewhere under that name, or that impostors exist, who, for the sake of profit, are willing to suffer the odium attached to the reputation of conjurer.¹ Whether such practices, like the term by which they are designated, are wholly of European origin, or African superstitions have blended with the European, must be left for subsequent investigation to determine.

William W. Newell.

“Voodooism actually exists everywhere in the West Indies, and nowhere more than in the British islands, under the name Obeah.”

On the other hand, Mr. Cable (*The Century Magazine*, April, 1886) considers the worship of “Obi” as the opposite of that of “Voodoo.”

It will thus be seen how difficult it is to arrive at any exact information by inquiry on the spot. Is serpent worship or Obeah worship among negroes as mythical as devil worship? The stories from Trinidad, cited by Charles Kingsley in *At Last* (ch. xi.), appear to have come from the same mint as the Haytian tales respecting the horrors of Voodooism.

¹ Voodoo doctors are to be found in Northern cities. Taverner, writing in the *Boston Post*, February 1, 1888, mentions one as in full practice in Boston. “Her reputation on the northerly slopes of Beacon Hill, I was told, fully equals that which the most fashionable physician has acquired on the southerly side of the same eminence.” He describes the sorceress as having the appearance of a good-natured and genial person.