

ON SUPERSTITIONS

A. G. Gardiner

ON Superstitions, a serio-comic essay has been written by Albred George Gardiner. He deals with the serious topic of superstitions but the treatment is playful. The essay is full of examples of superstitions or unceritified beliefs. NO.13 is an unlucky number and is at the centre of superstitious beliefs. Every body takes notice of the house number in which a murder has been committed. Though many such murders have taken place in House NO-6 or 7 but it remains unnoticed. It is sure that the superstition about No.13 being unlucky is a childish superstition but most of the people would be happier if they avoid this number. It influences a landlord to evaluate the letting qualities of his house. It also influences mental health of the patients

The essayist refers to the testimony of a French writer and doctor who served in World War-Ist in the remiscences of the war. He records how a soldier who had been seriously injured in battle and was brought to the military hospital in a critical condition was slowly patched up and seemed to have been saved when a pimple appeared on his nose. The growth of the pimple on his nose cast such a gloomy shadow on the wounded soldier's mind that he died of a nervous breakdown. It was nothing in itself, "says the essayist," but it was enough to produce a mental state that checked the flickering return of life. Though, the soldier in critical condition survived the blows of fate. Similarly

any association with number 13 may spell disaster.

Gardiner says that he can't claim to be wholly free from superstition. He confesses that ~~the number 13~~ he does not use ^{the} number 13 too frequently in London. He ~~comes~~ ^{is} under the influence of superstitious belief that it is advisable for him to walk round a ladder placed against a house side rather than under it. He is afraid of being hit seriously by a man climbing up the ladder. Gardiner notes that many of our superstitions have sensible and common place origin. He is satisfied when he sees the new moon in the open rather than through glass, and over his right shoulder rather than over his left. People are subject to blind habits which cause mechanical reflex action. For example, Pompey, the Roman emperor got the election to the Senate of Rome postponed on hearing the rumble of thunder. Alexander the Great's military expeditions were guided by his counsellors. Cicero, the modern Roman orator and rhetorician believed in augurs and superstitions. Cicero lost his life by believing in the symbolic meaning of the movement of crows.

Gardiner is proud of being born in the present rational age. He has the perception that there is something mysterious and very powerful which controls our life.

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