

attached to it, and which, both by the exaggerations of the reporters' and by additions of all kinds, were commonly disfigured beyond recognition. Thus, for example, for a long time the numerous ancient and modern testimonies to the so-called showers of fire and stones were explained as lies, until these phenomena were, since the beginning of this century, established as scientific facts (meteor showers). Even in many cases in which the account of a wonderful appearance bears evidence of deception, intentional or otherwise, it is still to be observed that at least the belief in the same, or in the report relating thereto, has its root in some unusual or striking phenomenon which was strangely interpreted and surrounded with a mysterious importance.

A proof of this is furnished by the innumerable accounts, which we meet among all peoples from the earliest to the latest times, of signs and wonders *in which blood plays a prominent part*. According to these accounts, from time to time, on the most varied materials, *blood* has suddenly appeared,—now in food, now on clothes, now in standing water, now in rain, on walls or on rocks, reddening fields of snow or surfaces of seas. These appearances have always attracted the attention of the people, who, interpreting them after their own manner, have ever regarded them as grave and ominous. But only in latest times has science recognized the fact that here also there is a region open for her researches. And since then she has for the first time made herself mistress of a realm which, up to this time, had been used exclusively as a field of exercise for superstition and fancy. Accordingly it has become possible, in the first place, to do justice to facts which past centuries had refused to acknowledge as such, and further to array the same in the ranks of known natural phenomena, to which the popular belief was accustomed to oppose them as *wonders*.

Bread enclosed in a cupboard over night becomes covered with *blood*, which collects itself in red drops; another day blood appears on all kinds of food; specks of blood appear suddenly on garments and on furniture, and disappear again with-