

## Introduction.

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IN the first volume of this work the texts treated of belonged chiefly to the Series entitled "The Evil Spirits," and dealt with the relations which existed between men and demons, and provided the spells whereby the evil which had attacked a sick man might be removed. The incantations of the two Series "Fever Sickness" and "Headaches" which are translated in the present volume are of a similar character, but the formulæ prescribed must be classed under the head of sympathetic magic to an even greater extent than those of the preceding Series, and the exorcisms go far to show that the *tapu* (more commonly known as *taboo*) was as real a terror to the Assyrians as it was to the other Semitic tribes. The more this class of texts is examined, the more closely are their contents found to resemble the magic of other nations. This is proved by the following considerations:—

### (I) WORDS OF POWER.

In attacking the powers of evil it was of no avail for the magician to rely solely on his own strength; it was necessary for him to call to his aid some divine authority to support him in his combat. This

aid is generally known as the “Word of Power,” and in its simplest form is the name of some divine being or thing. It is for this reason that so many of the Assyrian incantations end with the words

“By Heaven be ye exorcised! By Earth be ye exorcised!”

at which adjuration the evil spirits are supposed to be overcome. It is also common to find long lists of gods invoked in the same way and for the same purpose.

But in addition to this simple form there are many elaborations which can all be traced back to the same fountain-head. For instance, in many exorcisms against diseases which were supposed to be caused by the agency of spirits, we find the sorcerer repeating the legend which tells how Marduk went to Ea, his father, to ask his advice against the sickness which possesses the sick man for whom he is reciting the incantation :—

“ Marduk hath seen him (the sick man) and  
 “ Unto the house of his father Ea hath entered and  
 spoken :  
 “ ‘ Father ’ <sup>1</sup>  
 “ Twice he hath said unto him,  
 “ ‘ What this man shall do he knoweth not,  
 “ ‘ Whereby he may be assuaged.’

<sup>1</sup> Here Marduk repeats the first line of the tablet.

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“ Ea hath answered his son Marduk :  
 “ ‘ O my son, what dost thou not know,  
 “ ‘ What more can I give thee ?  
 “ ‘ O Marduk, what dost thou not know,  
 “ ‘ How can I add unto thy knowledge ?  
 “ ‘ What I know thou knowest also.  
 “ ‘ Go, my son Marduk ’ ”<sup>1</sup> —

Then follow the advice of Ea and his instructions for healing the patient. This legend is constantly repeated in the incantations, and it was so well known that it is generally quoted on the tablets in an abbreviated form in one line in the following way : “ Marduk hath seen him : ‘ What I ’ ; ‘ Go, my son ’ ” ; the priest or magician supplying the remainder and reciting it in full.

Now, it is not difficult to see that the mention of this episode is based on a fundamental principle of all magic, viz., the use of Words of Power, for rites and ceremonies have no inherent authority of their own, and are only of avail when used in conjunction with supernatural aid. By bringing in the story of Ea and Marduk, the magician at once invokes divine help, and, in so far as he carries out the directions which Ea gives to his son, it is as though Marduk were himself performing the incantation, the exorcist becoming the servant of the god, endowed with

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<sup>1</sup> See note *d*, p. 117 of Vol. I.

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corresponding power against spirits. Indeed, magic, be it worked by spell or amulet, depends largely on these Words of Power written or recited, and a similar use of magical words is to be found among other ancient nations. For instance, we find in the Egyptian Pyramid Texts of Unas (c. 3500 B.C.) that it is stated that “a book with words of magical power” was buried with him.<sup>1</sup> No demon could withstand the authority of these mystic words if only they were rightly employed, particularly if used in the proper place, and with the proper intonation, and by a properly qualified priest.

We have seen, then, that Ea and Marduk, two of the most powerful gods of Assyria, especially in all matters relating to sorcery, were supposed to help magicians, should they be invoked to aid them in their spells. The use of mighty names in exorcisms, and the invocations to the gods to lay the evil under a ban, had each its special significance. The human sorcerer with all his ceremonies and abracadabra was powerless against supernatural evil unless he could depend on the aid of some more powerful spirit, and since the gods were vested with authority over all evil, it was the gods to whom he turned in his hour of need. The system is a universal one, and lies at the base of all magic, whether it be the spells of the Sumerian priest who exorcised a demon two

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<sup>1</sup> See Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, p. 28.

or three thousand years before Christ, or a Syrian monk casting out devils, or a mediæval wizard summoning a familiar spirit. The only difference lies in the actual divine word which was used; the Babylonian priest adjures the evil spirit by one of the gods, or by heaven and earth, while the later wizards invoke the name of Christ. Each trusts to the god in whom he believes to lay the devil under a ban.

It is also plain from these texts that the Assyrian sorcerer considers himself in direct communication with the gods, being merely the mouthpiece through which the divine will acts. Indeed, he claims to be sent by the gods when he is expelling a demon:—

- “ The man of Ea am I!  
 “ The man of Damkina am I!  
 “ The messenger of Marduk am I!  
 “ To revive the ( ) sick man,  
 “ The great lord Ea hath sent me;  
 “ He hath added his pure spell to mine,  
 “ He hath added his pure voice to mine,  
 “ He hath added his pure spittle to mine,  
 “ He hath added his pure prayer to mine.”<sup>1</sup>

And at the end of his exorcism he prays to Ea<sup>2</sup>:—

- “ O Ea, King of the Deep, to see . . .  
 “ I, the magician, am thy slave.

<sup>1</sup> *Devils and Evil Spirits*, Vol. I, Tablet III, l. 65 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 260.

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“ March thou on my right hand,  
 “ Be present on my left ;  
 “ Add thy pure spell unto mine,  
 “ Add thy pure voice unto mine,  
 “ Vouchsafe (to me) pure words,  
 “ Make fortunate the utterances of my mouth,  
 “ Ordain that my decisions be happy,  
 “ Let me be blessed where'er I tread,  
 “ Let the man whom I (now) touch be blessed.  
 “ Before me may lucky thoughts be spoken,  
 “ After me may a lucky finger be pointed.  
 “ Oh that thou wert my guardian Genius,  
 “ And my guardian Spirit !”

Now the idea that the sorcerer was the direct agent of the divine will continued down to the Middle Ages, when the wizard in uttering his spells describes himself as “ the servant of the Most High.”<sup>1</sup>

The intention of the magician when combating these evil spirits is to bind them in such a way, with the help of the Mighty Names, that they can do no more harm. In all Assyrian magical texts great stress is laid on the banning or tabooing of the demons by the divine powers which the priest invokes, i.e., either the names of gods or, far more frequently, the powers of heaven and earth. The phrase “ By Heaven be ye exorcised! By Earth be ye exorcised!” calls in all

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<sup>1</sup> See p. xxx.

celestial and earthly powers against the invisible foes, who will thus be spellbound. In the same way, some thousands of years later in the same country the descendants of these people, the holy Nestorian monks, were credited with the ability to exorcise devils and lay them under a ban in the name of Christ. It is related of Rabban Hormizd, the Persian, that he once overcame certain devils in this way :—

- “ Straightway the devils of the impure Ignatius  
 [began] to buzz in the air,  
 “ And they took the miserable man up and held  
 him suspended in the air ;  
 “ Suddenly our father fixed a sharp arrow in his  
 bow,  
 “ And shot it at the miserable man and his legions  
 and pierced his heart ;  
 “ He made the deceiving devils to hear [these  
 words] :—‘ It is not meet for you  
 “ ‘ To fulfil in him your will with the fulness of  
 impurity :  
 “ ‘ By Jesus Christ I bind you, O ye trembling  
 horde,  
 “ ‘ So that ye may abide in the air as ye are in hot  
 agitation,  
 “ ‘ And ye shall continue to abide in terror until  
 I loose you from the bond.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hormizd*, p. 474.

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(2) KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPERNATURAL ENEMY.

Words of power, therefore, plainly constitute one of the first principles of magic. The next principle, and one no less important, consists in the knowledge of the name or characteristics of the unseen influence which afflicts the sick man. It is, however, not necessary that the diagnosis should be exact, for it cannot be expected that a magician should be able to define the exact form of the invisible demon or *tapu* which has assailed his patient. Devils are legion, and *tapus* may arise from countless unknown or forgotten causes, and neither can be distinctly specified; yet it is absolutely necessary that the spirit or evil influence shall be mentioned by name in order that, by whatsoever power it be that it is removed, there shall be no doubt as to what is meant. To this end, therefore, the priest repeats long lists of ghosts, devils, or *tapus*, any one of which may be the cause of the sickness, and by so doing he impresses the demon that he is in possession of his name or description. The idea underlying this custom is that when once he possesses the name of his enemy he has gained the mastery over some portion of him, and just as he is able to cast spells upon living people if he has some of their nail-parings, or hair, or even wax figures in their likeness, so is he able to conjure the hostile spirit because he knows its name. This is exemplified in the customs of the natives of



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many savage tribes, who are afraid to disclose their names lest some enemy should hear it and thereby be able to work magic against them.<sup>1</sup> Thus, “an Australian black is always very unwilling to tell his real name, and there is no doubt that this reluctance is due to the fear that through his name he may be injured by sorcerers.”<sup>2</sup> Among the ancient Egyptians the monster Apep could be destroyed by making a wax figure of him, and after writing his name upon it by casting it into the fire;<sup>3</sup> and it is evident that the writing of the name is considered as good as moulding nail-parings into the wax, the difference being that Apep is a demon and nothing tangible can be obtained of him. In Palestinian Demonology the same thing is apparent in the words of the Unclean Spirit (Luke iv, 34), “Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.”

In the magic of the Middle Ages, if a demon was slow to appear at the command of the wizard, he rendered himself liable to be cursed and buried in oblivion, because his master knew his name and “seal.” In one of the Grimoires, or books on magic, the student of sorcery is recommended to write the seal of the demon on a piece of parchment and put it into a box “with brimstone, assafœtida, and other stinking

<sup>1</sup> On this see Frazer, *Golden Bough* (2nd ed.), i, 404.

<sup>2</sup> R. Brough Smith, *Aborigines of Victoria*, i, 469 (quoted *ibid.*).

<sup>3</sup> Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, p. 171.

perfumes"; he must then exorcise the demon and threaten to destroy him.

“ . . . I, who am the servant of the Most High  
 “ . . . will excommunicate thee, will destroy thy  
 “ name and seal which I have in this box, will burn  
 “ them with unquenchable fire, and bury them in un-  
 “ ending oblivion . . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, when we find long repetitions of the names of ghosts and all the possible forms of death which may have overtaken them when alive on earth, or lists of demons with their peculiar characteristics, it is plain that the magician expects to vanquish the spirit as soon as he shows that he knows its name. It is immaterial that he himself should know exactly which one it is out of the long categories which he reels off; it is only necessary for him to make the list of possible demons sufficiently inclusive to contain the description or name of the particular demon which he wishes to exorcise, and it is enough that he should repeat its name in some form or other, that it should cease from troubling his patient. Indeed, this is the idea of what may be termed the poetical part of the Assyrian spells, which all begin with long descriptions of the particular demon which it is intended to drive out.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Edward Waite, *The Book of Black Magic*, p. 199.