

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MAGIC

By Gustar Woomax

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A POPULAR ENCHANTING Book.



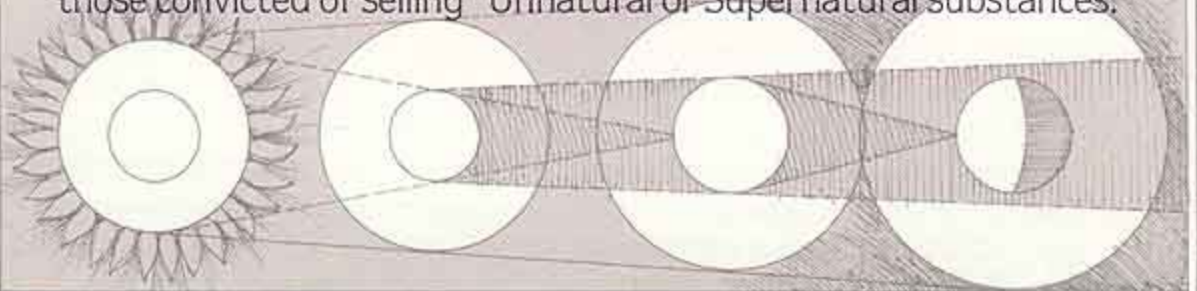
he history of magic can be broken down into four distinct periods: the Empirical Age, the Scientific Age, the Industrial Age, and the Age of Guilds. Each of these will be explored in some depth in order to give the reader a sense of the course of events which has shaped the use of magic in today's society.



The Empirical Age

Primitive cultures had naturally assumed that the disorderly nature of our world was due to such supernatural causes as magic. With the founding of the "natural" sciences, however, nature was increasingly viewed as being orderly. As the sciences progressed, the knowledge and lore of magic largely disappeared. As early as the 5th century GUE (Great Underground Empire), however, such students of the mystic arts as Bizboz and Dinbar thoroughly examined ancient writings on the subject. Bizboz himself wrote what became the seminal work in Thaumaturgy, "On the Presence of Incredibly Weird Stuff Going On," in 473 GUE, in which he claimed to have discovered "for-the-most-part Natural Rules" by which this "Weird Stuff" is ordered.

This work was ridiculed by the leading scholars of the time, leading to Bizboz's removal from the faculty at the Galepath University, and, eventually, to his tragic suicide in 475 GUE. His work, however, encouraged others in the pursuit of magical knowledge, with mixed results. Charlatans, claiming to have created magical potions and powders, regularly fooled the gullible population into buying potions which claimed to do such things as "reverse hair loss" and "draw Trebled Fromps in Double Fanucci." Such appeals to public ignorance led King Duncanthrax in 672 GUE to write the Unnatural Acts, which provided stiff penalties for those convicted of selling "Unnatural or Supernatural substances."



The

Scientific Age

While the charlatans were at work, serious students took up the cause of magic, attempting to explain the natural world as a by-product of the interrelated workings of the sciences of Physics, Medicine, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Thaumaturgy. Their success in demonstrating the so-called first principles of Thaumaturgy, namely Presence, Incantation, and Unusual Effect, led to a loosening of the Unnatural Acts to allow what became known as Scientific Thaumaturgy. During this period, the first chapter of the Guild of Enchanters was founded at the tiny hamlet of Accardi-by-the-Sea by the great thaumaturge, Vilboz.

During the reign of Frobwit the Flatter (701-727 GUE), the art and science of Thaumaturgy flourished. The first reliable Incantation Device, known to scholars as the Hyperbolic Incantation Concentrator, was produced at the Thaumaturgical Institute in 723 GUE. The long, thin, portable device, nicknamed the "magic wand" by the lay press, became an instant sensation among the populace, and gained a certain measure of respect for the fledgling science.

A major advance in Thaumaturgy occurred when Davmar, working in newly-crowned King Mumberthrax Flathead's laboratory, discovered a means by which Incantation could be stored on special Presence-imbued paper. These so-called scrolls were found, however, to be destroyed during the spells' Incantation. Nonetheless, scrolls soon replaced the temperamental and poorly-understood "wand" as the primary means of Incantation.

The problem of imbuing Presence became a deterrent to the rapid growth of magical science. The creation of a single powerful scroll could take literally months for even the most creative and productive thaumaturge. This roadblock prevented the widespread use of magic for generations.



The Industrial Age

The Industrial Age dawned in 769 GUE with a discovery by a little-known thaumaturge named Berzio. Berzio, working for years in his own self-made workshop and often going for days without food, drink, or sleep, created the means by which Presence could be transferred from a scroll to a specially impregnated paper by use of a simple spell, which he named after his dog, Gnusto. This paper, in turn, held the Presence even after the Incantation had been finished, solving the major problem in spell production. The euphoria which greeted this discovery was tempered by the finding that very powerful spells could not be transferred in this way. Nevertheless, spell "books," which were capable of holding dozens of spells, were produced in great number, leading to the founding of a new industry.

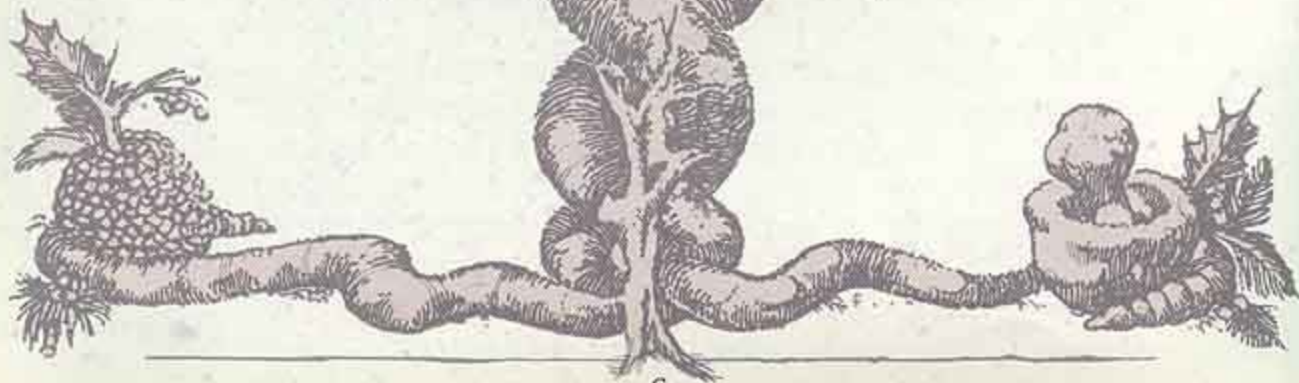
Another advance in Thaumaturgy occurred with the finding that certain liquids and powders could be imbued with the magical Presence. Such potions are of great interest, although their limitations have prevented them from supplanting scrolls as the primary method of Incantation. The first of these potions, which obviates the need for food and drink, was given the name BERZIO, in honor of the great thaumaturge.



The Age of Guilds



As the use of magic became more prevalent, so did the problems inherent in its use. Since magic had become available to people in all professions, conflicts arose. One famous issue involved the question of whether the plumber's FIZMO spell ("cause stopped-up pipes to unclog") could be sold as a digestive aid by physicians. The issue came to a head in the aftermath of the Endless Fire of 773 GUE, so named because it burned for 4 weeks after destroying the city of Mareilon. It was later found to have been started by a civil servant who thought he was casting the ZEMDOR spell ("turn original into triplicate") but who, instead, cast the ZIMBOR spell ("turn one really big city into lots of tiny, little ashes").

This led Lord Dimwit Flathead (the Excessive) to issue a series of 5,521 edicts over the following few weeks, which had the effect of severely limiting access to magic (and, incidentally, lawyers). Henceforth, all magic was entrusted to the various Guilds of Enchanters, which by now existed in many small communities. Each Guild, whose elders comprised the so-called Circle of Enchanters, was empowered to form schools for the training of new Enchanters. This official sanctioning of the Guilds led to the formation of numerous other chapters, with membership in the various Guilds in excess of 2,000 by the year 800 GUE. Despite the fall of the Great Underground Empire in 883 GUE under the feeble-minded reign of Wurb Flathead, the Guild of Enchanters remains virtually unchanged in character today.








Today's Enchanter



Since the fall of the Empire, magic has again become a mysterious art, practiced primarily by trained Sorcerers, although a few spells, such as UMBOZ ("obviate need for dusting") and NERZO ("balance checkbook"), have been approved for over-the-counter sale. Upon graduation from an accredited Thaumaturgical College, an Enchanter is given a spell book with a few spells, none of which has great power. As an Enchanter continues his or her studies, new spells may be obtained; these may be copied into a spell book for use whenever the occasion warrants.



The Enchanter's job is not as easy as is commonly thought. An Enchanter must memorize a spell written in a spell book before casting it. (Spells on scrolls and those which have been permanently etched in the memory by training needn't be memorized.) Moreover, if an Enchanter needs to use a particular spell twice, it must be memorized twice, since the effort of casting it makes it a jumble in one's memory. In fact, even a night's sleep will make an Enchanter forget any memorized spells. But, in spite of the rigors of spell casting, the personal rewards are great, and the job of Enchanter remains a popular and well-respected vocation.





An Afterthought

The most fitting words regarding the history of magic were written over a century ago by the renowned historian Ozmar in 821 GUE. He wrote: "The greatest irony is this: that the ancients of our kind were nearer to knowing the truth about Science than those who called themselves Scientists. Science has taught us much and given us new words for old mysteries. But beneath these words are mysteries, and beneath them more mysteries. The pursuit of Magic has given these mysteries meaning and provided for our people great benefits unrealized as yet by Science. One day, perhaps, a great union will be formed between Magic and Science, and the final mysteries will be solved."





ur once peaceful land is being held in thrall by a warlock so powerful, he detects and destroys even the strongest opponents who enter his domain. But all is not yet lost, for an ancient prophecy speaks of a brave and cunning novice enchanter, someone insignificant enough to slip past the watchful warlock and conquer him by means of rudimentary magic and spells discovered during the quest.

Our only hope for the future is you. Should you succeed, a seat in the illustrious Circle of Enchanters shall be yours. But if you fail, our land will be subjugated to unimaginable doom forever. Farewell, brave enchanter; may your necromancy save the land and the prophecy prove true.

The Table of Contents for the instruction manual is on page 11. Take a look at it to find out what you need to know before you start the story.