the accusations of Hopkins the witch-finder. Webster was the next writer against witchcraft, but he had a different fate from that of Scot, for most of his arguments were re­futed by Glanville. This very acute writer was induced to publish his Philosophical Considerations about Witch­craft, by the apprehension that the increasing disbelief of witches and apparitions tended to affect the evidences of religion, and even of a Deity. In respect of argument he was certainly superior to his adversaries ; his reasoning is perspicuous, though sometimes subtile, placed on the most specious foundations of evidence, and arranged with great skill.

On the continent, this controversy seemed almost for­gotten, till Bekker published *his Monde Enchantée.,* in which he denied the existence of witches, on the Cartesian prin­ciple that the Deity is the source of all action, consequently actions so opposite to his nature and attributes cannot be supposed to exist. He was answered by Frederick Hoff­mann, the father of the modern theory and practice of me­dicine, in his dissertation *De Diaboli Potentia in Corpora.*

The latest witchcraft phrensy was in New England about the year 1692, when the execution of witches became a calamity more dreadful than the sword or the pestilence. The accusers became so daring, that neither civil nor re­ligious authority would have proved a security against their attacks, if all the prosecutions had not been suddenly drop­ped, and the prisoners set at liberty. So far did those wretches proceed in absurdity, that a dog was accused of throwing persons into fits by looking at them. As soon as the prosecutions were stopped, all reports of witchcraft ceased.

It would be ridiculous to attempt a serious refutation of the existence of witches ; and the task has long been un­necessary. In this country, at least, the discouragement long given to all suspicion of witchcraft, and the repeal of the statutes against that crime, have very much weakened, though perhaps they have not entirely eradicated, the per­suasion. On the continent, too, it is evidently on the de­cline ; and notwithstanding the exertions of Dr de Haen, and of the celebrated Lavater, we have little doubt that in a short time posterity will everywhere wonder at the credulity of their ancestors. That there ever were witches, is an opinion which cannot for a moment be admitted by a thinking man. The actions imputed to them were either absurd or impossible ; the witnesses by whose evidence they were condemned, either weak enthusiasts or downright vil­lains ; and the confessions ascribed to the witches them­selves, effects of a disordered imagination produced by cruel treatment and excessive watchings. As to the nightly meet­ings, demonologists themselves have been obliged to confess that they were nothing else but uneasy dreams, often pro­duced by soporific compositions. The facts which have been brought forward by the advocates for witchcraft bear in their front the most evident marks of trick and imposture; and this has constantly been detected whenever these facts have been properly examined.

WITEBSK, a government or stadtholderate of the Rus­sian dominions in Europe, formerly a portion of what was denominated White Russia, but now bearing the name of the largest city within it. It extends in north latitude from 54° 42' to 57° 21', and in east longitude from 15° 35' to 21° 39'. It is bounded on the north-west by Li­vonia, on the north and north-east by Pfkow, on the east by Smolensko, on the south-east by Mohilew, on the south-west by Minsk, and on the west by Wilna and Courland. It is divided into twelve circles, with a capital to each ; be­sides which there are twenty-three other cities or towns, and 12,185 villages. It is 14,690 square miles in extent, and contains 934,900 inhabitants.

The whole is a level plain, without hills ; and even hil­locks are rare, so that nothing is to be seen but sandy fields, with here and there the banks of the rivers, and oc­casionally a few small lakes. The soil is poor, of sand or sandy loam, with a thin covering of vegetable mould. The chief river is the Duna, which receives and carries to the sea the waters of the Mesha, the Kasplia, the Ula, the Polota, the Drissa, the Druja, the Saryja,,the Feananka, and the Ewest. Among the lakes, the most extensive are the Usmyn, the Usmiat, the Osweja, and the Lubahu, which last indeed belongs in part to Livonia.

The greater part of the inhabitants adhere to the Catholic church, or to the Greek united. The former has an arch­bishop at Mohilew, with sixty-three parishes and forty monas­teries ; the second has a bishop at Polozk, with 135 parishes and thirty-three monasteries. The orthodox Greeks have sixty-five parishes. Among the Lithuanians, the Livonians, and the Germans, the Protestants are the most numerous. The Jews are numerous, but chiefly in the cities and towns.

The capital of this government, the city of the same name, and the capital of a circle, stands on the river Duna or Dwina, 460 miles from St Petersburg. It is surrounded with old walls and towers, has narrow and crooked streets, and contains three Catholic and eleven Greek churches, 1940 houses, and about 14,000 inhabitants. It has six Greek and two Catholic monasteries, and three synagogues for the Jews. The city has a considerable number of tan­neries, the leather made at which is sent partly to Riga and partly to St Petersburg. It has several large fairs, where much business is transacted. Long. 29. 55. E. Lat. 55. 11. N.

WITENA MOT, or Witena *Gemot,* among the Anglo- Saxons, was a term which literally signified the assembly of the wise men ; and was applied to the great council of the nation, afterwards called the *parliament.*

WITHERS of a House, the juncture of the shoulder-bones at the bottom of the neck and mane, towards the upper part of the shoulder.

WITNESS, in *Law,* a person who gives evidence in any cause, and is sworn to speak the truth.

WITNEY, a market-town and parish of the county of Oxford, in the hundred of Bampton, sixty-nine miles from London and eleven from Oxford. It stands on the river Windrush. It consists of two streets, at the end of one of which is a fine church in the Gothic style. There is also an endowed grammar-school, with a good library. This place has long been celebrated for the manufacture of blankets, which is still carried on extensively, and they still maintain their character for superior warmth and light­ness. There is a market on Thursday. The population of this town amounted in 1821 to 2827, and in 1831 to 3190 ; but the whole parish, comprehending also four ham­lets, in 1831 had 5336 inhabitants.

WITSIUS, Herman, a learned divine, was born on the 12th of February 1636, at Enckhuysen in North Holland. His father, a member of the municipal council of that place, was the author of some pious meditations, written in bis native tongue. In 1650 he became a student in the university of Utrecht, where he distinguished himself by his rapid progress in different branches of learning. At the age of eighteen, he publicly recited a Hebrew discourse on the Messiah of the Jews and the Christians. He after­wards removed to Groningen, in order to attend the lec­tures of Desmarets. He was ordained a minister in 1657, and exercised his functions in different places till 1675, when he was appointed professor of divinity at Franeker. In 1680 he was nominated to a similar chair at Utrecht; and in 1685 he proceeded to London as chaplain of the Dutch embassy sent to congratulate the king on his acces­sion to the throne. In 1698 he succeeded Spanheim as professor of divinity at Leyden ; but this office he after­wards exchanged for the rectorship of the Theological Col­lege. He died on the 22d of October 1708, in the seventy- third year of his age.