The land of Chaldea has always been regarded as the home of mystery—the abode of the magician and sorcerer. The Hebrew Scriptures, and especially the later works, abound in references to both Chaldean and Assyrian belief in magic and witchcraft. It was, therefore, naturally expected that among the vast mass of literature recovered from the buried libraries of Babylon and Nineveh some traces of the magical works would be found; and such has proved to be the case. The late M. Lenormant, in his able work "La Magie chez les Chaldéens," and in his subsequent work on "La Divination," dealt with the most interesting series of inscriptions which formed, as he aptly described it, the 'Atharva Veda,' or 'Black Veda,' of the Chaldeans, but the section more especially relating to witchcraft still remained untouched. In the fourth volume of the "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia" some specimens of the witchcraft tablets were published by Sir Henry Rawlinson, but no series of inscriptions were edited, nor was any definite attempt made to translate those published. Dr. Knut Tallqvist, of the Finnish University of Helsingfors, recently spent some time in England, and copied eight tablets of a series devoted entirely to witchcraft, and this important work has now been issued by the Russian Government, under the title "Assyrische Beschworung Serie," and is a work of great importance to students of the Old Testament. The tablets come from the royal library at Nineveh, and bear the endorsement of Assurbanipal, and so may be dated about B.C. 660. They are, however, in all cases stated to be copies of older tablets (Kima labri šu) from the libraries of Southern Chaldea. From statements in the tablets they seem to have belonged chiefly to the priestly schools of Ur, Larsa, Akkad or Agade, Eridu, and Sippara—all of great antiquity.

From these inscriptions we obtain a wonderful insight into the principal tenets of this religion of the 'Black Gods,' or the 'gods of night' as they are called. The first tablet opens with the words, Ašš kunuša ilani mušite, 'I call on you, O gods of night.' As there was a definite priesthood attached to the gods of light, so there was a hierarchy of the gods of night. This body consisted of wizards (Kaššapu) and witches (Kaššapu), the sorcerer (epišu) and sorceress (epišitu), and various other kinds of enchanters and wishers; and associated with them were the street workers (elititu), the harlots (gaššitu), the devotees of Istari, the mistress of witchcrafts, called Istarišitu, 'she who seizes by night,' 'she who slays youths,' 'she who spared not women,' all which epithets amply justify the epithets applied to the goddess of Nineveh by the prophet Nahum (iii. 4). It was rather the female members of this strange priesthood whom the Chaldean feared, and against whom all his knowledge of charms and spells was required. It was this knowledge of the incantation or word and its repetition, idi šipta, which empowered both magician and exorcist. In the old Akkadian it is very frequently referred to in the mediatorial action of Merodach, the son of Ea, 'thou knowest the word' which will heal the sick one and remove the evil spell. Its power resembles, in some respect, that of the 'writing' in the 'Book of the Dead' among the Egyptians. Those who knew the prayers of the Book of the Dead, or carried with them the papyrus copy of it, were called the 'equipped shades.' This custom must have been of immense antiquity in Egypt, for we find it referred to in the tomb of Pepi of the Sixth Dynasty. 'Hail to thee, Pepi, thou placest thyself upon the throne of Him who dwellest among the living, and it is the writing which thou hast, that striketh terror into their hearts.' Some such idea, no doubt, caused the making of the Jewish tephillim. The whole time of a superstitious Chaldean—and most Chaldeans were inclined that way—must have been taken up in protecting himself against the various forms of witchcraft.

This is shown by quoting the following spell: 'O my witch and my enchantress, thy frontiers all the earth, thou crossetst over all mountains, I know thee, and I have taken precautions. In my broad way a watch (I set), I set a trap in my door. On the right of my gate and the left of my gate I have caused to be placed (the figures) of Lugal-gira and Allamu, the gods of the watch, (who) tear out the hearts of the wicked. The witch (Kaššapu) may they slay, and I shall live.' The close connexion between the enticements of the harlot and those of the witch are constantly referred to by Hebrew writers, and especially in Nah. (iii. 4); but there is a most curious parallel in...
one of these magical tablets between Kaššaptu and the strange woman or harlot (=plt) of Prov. vii. The example is so striking that I quote the Assyrian version transliterated.

**Translation.**

**Incantation.**  The witch who goes to and fro in the streets.
The enterer of houses.
The creeper into fortresses.
The traverser of the broad ways.
She turns backward and forward.
In the broad way she has divided the way.
She has robbed the well-favoured youth of his love.
She has ravished the well-favoured maid of her fruit.
Her deception has seized (them) by the glances of her eyes.
The youth regards her, and she steals his love.
The maiden regards her, and her fruit she ravishes.
She has seen me, the witch, and comes after me.
With her philtre she has divided the way.
With her enchantment she has divided the path.
O my god and my goddess, she shrieks for my body.
Of the witch her utterance shame I.
Of my enchantress I make her statue.

No. II.

1. This oppression, O oppression,
The mighty oppression of mankind,
Which like a lion seizes hold of mankind.
Like the drag net (Khukhari), it throws down heroes;
5. Like the fowler's net, it covers warriors;
Like the snare, it captures the firstborn;
Like the net, it covers the strong.
Your oppression, O magician and witch, may the fire-god burn;
May the fire-god eat; may the fire-god drink;
10. May the fire-god carry away;
May the fire-god laugh at the might of your tyranny.
For the oppression ye have made, may your bodies tremble.
Your might, may the son of Ea, the great magician, sweep away.
The odour of the fire-god, may it smite your faces.
15. Like an oven, may it shrivel you up;
Like a burning coal, may it consume you.
May the mighty fire-god cause you to be overthrown.
Your bewitchment and your enchantment, may they not come near me.
It shall disappear like a fish in dry waters;
20. Like a wild boar in miry morass;
Like the mastakal plant in the overgrown field;
Like the hankal plant on the bank of a pool;
Like the usu seed on the sea-shore.
25. O noble Istar, the foreseer of destinies,
. . . I am bound with a charm.
. . . O fire-god, mighty one,
O fire-god, the consumer, son of Anu, the warrior.

No. III.

1. Who art thou, O witch, who caused to exist the word of my evil in her heart?
My enchantment she has made with her tongue,
My poisoning she has made with her lips.
By her power she has spoken it and established death.
O witch, I seize thy mouth, I seize thy tongue;
I will afflict thy far-seeing eyes;
I will afflict thy swift-going feet;
I will afflict thy out-striding knees;
I will afflict thy delicate hands;
I will tie thy hands behind thee.
The resemblance which this extract bears to the passage in Proverbs is so remarkable that it would seem as if the two were related as common Eastern folk-lore. Indeed, it is possible to carry the parallel farther, into Egyptian literature, where, in the maxims of Ani, we read, 'Do not follow after a woman, do not allow her to seize thy heart.'

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The whole of the similes of the inscription and the Hebrew writing are the same. 'The traverser of the broad ways,' 'she turns backward and forward,' are often the exact equivalent of the biblical words. Indeed, these magical inscriptions enable us to suggest some alterations in the Hebrew. The passage 'the garments of a harlot,' seems as if the two were related as common Eastern folk-lore. Indeed, it is possible to carry the parallel farther, into Egyptian literature, where, in the maxims of Ani, we read, 'Do not follow after a woman, do not allow her to seize thy heart.'

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