

day was rapidly dimming, being darkened by any in the sky, nature seemed these unusual events is terror with which individuals to be carried away in

eclipse never lasts longer than a moment to allow a thousand to the mind. The disappearance of the sun is a great trouble to ignorant men; with how much more reason should the disappearance of the sun cause disquietude!

History is full of the examples of the terror caused by eclipses, and demonstrated through ignorance and superstition. Nicias had resolved to march into Sicily with his army; but, deterred by an eclipse of the sun, he was wishing to delay several days to assure himself if our satellites would lose nothing after this. He missed the opportunity; for his army was destroyed, and he himself perished, and this misfortune commenced the ruin of

the taken advantage of people for the moon, to gain their advantage by sustaining his soldiers on the moon and nearly losing this reward that he was about to depose began, terror seized the people of Columbus the accus-

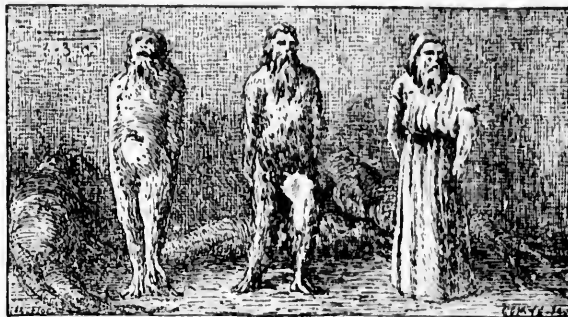
predicting an eclipse of the sun, in the war of Paulus and Pericles, Agathocles,

king of Syracuse, and Dionysius, king of Sicily, nearly fell victims to the ignorance of their soldiers. Alexander, near Arbella, was obliged to use all his skill to calm the terror that an eclipse had cast over his troops. Thus it is that superior men, rather than sink under the circumstances which oppress them, exert their art to turn them to their profit.

How many fables were built on the idea that eclipses were the effect of Divine wrath, which avenged the iniquities of man by depriving him of light! Sometimes Diana sought Endymion in the mountains of Caria; sometimes the magicians of Thessaly caused the moon to fall on the herbs destined for enchantment.

Now it is a dragon which devours the sun, and whole nations seek to frighten it away by cries; or it is supposed that God holds the sun enclosed in a tube, and hides or shows us the light by means of a shutter.

The progress of science has proved the absurdity of these opinions and fears, since it is known to be possible to calculate by astronomical tables, and to predict a long time beforehand, the instant when the wrath of heaven will burst forth. Science is the sure death of superstition.



CARVED MANDRAGORA ROOTS.

Biot gives us very curious details on the rites which presided and which still preside over the observation of the eclipses in the Celestial Empire. The Emperor is considered to be the son of heaven; and with this title his government ought to present the picture of the immutable order which governs the celestial movements. When the two great luminaries—the sun and the moon—instead of following their own routes separately, cross each other's paths, the regularity of the order of the heavens appears to be upset; and the disturbance which is there manifested must have its likeness, as well as the cause, in the disorders of the government of the Emperor. An eclipse of the sun was then considered as a warning given by Heaven to the Emperor to examine his faults and correct them. When this phenomenon was announced beforehand by the appointed astronomer, the emperors and grandees of this court prepared themselves by fasting, and dressing in the plainest garments.