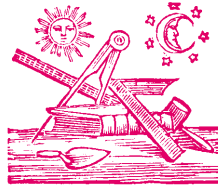


WITCHCRAFT GHOSTS & ALCHEMY

BY
HUBERT DE SOUSLEAU

TRANSLATED BY
J. M. STANDEFER

WITH 10 PLATES IN COLOUR
AND 366 ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT



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A Woman Possessed by a Spirit

Richesson, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Venice, 1875). Collection of the author.

WITCHCRAFT GHOSTS AND ALCHEMY



FIG. 8. A SPIRIT BEING CONJURED.
Richesson, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Venice, 1875).

II

Conjuring the Dead

Spirits can communicate spontaneously, or come at our call ; that is, on invocation. When it is wished to communicate with a designated spirit, she must of necessity be invoked. When a spirit is invoked for the first time, it is best to designate her with some precision. In the questions addressed to her, we should avoid dry, imperative forms ; they might be a reason for her withdrawal. The forms should be affectionate or respectful according to the spirit, and in all cases testify the kindness of the invocator.

There are also essential items that are indispensable to the conjuration, for the invocation of a spirit is not so easy a business as some idle and curious might suppose. Foremost among these items are ones with a connection to the dead, especially something that has been touched by the deceased. This may be an article of clothing worn by the deceased, a nail-clipping or a lock of hair.

Gather the items together and say the following:

*All treasures that in your house are found
Are only demons that dance you round;
Their shapes like plates and lamps and chairs
Snatch at your brain and catch it in snares;
If you would loose the talons that tease,
And live by spirits more worthy than these,
Write upon leather, ancient and brown,
The names of all that grapple you down—
The Meissen Plates, the Lamp of Towle,
The Sheraton Chairs, the Sevres Bowl,
The Carpet, the Curtains, the Papered Wall,
The Spoons and the Goblets—goblins all,
And countless others that take their pleasure
Drinking your soul for their daily measure;
Cast their names in a raging fire;
Say these words, your strength to inspire.*

CONJURING THE DEAD

air with creatures which they did not hesitate to define with much precision, although ordinary mortals had not the enviable privilege of seeing them. In these mythologies and theogonies of varying ingenuity mankind had found it agreeable to seek the solution of all the disturbing questions which elude, and perhaps will for ever elude, exact mathematical demonstration. Such are the mystery of human destiny, the problems of chance and of fate, and the knowledge of the future—matters, all of them, which by the wisest were left in the lordship of an Infinite and Supreme Being, while the most daring desired to reduce them to a true science accessible to mortals, in spite of their weakness and limited intelligence.

In brief, the riddles of the whole universe, of the Cosmos and all its parts, and of this globe upon which man lives without knowing whence he derives his origin, were all explained as yet, in default of any analytic or experimental science, by the intervention of the powers of that other mysterious world in which one could hardly adventure but with dread and shuddering.

The problem of the origin of evil, which haunted the minds of Mani, St Augustine, Spinoza, Pascal, and Leibnitz, and was left unsolved by them, had been boldly determined in the ancient doctrine of the Persians at a time certainly earlier than the mythical Zarathustra. The enunciators of this doctrine had without misgiving stated the problem as a terrible equation of which one term was positive, the other negative. These terms were Good and Evil; two principles equal, opposite, co-eternal, holding between them the world in balance.

The inventor of this apparatus was a very distinguished German physician. He had been inspired by the ideas of Van Helmon, Goclenius, Al Hazrad, Burggraave, and Nicolas de Locques, and most of all by

William Maxwell's treatise *De Medicina magnetica*, published at Frankfort in 1679. This book contains aphorisms like the following :

Material rays flow from all bodies in which the soul operates by its presence. By these rays energy and the power of working are diffused. The vital spirit which descends from the sky, pure, unchanged, and whole, is the parent of the vital spirit which exists in all things. If you make use of the universal spirit by means of instruments impregnated with



FIG. 9. DR. FAUSTUS CONJURING UP
THE DEMON MEPHISTOPHELES.

Wright, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (London, 1631).

WITCHCRAFT GHOSTS AND ALCHEMY



FIG. 43. A SPIRIT IS EXORCISED BY MEANS
OF THE BURNING HAND.

Richesson, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Venice, 1875).

VI

Exorcism

During the Middle Ages and right down to the eighteenth century people were often regarded as sorcerers when in reality they were merely possessed of one or more demons. It sometimes happened, besides, that witches would put so much energy into their evocation of the Devil that, instead of becoming their obedient servitor, he would forcibly take possession of them.

When demons installed themselves as masters in the bodies of the possessed, they afflicted them with countless unbearable pains, and the supreme art of the Christians consisted in knowing how to dislodge them from their borrowed residence. The possessed person is convulsive when affected by the mysterious and invisible influence, which tortures him, impels him to violent and brutal actions, and makes him burst out howling. He can be delivered only by certain special prayers. The prayers by means of which unhappy creatures thus tormented were freed from demons are called exorcisms.

Scenes of possession are mentioned in the Gospels, and traverse the whole extent of



FIG. 44. A RITUAL PURIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT.
Richesson, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Venice, 1875).