

is so bewitching that no argument will avail. We have amongst our friends a lady, one of the most accomplished it was ever our happy fortune to meet. Possessed of a clear practical mind she is the last one in the world we would imagine likely to come under the spell of the charm superstition; yet she implicitly believes that an unsightly crop of warts on her fair hands were charmed away, after repeated other treatment had failed, by an old Devonshire crone. It is useless to point out that warts frequently occur through disordered digestion, and as frequently disappear, voluntarily, on change of scene, occupation or habits; that immediately after the "charming" process she was married and removed to another locality. These explanations are far too prosaic; and although the plausibility of the arguments is admitted, the credit of the cure is given to the magical power possessed by the half-blind and wholly deaf old woman. And to show the inconsistencies the human mind will revel in, we know of no one more skilled in massage than the same lady; and we have often found severe muscular pains disappear, as though by magic, under the manipulation of her dexterous fingers. Yet to hint that such power on her part is magical would bring down a very shower-bath of ridicule upon one's head.

We know of no districts in England so likely to reward the inquiry into charms and their workings as are Devonshire and Cornwall. Removed to a certain extent from the rush of life, which, elsewhere, makes the practical and tangible the only things believed in, the kindly people of these counties pursue the even tenor of their way, and accept still as gospel much that their forefathers bequeathed them. Poetic in their natures as the glorious scenery about them, simple of heart and guileless of mind, generation after generation wove a folk-lore incomparably richer than any we have met with elsewhere, and formulated a system of charm-cure almost scientific in its precision of detail, and as full of mystic ritual as the weird religious rites of Phœnician and Druid, whence, indeed, much of the superstition was derived.

But even here, as elsewhere, education is having its necessary and legitimate result. The young men rise up and with glib tongue and scientific phrase explain away

the superstition; and the maidens pay attention to the newer charms of cosmetiques and laces. The old order is changing, and one has to search diligently in hidden nooks, and amongst the remnants of the passing generation, ere one is rewarded with practical proofs of the old beliefs.

As we have already instanced the belief in the efficacy of wart-charms it may be well to start with a few of these charms, not one of which was ever known to fail!!

I. Each wart must be touched with a new pin and the pin is then to be dropped into a new bottle, the mouth of which must be closed with a cork and bound with a hair from the head of a newly-born male child. The bottle is then to be buried in a freshly-made grave;—if that of a suicide, so much the speedier will the charm work. As the pins corrode the warts will drop off.

II. Each wart is to be touched with a small pebble gathered from a brook at the time when the moon is "like to a silver bow, new bent in heaven." This pebble is to be placed in a bag made of fair linen. The bag must be dropped on the way to church in the afternoon. Any person who picks up the bag, and examines the contents, will have transferred to his or her fingers the warts of the original possessor.

III. Another charm, and of great repute, was to steal a piece of meat from a butcher's stall in the public market. The warts were touched with this and the meat afterwards buried. As the meat decayed the warts disappeared, *pari passu*.

The charm which effected our friend's cure was a somewhat elaborate ritual. *Imprimis*: Three questions were asked. The date of her birth, her name, and the complexion of her lover. These satisfactorily answered, certain hieroglyphs were drawn on the newly-kaolined floor with a charred stick, and the lady was instructed to stand upon them, with her eyes closed, and the hands pendant and crossed. Muttering some cabalistic words, which our friend could not catch, the old woman moistened her left forefinger with saliva, and touched each wart; then having clapped her hands together seven times, she made the sign of the cross, and the charm was worked.

Performed by some old women we have met, we can easily believe this charm would be effectual, for their saliva would be