was an epidemic among children, they were brought to touch a serpent’s skin which hung on a pole. The same ideas underlie the story of the Brazen Serpent which cured the Israelites of the bites of the serpents in the Wilderness (Num. xxi. 6-9; 1 Cor. x. 9). The object, however, was no temporary device; centuries later, 250 years after the founding of the temple of Jerusalem, the Brazen Serpent was regarded as unorthodox by the reforming king Hezekiah, and the historian who relates its overthrow ascribes its origin to the founder of Israelite national religion (2 Kings xviii. 4). The story in fact may have arisen to explain the object of cult; in any case it illustrates a general belief.

According to primitive thought, rivers, lakes, springs and wells are commonly inhabited by spirits which readily assume human or animal form. Here the serpent and its kind are frequently encountered.@@1 In India the serpent-godlings are very often associated with water, and, even at the digging of a well, worship is paid to the “world serpent,” and the Sãlagrãma (spiral ammonite), sacred to Vishnu, is solemnly wedded to the Tulasi or basil plant, representative of the garden which the pool will fertilize.@@2 It is often supposed that the Nāga (serpent) chiefs rule countries in or under the water, and in Kashmir a submarine serpent-king became a convert and built churches. Especially common are the popular stories connecting serpents with submarine palaces and treasures (Crooke i. 45, cf. § 2 above) ; and one submarine realm in the Ganges was reputed to possess “ the water of strength.” In Palestine and Syria, where demoniacal beings are frequently associated with water, local opinion is sometimes uncertain whether the water is under the care of a *jinn* or of a patron-saint. Several springs are named after the serpent, and the sacred fountain of Ephca at Palmyra, whose guardian in the early Christian era was appointed by the god Yarḥibol, is still tenanted by a female serpent-demon which can impede its flow.@@3 Jeru­salem had the stone Zōḥeleth (possibly “ serpent ”) by the well En-Rogel (1 Kings i. 9) and also its Dragon Well (Neh. ii. 13); in modern times the curative Virgin’s Spring or St Mary’s Well has its dragon which, when awake, swallows the inter­mittent flow of the water.@@4 Serpents of the water are often healers (cf. § 3). A serpent in a lagoon near Gimbo-Amburi in Africa could cure madness; another, which haunted an Algerian well, embodied the soul of a Mahommedan saint and could cure sore eyes. This feature is especially intelligible when the waters have medicinal qualities. Among the southern Arabs the hot well of Msa’ide was virtually a sanctuary, and the serpent-demon was honoured by annual festivals in the sacred month Rajab. As recently as 1882, when the grand Llama of Tashilumpo was not relieved by the hot springs of Barchutsan, religious services were held to propitiate the serpent-deities (Oldham, 203). Finally, although in the sanctuary of Aesculapius healing came directly or indirectly as the patients dreamed, it appears from the hurlesque of Aristophanes (*Plutus,* 653 sqq.) that they first

bathed in the sacred spring.

The serpent of the water is also the serpent of the great sea upon which the earth rested.@@5 Sometimes the reptile lives in submarine infernal regions (with his wife, Crooke i. 43), and as the demon of the underworld it is sometimes the earth-shaker.@@6 The Greek demon or snake Poseidon, god of sea and springs, was an earthquake god. To the great half-serpent monster Typhon were ascribed numerous springs; he was also the cause of earthquakes, and when he buried himself in the earth he formed the bed of the Syrian

Orontes. This river, which was otherwise called Drakōn, Typhōn or Ophites, is known at the present day as the “ river of the rebel ” *(Nahr El-'Aṣi;* Baudissin ii. 163). The waterspout, sometimes taken for a long-tailed dragon, is a huge sea-serpent, according to the Wanika of East Africa (Tylor i. 292 seq.).

In ancient Persia the rainbow was the celestial serpent, and among some African tribes it is the subterranean wealth-conferring serpent, stretching its head to the clouds, and spilling the rain in its greedy thirst.@@7 An early Indian name of the Milky Way is “ the path of the serpent ” (Crooke i. 25), and a great dragon or serpent is often the cause of eclipses, so that in India, on the occasion of an eclipse, its attention can be attracted by bathing in a sacred stream, or by a ritual which in­cludes the worship of the image of the snake-god (i. 22 seq.).@@8 Again the serpent is often associated with the lightning (Winternitz, 33).@@9 Hence, as the reptile’s range seems to be boundless, one is prepared for the serpentine deity of the Samoan and Tonga natives which connects heaven and earth (Tylor ii. 309 seq.), and for the part the serpent plays in the traditions of a universal deluge.@@10

The fok-lore of the Old and New World contains many examples of supernatural conception, an idea which is to be supplemented by the actual living belief (e.g. in Palestine) that supernatural beings can be fathers.@@11 In Annam where water spirits may take the form of serpents or of human beings, two deified heroes were said to have been serpents born of a childless woman, who drank from a bowl of water into which a star had falIen.@@12 Leland (132) cites the medieval belief that the household snake (see § 9), if not propitiated, can prevent conception, and in Bombay barrenness is sometimes attributed to a serpent which has been killed by the man or his wife in a former state of their existence. Hence the demon is laid to rest by burning the serpent-image with due funereal rites.@@13 In the sanctuary of Aesculapius at Epidaurus women were visited in their dreams by a serpent—the reputed father of the child that was born, and elsewhere Sicyon who had such a progenitor was regarded as the son of the divine healer.@@14 Similar also was the origin of Augustus in a temple of Apollo, the god who had his tame serpents in the grove on Epirus. Further, as the serpent-“ father ” of Alexander the Great came with a healing-root to cure his general Pompey (Cicero, *De diυ.* ii. 66), so in an Indian story the son of a king of serpents and of a virgin (or, in a variant form, a widow) was succoured in warfare by his sire (Fergusson, 266). In India the serpent origin of kings and rulers is famous. The same idea meets us in China, Greece (e.g. Aegeus, and Drakōn or Cecrops the first king of Athens), the Arabian dynasty of Edessa, the dynasty of Abyssinia, &c.; it is proper, therefore, to notice the serpent-symbol of royalty on the signets of the Rajahs of Çhota Nagpur, the fire-spitting serpent which adorned the head of Egyptian Pharaohs, and the dragons which entwine King Arthur as he stands at the tomb of

@@@1 See Frazer’s notes on Pausanias (1898), vol. v. pp. 44 seq.

@@@2 Crooke i. 42 seq., 49; see also Oldham, 51, 114; Winternitz, 259. The ammonite, here an instrument in a nature “ marriage,” has else- where given rise to legends of the destruction of serpents, viz. by St Hilda at Whitby in Yorkshire, and perhaps also by St Patrick in Ireland (see E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture,* 1903, i. 372).

@@@3 W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites,* 2nd ed., pp. 168 seq., with references. Cf. G. F. Abbot, *Macedonian Folk-lore,* 261 : “ the drakos held back the water see further § 11 below.

@@@4 C. R. Conder, *Tent-work in Palestine* (1878), i. 313 seq., who notes the “ moving ” of the water in John v. 3, 4 (see R.V. marg.).

@@@5 Cf. Amos ix. 3 and the Babylonian Tiamat, a serpent of the sea; see Baudissin in Hauck’s *Realency. f. Theol.* v. p. 5 (1898); T. K. Cheyne, *Εncy. Bib.,* art. “ Serpent.”

@@@6 See Fergusson, 57; J. G. Frazer, *Adonis,* 165; and R. Lasch, *Arch.fi Relιg.* v. 236 sqq., 369 sqq.

@@@7 Crooke ii. 144; Tylor i. 294; A. B. Ellis, *The Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (1890), pp. 47 seq.

@@@8 See also R. Lasch, *op. cit.* iii. 97 sqq.

@@@9 D. G. Brinton, *Myths of the New World* (1896), 135; A. S. Palmer, *Nineteenth Century* (Oct. 1909), pp. 694 sqq.

@@@10 For the latter, see J. T. Medina, *Les Aborigènes de Chile* (1882), 28 sqq.; D. G. Brinton, *οp. cit.,* 176 sqq.; Frazer, *Pausanias,* v. 44 seq.; J. F. Maclennan, *Studies in Anc. Hist.,* 2nd series, 203 seq. The Babylonian story of Ea (see § 2) and the deluge finds an Indian parallel in the fish (or, otherwise a manifestation of Vishnu the many-headed serpent) which warned Manu. Among the Austrian gipsies the serpent is supposed to be able to swallow up prolonged rains, and it may be conjectured that the stories associating the commencement or conclusion of great floods with chasms (*e.g.* Lucian, *De dea Syria,* § 12 seq.) are connected with the beliefs associating wells or springs with serpents and other occupants.

@@@11 See E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity* (1909); Frazer, *Adonis* (Index, *s.v.* Conception), and *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910; Index, *s.vv.* “ Conception,” “ Snake ”).

@@@12 E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (1894-1896), i. 121. In many places streams or springs are credited with the power of re­moving barrenness which, in primitive thought, is often ascribed to supernatural malevolence. See Hartland, *op. cit.,* i. 71 sqq., 133, 167 sqq.

*@@@13 Journal of the Bombay Royal As. Soc.* ix. 188; for sacrifices and snake-deities to obtain offspring, see Crooke i. 226; Winternitz, 258. In the *Arabian Nights* Solomon prescribes the flesh of two serpents for the childless wives of the king of Egypt and his vizier.

@@@14 Frazer, *Adonis,* 72 (with other examples). The Inca hero Yupanqui had as father a divine being with serpent and lion attri­butes who revealed himself in a well (Hartland ii. 14 seq.).