

ornithologist of his time, Aldrovandus, propagate such ridiculous fables in his great work. He there maintains that sea-ducks are the product of certain trees, and he even represents these with the fruits which they bear. But by an unpardonable error for a naturalist, these pretended fruits from which the birds are issuing are only barnacles, crustaceans which live at the bottom of the sea, and with which he nevertheless overloads the miraculous boughs! After this one may well ask, which is the most censurable—the savant who transcribes such absurdities, or the public who believe in them?

Some plants have also become celebrated in the annals of charlatanism. There were plants that warded off evil, plants that caused injury, and magical plants. Antiquity possessed a long list of these, and we have not fallen behind it.

On one side we find a venerated plant, the St. John's-wort, which,



MARINE DRAGON: FROM MAGNUS.

gathered at the moment pointed out by the legend and hung over the outer door, preserved the house from lightning. On the other was a long list of cabalistic plants, among which the thorn-apple, ought to be mentioned in the first rank. This was the frightful poison which sorcerers made use of to intoxicate their senses.

But no magical herb ever enjoyed more celebrity than the mandrake, an indispensable ingredient in all the philtres employed by the old sorcerers. Antiquity had already conducted us to this dark road, by maintaining that the roots of this plant were of human form. To speak the truth, they in no way resemble a man, but the credulity of the learned and the astuteness of charlatanism have supplied what was requisite to give a certain amount of credulity to the opinions of the ancients. It was after they had rudely shaped themselves into human likeness that the magicians employed them in their incantations, and it was also under this form that the vulgar thought they were found at the foot of gibbets