

VOODOOS AND WITCHES

THE following newspaper clipping has been sent to us, and we have been requested to give an opinion on it:

VOODOOISM BELIEVERS SENTENCED TO DEATH. HAVANA, May 9— Three Negroes, practicers of voodooism, have been sentenced to death for the killing of the latter's centenarian father.

They believed that by washing in the blood of the centenarian they too would live to be 100 years old.

It is a mystic maxim that all occult development begins with the vital body, and this applies whether the aspirant follows the white or black path. But there is one cardinal difference: He who follows the white path aims to attain by sacrifice of self, by dying daily to the old sins, and giving his own lifeblood for others. Nor are these sayings mere figures of speech, the mortification of self is an actual fact in the lives of those who attain.

The black magician who is not prepared to sacrifice self must sacrifice someone else, to obtain the products of his or her vital body. For that purpose he obtains certain substances from the body of his victim which are particularly rich in the specialized ether whereof the vital body is composed, and with them as nuclei he may draw upon his victim's vital body so that the person so abused soon wastes away, and often becomes insane.

In Europe there is in many places a "superstition" that it is dangerous to leave combings of hair and clippings of nails about lest the witches get them. This, according to some, is only believed in "by ignorant servant girls and old women in their dotage"; nevertheless, there is more truth in the tale than the wiseacres suspect, for the hair and nails contain and retain a larger share of the etheric vital body than most other substances, as seen by the fact that they are preserved in the grave long after the rest of the body has decayed. These substances can therefore be kept for a long time and used at the convenience of the sorcerer.

The placenta discharged after birth is also surcharged with the ether, and is much more potent in magic, but it must be used at once for obvious reasons, and it is a favorite medium with Negro devotees of Voodoo magic.

Next comes the blood. This is better still, but it involves the murder of the victim in a manner traceable and punishable; hence it is not often that the sorcerers attempt it nowadays. This sacrifice usually is made at the instance of an elemental, which agrees to serve the murderer in consideration. By bathing in the victim's blood, this entity absorbs all the ether, and attains to a degree of intelligence with ability to function in the dark border-region between the visible and higher worlds, and they keep their bargains scrupulously. There are numerous instances of this relationship consummated in the described manner in the Far East, in Southern Europe and among the votaries of Voodooism.

We do not believe for a moment that the Negroes in question killed their father with the idea stated in the newspaper clipping; that is, if they were really Voodoo's. Maybe

an elemental had served the father, and now demanded another sacrifice, for they can only live upon the ether of a victim a certain number of years; then it evaporates, so to speak, and it becomes necessary to replenish it by a new sacrifice. Then it often makes a bargain with a son, who is more easily influenced because he has seen the benefit accruing to the father and may therefore commit parricide as in the above instance.

There is still another substance which is very efficient in black magic, and may be obtained with comparatively less danger to the perpetrator. A certain "teacher" of occultism who lectured in America about a decade ago caused quite a scandal by a certain practice, and his purpose was thought to be quite different from black magic; but one of his "pupils" told the writer that this man always "saved" the extract, obtained from his victims, and he wondered why. That chance remark made the purpose plain to us, and the man's adherence to the practice, despite many dangers and loss of reputation among many thousands of former followers, seems *prima facie* evidence that he is devoted to the black art without reserve or rescue.