

Chapter 8 — Superstition as Related to Health and Disease

*of The Physiology of Faith and Fear:
or, The Mind in Health and Disease (1912)*
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Sources for Chapter 8, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Prof. Dr. Hugo Magnus, *Superstition in Medicine* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1905)
- (2) Lyman Beecher Sperry, A.M., M.D., *Physiology, Fear and Faith* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902)

Key

- (a) Green indicates where a source author (or a previous Sadler book) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) Yellow highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) Tan highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) Pink indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (f) Light blue indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (g) Red indicates an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about, in most cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting his source.

VIII — SUPERSTITION AS RELATED TO HEALTH AND DISEASE

8:0.1 The study of physiology and psychology discloses the vast possibilities existing in the human body and brain for the origin of inaccuracies, the birth of deceptions, the creation of delusions, and the production of a vast system of baseless fears, false conceptions, and erroneous conclusions. This systematized mental fear and moral cowardice may be summed up in the one word—superstition.

8:0.2 In all ages and at all times, there have existed health delusions and healing deceptions, and even the present age is no exception; but it is beyond the scope of this work, and foreign to its purpose, to dwell in detail upon these various systems of erroneous teaching, or even to expose the delusive philosophy, the cunning methods, and the deceptive inner workings of the many health and healing frauds which are perpetrated upon a long-suffering public. In this chapter we can but hope briefly to trace some of the ancient medical superstitions and connect them with modern health delusions—to show the influence of superstition upon the health teaching, medical practice, and the healing beliefs of the world.

ANCIENT HEALTH DELUSIONS

I: WHAT IS MEDICAL SUPERSTITION? (Magnus 1)

Medical superstition varies according to the kind and the origin of ... supernatural causes, and therefore appears in the greatest variety of forms. If these causes were looked for in celestial regions, medical superstition became vested with the religious garb, and its source was in the religious cult ... (M 4-5).

II: THEISM IN ITS RELATION TO MEDICINE AND IN ITS STRUGGLE WITH THE PHYSICO-MECHANICAL THEORY OF LIFE (Magnus 7)

[A]s the inhabitants of heaven, like the inhabitants of the earth, were subject to whims, it happened very often, unfortunately, that they attended to their task of protecting the undisturbed development of the vegetative as well as the animal functions of the body in a very unsatisfactory manner, sometimes, in fact, even purposely neglecting it. Thus disturbances occurred in the regular course of organic life, and this brought diseases into the world (M 8).

8:1.1 Superstition has ever paraded in the garments of faith,

and so in the earliest records of ancient history,¹ medical superstition is discovered travelling hand in hand with religious superstition.

The earliest of these health delusions taught that

disease was due to the ill-humor of the gods.

[?]

With the Greeks also the gods rendered services to diseased humanity. Thus Apollo invented the art of healing,

and if his time permitted he occasionally lent a hand when difficulties beset the entrance into this world of a young mortal (M 9).

When [dire] events reached dimensions which threatened the existence of the [early Roman] republic, attempts were made to gain the favor of the gods

by most curious ceremonies. The celestials were simply invited to take part in an opulent banquet... But if the gods, in spite of the most opulent entertainments, did not have any consideration, ... endeavors were made by theatrical performances to provide as much as possible for the amusement of the gods.

Such plays, at first, consisted only in graceful dances, with flute accompaniments ... [etc.] (M 12-13).

When mankind suffered the blight of infectious disease and physical decay, some particular god was supposed to be in a state of anger, having taken offence at some sin of commission or omission on the part of the sufferer or his friends.

This system of explaining the cause of disease progressed to that point where there appeared to be a different god for each disease;

and following all this came the discovery of, and appeal to,

Apollo, the god who was supposed to have invented the art of healing.

8:1.2 In their efforts to amuse these various gods of health and disease, to appease their wrath, and win their favor,

the pagans were wont to engage in spectacular theatrical performances, elaborate banquets,

and extraordinary dancing manœuvres;

and, subsequently, professed Christians unfortunately incorporated much of this delusional teaching respecting health and disease into their systems of belief, and hence were led to endow the Creator—their personal God—with many of these health and disease practices which had been attributed to the numerous heathen gods.

Almost every idea pertaining to physical health and bodily disease was steeped in ignorance, and saturated with superstition.

III: RELIGION THE SUPPORT OF MEDICAL SUPERSTITION (Magnus 23)

§1. Priesthood the Support of Medical Superstition. (Magnus 24)

Very soon many cunning fellows arrived at the conclusion that the trade of a sacerdotal physician and conjurer might bring a profitable livelihood to its professor, even if this professor were not a priest but a layman. Thus there arose a special profession of sorcerers, miracle workers, and medicine-men,

who protested with solemn emphasis that they were able to cure all physical as well as psychical ailments of their fellow men as thoroughly as the priests had done. But in order to bestow the required consecration upon this art, these gentlemen usurped the venerable name of ... “Magi” (M 26).

8:1.3 Later there arose a special class of the priesthood—the *magicians*—

who claimed to work miracles by means of some supernatural endowment or some special influence with the gods.

These ancient wonder-workers claimed to be able to relieve suffering and cure disease by the supernatural method.

SOURCE

§2. The Spread of the Word “Magic.” (Magnus 28)

It appears ... that **Alexander the Great** entertained an implicit belief in magic—at least, Pliny reports that during his wars he was always accompanied by a celebrated magician (M 29).

Even **Nero** attempted to master the secrets of magic, altho unsuccessfully (Pliny, Book 30, Chapter II., §5) (M 29).

§3. The Medical Practise of the Magicians. (Magnus 32)

[See contrastive endnote.]

The **drug** therapy of the magicians actually utilized everything under the sun as a remedy (M 32).

The awe with which parts of corpses usually inspired the non-medical part of the public was relied upon by the magicians to advertise their cures. Thus these quacks administered **powders of human bones** to the ailing (M 33).

But the most loathsome substances were quite as readily employed, for here, too, the most general attention was bound to be attracted by their application. **Human feces, urine,** and menstrual blood were introduced into the materia medica in such a manner (M 32-33).

[T]he **rope of the hung criminal** plays a conspicuous part in antique magic as well as in modern sympathy treatment;

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Alexander the Great is reported to have always had one of those medicine-men connected with his personal staff;

and **Nero** was an ardent pupil of the magi.

These religio-medical impostors, while they claimed to effect their wonderful cures by the direct working of the gods,² nevertheless made use of

all manner of **drugs,**

bone powders,

human fæces, urine, and various other unmentionable things,

including the **ropes that hung criminals.**

SOURCE

the same importance is attributed to shooting-stars, to the moon, to **crossroads**,

to **certain numerals, such as 3, 7, 9, etc.** (M 35).

But an actually inexhaustible stock of medical conjurations was contained in the work of a layman, Marcellus Empiricus.... Here are a few **examples** of this medicine of the magicians:

[contd] *Remedy against warts and corns* (Pliny, Book 28, Chapter IV., §12, page 268):

“Lie on your back along a boundary line on the twentieth day of the moon, and extend the hands over the head.

With whatever thing you grasp when so doing, rub the warts, and they will disappear immediately” (M 38-39).

[contd] **“Whoever, when he sees a shooting-star, soon afterward pours a little vinegar upon the hinge of a door,**

is sure to be rid of his corns” (M 39).

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They instructed their victims to swallow these medicines while standing at

the **cross-roads** at midnight,

repeating prayers to the gods and saying over

certain magic numbers such as three, seven, and nine.

EXAMPLES OF ANCIENT MEDICAL SUPERSTITION

8:2.1 As **examples** of some of these ancient health prescriptions, which superstitious practices are by no means altogether extinct at the present time, the following may be cited:

8:2.2 *For warts and corns.*

Lie on your back along a boundary line on the twentieth day of the month, with the hands extended over the head.

With whatever thing you grasp while so doing, rub the warts, and they will immediately disappear.

After seeing a shooting star, immediately pour vinegar upon the hinge of a door.

This is a sure cure for corns.

SOURCE

[contd] *Remedy against headache* (Pliny, *ibid.*):

“Tie the rope of a hung criminal around the forehead” (M 40).

[contd] *Remedy against bellyache* (Priscian, physician of the fourth century, Book 1, Chapter XIV., and Sprengel, Vol. II., page 248):

“If any one suffer from colicky pains he may sit down on a chair and say to himself:

‘*Per te diacholon, diacholon, diacholon*’” (M 40).

[?]

[contd] “A person who has an attack of colic may take the feces of a wolf, which, if possible, should contain small particles of bone,

enclose them in a small tube, and wear this amulet on the right arm, thigh, or hip”—*Alexander of Tralles*, Book 8, Chapter II., page 374 (M 40).

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8:2.3 *For headache.*

Tie a piece of a rope that hung a criminal tightly around the forehead.

There is a physiological reason why this might have helped in stopping headaches. It is a well-known fact that pressure upon the aching head or the tying of a handkerchief about the head, frequently eases the headache by its pressure upon the nerves and its influence upon the circulation. Another illustration of how even superstition and ignorance sometimes unwittingly hit the nail on the head.

8:2.4 *For stomach-ache.*

The one suffering from colicky pains must sit down on a chair and repeat to himself

a prescribed formula of words

(various formulæ adapted to different pains were used);

or take the excreta of a wolf, together with small pieces of bone,

bind them up together, and wear them on the right arm or hip.

SOURCE

[contd] “Take the heart from a living lark and wear it as an amulet at the left thigh.”—*Alexander of Tralles, ibid.* (M 40).

[contd] *Remedy against epilepsy* (advised by the physician, Moschion Diorthotes. “Alexander of Tralles,” Book 1, Chapter XV., page 570): ...

“Gather iris, peonies, and nightshade when the moon is on the wane,

pack them into linen and wear as an amulet.” Advised by the magician Osthanes—*Alexander of Tralles*, Book 1, Chapter XV., page 566 (M 40).

[contd] “Take a nail from a cross and suspend it from an arm of the patient.” Given by a physician of the second century, A.D., by the name of Archigenes—*Alexander of Tralles*, Book 1, Chapter XV., page 566 (M 41).

Remedy against podagra [gout] (“Alexander of Tralles,” Book 12, page 582):

“Take a gold leaf and write upon it when the moon is on the wane: mei, threu, mor, for, teux, za, zon, the, lu, chri, ge, ze, on. ...

This document must be covered with the tendon of a crane, enclosed in a capsule, and worn by the patient at his heel” (M 41).

[contd] *Remedy against diseases of the eye* (advised by Sextus Placitus Papyriensis. Magnus, “Ophthalmology of the Ancients,” page 597):

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Another favorite prescription for colic was

the heart taken from a living lark, to be worn on the left thigh.

8:2.5 *For epilepsy.*

Gather peonies at night when the moon is on the wane;

wrap up in linen and wear as an amulet.

Or take a nail from a cross, and suspend it about the neck.

8:2.6 *For gout.*

Take a gold leaf and write upon it certain formulæ when the moon is on the wane.

This is then to be covered with a tendon of a crane, enclosed in a capsule, and worn by the patient about his heel.

8:2.7 *For diseases of the eye.*

SOURCE

“If the right eye becomes afflicted with glaucoma, rub it with the right **eye of the wolf**, and similarly, the left eye with the left eye of the wolf” (M 41).

The above illustrations are surely sufficient to give the reader an idea of the medicine of the magicians.

At the same time they show the great similarity which exists between these ancient magic cures and the sympathetic cures of our people at the present day (M 42).

[See 8:8.4, below.]

§4. Ancient Medicine and Magic. (Magnus 42)

The belief in the interference of spirits and supernatural beings in terrestrial matters, and the manifestations of their influence exerted in manifold ways—sometimes for good, sometimes for evil—had been widely disseminated from the earliest times, and we encounter them in all periods of classic antiquity. This belief in **demons** had become incorporated in the systems of many leading philosophers of antiquity (M 47).

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Rub the diseased eye with the **eye of a wolf**

or the eye of some other animal having a cunning look.

8:2.8 These are but samples of ancient and foolish medical superstitions,

but one can scarcely help recognizing numerous modern counterparts

in the notion of planting potatoes in the light of the moon, wearing charms about the neck, carrying a rabbit’s foot, and many other superstitious practices in vogue even at the present time.

DEMONOLOGY AND “TEMPLE SLEEP”

8:3.1 That diseases were caused by **demons** was a theory largely held in ancient times.

SOURCE

[D]uring the middle ages ... a distinction was made between higher and lower, or white and black, magic.

The white magic busied itself with good spirits, the black magic with the bad ones (M 49-50).

[See 8:6.3, below.]

II: THEISM IN ITS RELATION TO MEDICINE AND IN ITS STRUGGLE WITH THE PHYSICO-MECHANICAL THEORY OF LIFE (Magnus 7)

The ancient Greek culture also conceded a conspicuous medical significance to dreams, and even arranged a system of its own, that of the temple sleep, in order always to obtain prophesying dreams from the gods.

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Some devil, some bad spirit, or the influence of a bad god, was supposed to enter into a person and by its presence was supposed to produce various forms of disease.

In the Middle Ages they believed in the so-called white and black magicians—

those whose work was inspired by good and bad demons, respectively.

When these superstitions crept into the early Christian churches, the good demon was dropped out of their philosophy and the production of disease was exclusively assigned to the bad demons, while health and healing influences were credited to the agents of heaven—the angels.

And it is certain that this ancient idea of the cause of disease has not entirely departed from our modern philosophy of health and healing. The author is constantly meeting afflicted souls who believe themselves to be “under the power of the enemy”—to be subject to the “powers of darkness”—to be the “victims of doubt and unbelief,” and who are ever praying for their release by messengers of light—the divine agents and dispensers of health and healing.

8:3.2 The “temple sleep” was a peculiar superstition of the Greeks.

In carrying out this system of healing,

The patient, after the obligatory offering, was required to remain a night in the temple, and his dream during this night was the medical advice of the divinity in its most direct form. But only the priest was able to interpret a dream obtained in such a manner, and to extract medical efficacy from it. But as it occasionally happened that a too prosaic and phlegmatic patient did not dream at all, the priest was benevolent enough to intercede. He was always promptly favored by the gods with a suggestive dream (M 12).

the priests would fall asleep in the temple, and in their dreams would get prescriptions for disease from the gods.

III: RELIGION THE SUPPORT OF MEDICAL SUPERSTITION (Magnus 23)

§5. Sleep in the Temple. (Magnus 50)

The sixth of the marble votive tablets which were found in the temple of Æsculapius at Epidaurus shows the kind of miraculous reports [of cures] invented by the priests (M 53).

For many years this superstition which obtained among the Greeks was credited with remarkable cures.

§6. Church Sleep. (Magnus 56)

[Compare: ... after a lapse of three centuries ... (M 56).]

A little later,

The form in which we encounter the Christian temple sleep ... is as like as two peas to that practised in the Hellenic temples (M 60).

among the professed Christians, the same identical idea was practised under the name of "church sleep,"

and wonderful stories abound of how

Mummolus, who came to the court of Justinian (527 to 565) as the ambassador of King Theudebert, suffered greatly from calculi of the urinary bladder ... (M 56).

those who suffered from stone in the bladder

SOURCE

Whereupon he was advised to pass one night sleeping in St. Andrew's Church, at Pateras, for St. Andrew had performed many miraculous cures in this place. No sooner said than done. Mummolus ... had himself placed upon the stone flags of the sanctuary, and waited there for the things that were to happen.

Suddenly, toward midnight, the patient **awoke** with a violent desire to urinate, and discharged in a natural manner a calculus which, as St. Gregory assures us, was so enormous that it fell with a loud clatter into the vessel. From that hour Mummolus was hale and hearty, and joyfully started on his journey homeward (M 56-57).

[[A]fter having pressed the stone that he had removed from the bladder into the **hand** of the sleeping [German emperor, Henry II], [St. Benedict] retired heavenward (M 59).] [See 8:3.4, below.]

§5. Sleep in the Temple. (Magnus 50)

The above tablet, No. 6—which probably dates from the third century, B.C.—tells us that

a blind man by the name of Hermon, a native of Thasos, had recovered his sight by sleeping in the Epidaurean temple of Æsculapius. However, it appears that this man Hermon had been a miserable wretch, for he disappeared without having expressed his thanks in hard cash.

Naturally such ingratitude provoked the god, and summarily he blinded the thankless individual again.

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would go to sleep in the church, where miraculous and mysterious surgical operations would be performed upon them,

and they would **awake** entirely cured,

often finding the stone by their side,

or in the **hands** of the attending priests.

8:3.3 One interesting instance is related of how

the ungrateful patient who had thus been miraculously operated upon failed to pay the priests for what the gods had done.

He was again afflicted

SOURCE

It required a second temple sleep before the god condescended to become helpful once more (M 54).

§6. Church Sleep. (Magnus 56)

[St. Benedict] fully justified the confidence that was placed in him, for, during an acute period in the patient's [*i.e.* German emperor, Henry II] sufferings, he appeared in his own holy person, and with his own holy hands he performed the necessary operation, and, after having pressed the stone that he had removed from the bladder into the hand of the sleeping emperor, he retired heavenward (M 59).

Christianity has ... created one variation of the temple sleep,

[*Note:* See Magnus 61-62 for accounts of St. Martin curing two patients outside the precincts of a church.]

and this is the sleep which is taken, altho outside of the church, at any place whatever, but with invocation of the saints.

This sleep was said to be exactly as efficacious as that taken in the church itself, provided the patient had fervently prayed before falling asleep, and had particularly remembered the saint whose assistance he required (M 60-61).

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and it required considerable persuasion to induce the gods to perform the second operation.

8:3.4 While there were numerous saints in the later Christian superstition who ministered to the sick and performed surgical operations,

St. Benedict was the saintly surgeon who acquired the greatest reputation for successfully operating upon patients during the "church sleep."

8:3.5 Later, this superstition was wonderfully developed and broadened,

and there appeared the teaching that a certain celestial surgeon, one St. Martin, would perform operations and heal the sick,

who would go to sleep in any place and under any circumstances;

that if the sufferers would only call upon him, it was not necessary to sleep in a church;

SOURCE

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and thus the church, as a surgical hospital, was robbed of its peculiar healing influence and sacred climatic value.

§7. **Medical Saints.** (Magnus 62)

[contd] Some saints had a decided predilection for medical **specialties**, and for that reason paid a particular attention to certain varieties of disease.

Thus, St. Anna espoused ophthalmology; St. Jude cured coughs; St. Valentine, epilepsy; St. Catherine of Siena, the plague (M 62-63).

8:3.6 And so it would appear that a whole faculty of **medical** and surgical **saints** was created.

Ultimately there came into existence numerous **specialists**,

some saints performing surgical operations of one kind, while other saints performed operations along other lines.

In following out this superstitious system, they had these celestial practitioners grouped somewhat after the order of our present-day specialists. Some treated stomach troubles, some insanity, while other saints administered to the skin diseases.

RELICS AS A HEALTH DELUSION

§8. **Cult of Relics.** (Magnus 65)

[contd] It was believed that God had endowed the **bodies** of martyrs who died for the Christian faith, or of saints distinguished by extraordinary piety, with a miraculous power of extraordinary efficacy ... (M 65).

8:4.1 From time immemorial, relics have been associated with health and disease.

The **bodies** of either dead or **living** saints were supposed to be life-giving and healing to the touch—

SOURCE

Let us listen to what Gregory of Tours says under this head: “The miracles which our Lord God deigned to bring about through St. Martin, his servant, once a pilgrim in the flesh, he causes to be repeated daily, to strengthen the confidence of the faithful; for now he endows his **tomb** with precisely the same wonder-working power as was exhibited by the saint himself while still among us...” (M 65).

The most popular [method] was to **scrape the tombstones** on the graves of the saints as thoroughly as possible. The powder thus obtained was then put into water or wine, and thus a medicine was acquired which possessed an astonishing curative power (M 68).

I was not able to obtain from the literary sources at my disposal any data as to whether the direct **licking off of the tombstones** might not have been still more efficacious than the all-healing extract. Gregory does, however, report that he was cured of a tumor of the tongue and lips by merely licking the railing of the tomb of St. Martin

and **kissing** the curtain of the **temple** (M 69).

The **water which had been used before Easter to clean the altar** of the saints

was also considered to be a famous remedy (M 69).

Water which was obtained by **boiling the covers in which the relics were wrapped** also yielded a very efficacious medicine (M 70).

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even to touch the **tombs** of some of the saints was reputed to cure one’s disease.

8:4.2 A concoction made of a **piece of the tombstone** of a good man was supposed to cure malignant disease when everything else had failed.

For some diseases, it was a sure cure to **lick the tombstone** of a saint.

To **kiss the temple floors** whereon saints had trod was also supposed to confer extraordinary healing power.

8:4.3 The **water with which the altars were washed at Easter time**

was supposed to be unusually efficacious in the cure of many obstinate diseases.

Relic covers were boiled and the concoctions drunk by the sick and the afflicted.

SOURCE

[T]he chronicler records that the grave of the evangelist John exuded a sort of white manna,

which, owing to its wonder-working power, was distributed all over the world (M 71).

The healing of the sick by the power of the saints and through relics was in favor throughout the middle ages, and even in the sixteenth century it was so generally in vogue that a physician by the name of Wyer (1515 to 1588) considered it expedient to demonstrate the incredibility of such heavenly interference (M 73).

Medicine [in the Middle Ages] had taken refuge in the cloister from the storms and tribulations which followed the political collapse of antiquity and from the excitement of national migrations, and had here attained a high degree of perfection.

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There was a white manna which was supposed to have come from the tomb of the Apostle John,

and this was thought to possess extraordinary power in healing disease.

8:4.4 Many of these relic delusions were systematically practised right up to the seventeenth century,

and to-day we frequently read of pilgrimages and excursions to the relics and shrines of the saints, where scores of people are reputed to have been instantly healed of their diseases. The relic superstition has not entirely disappeared.

MEDIAEVAL MEDICAL SCHOOLS

8:5.1 About the time of the height of the relic rage,

the remnants of the early art of medicine took refuge in the mountain monasteries,

where for years in the midst of a mystical and superstitious environment,

SOURCE

In fact, we may contend, without exaggeration, that at certain periods of the middle ages the Christian monastery had the importance as a **medical school** which was later on claimed by the university; for the Christian **monks** not only **nursed the sick and practised medicine**, but also took an interest in its scientific development (M 74).

By leading the laity, in numerous cases and against their better knowledge and conscience, to believe that the aid of the saints, and of the relics originating from them, was far superior to medical services, the Christian priests of the middle ages have on their part contributed quite a considerable share to the horrors of medical superstition (M 75).

[T]he middle ages formed an era of **miracles**,

of **demons**, devils,

and **witches** ... (M 76).

§9. Theistic Thought as the Fosterer of Medical Superstition. (Magnus 79)

The sincerity of faith among the Christians of the **first** century was so intense that a great number of them believed that their bodily welfare could not be watched over more carefully than when it was commended exclusively to the care of God in all cases of sickness.

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the **monks** **nursed the sick and practised medicine**.

Following this ministry of the monks,

in connection with their church propaganda during the Middle Ages,

there came forth that great horde of **“miracle-workers”** and disease-healers,

whose activities were immediately **followed** by a revival of the teachings of **demonology**,

and **subsequently** by **witchcraft** and its allied theories;

and it is but a few years since witches were actually hanged on the shores of our much boasted free America.

8:5.2 It was not until the **fourth** century that the idea of exclusive and infallible healing by **prayer** became prominent;

SOURCE

Accordingly, they entirely neglected medical aid and treated all diseases only by prayers, by anointing, and by laying on of hands (M 80).

Moreover, an attempt was made to increase the therapeutic value of prayer by various accessories and aids.

Thus the Gospel was placed upon the affected part,

or clothing of a particularly pious man was spread over the patient (M 82).

The mode of treatment by means of prayer was, perhaps, intimately connected with the idea that bodily ailments were divinely ordained to make the wrath of God distinctly perceptible by man.

This conception of pathological processes was a very ancient one ... Afterward Christianity adopted this view of sickness as providential,

and the belief assumed very peculiar forms and dimensions in the middle ages.

In those times any disease occurring epidemically was actually considered to be ... a scourge with which God punished sinful Christians. Thus, for instance, syphilis, which originated in Naples in 1495, ... was instantly declared to be the chastisement of God (M 83).

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and immediately following this,

it was taught that there were many material things which would prove of great help to prayer,

such as placing one of the gospels on the affected part,

or spreading over the patient the clothing which had been worn by a pious man.

THE PROVIDENTIAL IDEA OF DISEASE

8:6.1 Following the theory of prayer as a disease cure, came the teaching of Providence as a disease cause—

the providential idea of human sickness and suffering—

which came to be quite generally held by the professed Christian world.

It was generally accepted that syphilis

SOURCE

[T]he pious Bishop of Zeeland, Peter Faladius, assures us that **military fever**, that terrible disease which devastated Europe five times from **1486** to 1551, was sent by God, who was angry at the excessive passion for finery which prevailed at that time (M 84).

IV: THE INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY UPON THE FORM AND ORIGIN OF MEDICAL SUPERSTITION (Magnus 89)

Porphyrus enumerates three [Neo-Platonist] methods of gaining an influence over the host of demons...

By the third method (goety) attempts were made to dispel the evil demons by **conjurations** and various kinds of mystical mummerly.

These mysterious accessories consisted mostly in **muttering** any number of words as meaningless as possible (M 103-04).

In such a manner words utterly nonsensical were drawled out at the bedside, and, for greater security, written on tablets to be hung **round the neck** of the patient (M 104).

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and the **military fever** which made their appearance in the **fifteenth century** throughout Europe were providential visitations.

This idea that disease was a visitation of Providence naturally led back to those practices which were designed to appease the wrath of God and atone for the shortcomings of man; **and it was in this connection that**

there arose the great army of **conjurors**

and **mumblers,**

as well as those who would chant hymns

and hang charms **about their necks.**

SOURCE

[T]he attempt was made to obtain directly from the demons such magic words as were endowed with curative power. For such purposes **small children were employed**, in whom it was supposed that the demons preferred to be present, and expressed themselves through their mouths. Such children, therefore, played a similar part as does a **medium** with modern spiritualists.

The senseless stuff babbled by such a child was considered the immediate manifestation of a demon,

and was accordingly utilized to banish the demons which brought on disease (M 105).

Porphyrius, probably the most notable disciple of the Neo-Platonic school after Plotinus, claimed even that the **demons personally taught him** to expel, with certainty and despatch, ... pathogenic demons (M 107).

[See 8:3.1, above.]

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8:6.2 In this connection there also arose a peculiar superstition in which

little children were used as the unconscious **mediums**,

great stress being placed upon their jargon or drollery.

These words were many times repeated and certain of them were supposed to possess unusual healing power.

8:6.3 About the same time, there arose the teaching that

some men had been **taught by superior and cunning devils** how to drive out the inferior or lesser devils,

and, as previously explained,

SOURCE

The ancient doctrine of demons passed under the influence of Christian mysticism through certain changes and transitions ...

The idea of good and evil demons ... now assumed a specifically Christian character which, it is true, greatly resembled the ancient Babylonian notion, excepting that the good demons were replaced by angels and saints, whereas the evil spirits were embodied in the devil (M 114).

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the saints and the heavenly angels later took the place of the so-called good and superior demons, in the Christian philosophy.

ASTROLOGY IN HEALTH AND DISEASE

V: THE RELATIONS OF NATURAL SCIENCE TO MEDICAL SUPERSTITION (Magnus 128)

Astronomy and medicine became most intimately connected during the earliest periods of human civilization.

The literature of cuneiform inscriptions shows us that the attempt to bring the stars into connection with human destinies is primeval, and reaches back to the ancient Babylonian [Chaldean] age, even to the Sumero-Accadic period (Sudhoff, Med. Woche. 1901, No. 41) (M 131).

8:7.1 It is indeed difficult to say just when medicine got mixed up with astronomy,

so that the treatment of disease and the preservation of health came to be determined by the flight of the stars through space.

There seems to be evidence that astrology existed back in the earliest Chaldean period.

SOURCE

[W]e believe that the decisive motive which led humanity to bring their bodily welfare into closest connection with the starry canopy of heaven was suggested by the powerful influence which the sun exerts upon the bodily welfare of all life (M 134).

Babylonico-Assyrian civilization possessed in its earliest ages a well-developed system of astrologic medicine, as is evident from writings bequeathed to us from antiquity (M 137).

We take the liberty of repeating certain extracts from these cuneiform tablets, which appear to be the reports which Assyrian and Babylonian court astrologists made to the king (M 137).

[contd] Tablet 69a says: "If the wind comes from the west upon appearance of the moon, disease will prevail during this month" (M 137).

[contd] Tablet 207: "If Venus approaches the constellation of Cancer,

obedience and prosperity will be in the land . . . the sick of the land will recover. Pregnant women will carry their confinements to a favorable conclusion" (M 137-38).

[contd] Tablet 163: "If Mercury rises on the fifteenth day of the month, there will be many deaths. If the constellation of Cancer becomes obscured, a fatal demon will possess the land and many deaths will occur" (M 138).

[contd] Tablet 232: "If Mercury comes in conjunction with Mars, there will follow fatalities among horses" (M 138).

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The idea of sun worship, the sun being the apparent source of energy and life, was probably at the root of this ancient astrology.

The Assyrians and Babylonians developed a veritable system of astrological medicine.

The following examples indicate how disease was treated by the astrologers:

8:7.2 If the wind comes up from the west, upon the appearance of the moon, disease will prevail during the month;

while, if Venus approaches the constellation of Cancer,

the sick in the land will recover.

8:7.3 If Mercury arises on the fifteenth day of the month, there will be many deaths.

If Mercury comes in conjunction with Mars, there will be fatalities among horses.

SOURCE

[contd] Tablet 175: “If a planet becomes pale in opposition to the moon, or if it enters into conjunction with it,

many lions will die” (M 138).

[contd] Tablet 195: “If Mars and Jupiter come in conjunction, many cattle will die” (M 138).

Tablet 269: “If an eclipse of the sun occurs on the twenty-ninth day of the month of Jypar, there will be many deaths on the first day” (M 138).

[contd] Tablet 271: “An eclipse at the morning watch causes disease. . . . If an eclipse takes place during the morning watch, and lasts throughout the watch, while the wind blows from the north, the sick in Akkad will recover” (M 138).

[contd] Tablet 79: “If a halo surrounds the moon and if Regulus stands within,

women will bear male children” (M 138).

We know positively that a physician was forbidden to perform any surgical operations on certain days of each month.

Thus, for instance, the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th of the month Schall-Elul were unfavorable days for such operations (Oefele) (M 139).

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8:7.4 If a planet becomes pale in opposition to the moon,

many lions will die;

while if Mars and Jupiter come in conjunction, many cattle will die.

8:7.5 If an eclipse of the moon occurs on the twenty-ninth day of the month, there will be many deaths on the first day of the next month;

while an eclipse in the morning is sure to produce disease.

8:7.6 If a halo is observed surrounding the moon,

it indicates that women will bear male children.

8:7.7 The ancient astrological medical teaching positively forbade the performance of surgical operations on certain days of the month,

such as the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first.

SOURCE

The above quotations refer exclusively to the course of diseases in relation to the stars, but we find in other passages also distinct references are made to therapeutic methods; for instance, in “Aphorisms,” § 4, paragraph 5, we read: “Purging is very difficult during or before the dog-days” (M 148).

Comets were considered heavenly mischief-makers of the worst kind, and almost every sort of calamity was ascribed to them... (Pliny, Book 2, Chapter XXIV.) (M 149).

All acute diseases were believed to be controlled by the moon,

whereas chronic affections were thought to be under the influence of the sun (M 150).

The signs of the zodiac, like the planets, exert full control over the various parts of the body. Honest Bartisch, of Königsbrück (1535 to 1606), has given us in his “Eye-Service” an illustration of these relations. Fig. 4 is a reproduction of this plate of Bartisch (M 157). [Note: See Exhibit A.]

The five planets already known to the ancients, as well as sun and moon, governed, according to Hermes, the following parts of the body:

The sun, the right eye.

The moon, the left eye.

Saturn, hearing.

Jupiter, the brain.

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8:7.8 Purging was supposed to be both difficult and dangerous during or just before the dog-days.

8:7.9 The appearance of comets, the heavenly mischief-makers, was regarded as a sure forerunner of world-wide pestilence and national calamity.

8:7.10 Acute diseases in general were supposed to be controlled by the moon,

while the chronic affections were more largely influenced by the sun.

8:7.11 It was taught that each part or organ of the human body was subordinate to a distinct sign of the zodiac.

For instance,

the sun controlled the right eye,

the moon the left eye;

Saturn, hearing;

Jupiter, the brain;

SOURCE

Mars, the blood.

Venus, taste and smell.

Mercury, tongue and gullet (M 154-55).

Some remedies could be administered only when the moon was in a particular relation to certain planets or stars of the zodiac. These remedies were principally emetics and purges (M 169).

[Note: See M 155-56, where Heinrich van Rantzau's "Tractus Astrologus" is described and displayed.]

In order to satisfy the astrological requirement of the physician most thoroughly, there arose in the middle ages

a very peculiar literature. Under the name of an almanac or calendarium,

thick folio volumes appeared, which enumerated, in long tables, the various positions of the planets and of the signs of the zodiac,

so that the astrologer was enabled to note the fate of mankind rapidly and easily.

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Mars, the blood;

Venus, taste and smell;

Mercury, the tongue.

8:7.12 An emetic or a purge could be safely given only when the moon was in a certain relation to certain stars.

8:7.13 The ancient astrologers prepared elaborate tables which indicated just how each physical function and mental faculty was subordinate to a certain star.

ANCIENT ALMANACS

8:8.1 During the Middle Ages,

when the science of medicine had begun to take definite shape,

the almanac was gotten out as a sort of compromise between the astrologer and the doctor.

This peculiar volume gave the signs of the zodiac

so that the astrologer was able to know the fate of mankind rapidly and easily,

SOURCE

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and the doctor who had not yet found deliverance from the superstition of the day could also have recourse to its teachings in connection with the practice of his profession.

And thus science has ever advanced with one hand upon the new truth ahead, and the other upon the errors and superstitions of past teachings—practices holy and hoary with age.

The contents of such calendaria

8:8.2 These tables based upon the signs of the zodiac

[Note: See Exhibit B.]

(See Fig. 14)

are beyond description. Apart from remarks which referred to all occurrences of civil life, was stated the exact period when to have the **hair cut**, when **venesection** was to be performed, when to **draw teeth**,

explained the proper times to have the **hair cut**, when it was safe to **draw blood** or to **draw teeth**.

when to **take a bath**, etc.

They also carefully indicated the days on which it was safe to **take a bath**;

Even the proper time for **prayer** was indicated by such a calendarium.

and even the best times to **pray** were indicated in the almanac,

According to the experience of Peter of Abano, the **conjunction of the moon with Jupiter in the Dragon** was sure to effect an answer to prayer.

it being taught that when the **moon was in conjunction with Jupiter**, you were sure to receive an answer to your prayers.

Hieronymus Cardanus had discovered, with the aid of astrology, that a request was sure to be complied with if a prayer was **offered to the Virgin Mary on the first day of April, at 8 A.M.** (Möhsen, Vol. II., page 423) (M 172-73).

Prayers were especially sure of an answer when **offered to the Virgin Mary on the first day of April at eight A.M.**

The physician, as almanac-maker, is probably one of the most wonderful results of medical superstition,

8:8.3 And so the ancient almanac proves to be a monumental exhibition of the combined medical and religious superstitions of the Middle Ages,

SOURCE

and this aberration of medicine clung so firmly to the people ... even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ... (M 173).

The ancient world, which was blindly devoted to all kinds of superstition, had also cherished and fostered astrology. But when the ancient theory of life was demolished later on, and the **Christian God of love** had taken possession of the world,

the **belief in the fate-determining power of the stars was shaken**, and centuries followed during which *Medicina Astrologica*, altho it did not by any means disappear entirely, was forced more or less to the rear (M 179).

Astrology, and with it *Medicina Astrologica*, reigned supreme at most of the princely courts from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries (M 181).

Thus, **Melanchthon** was so convinced an adherent of all astrological doctrines that he was incessantly active in their favor by mouth and by pen.

And when fatal disease had finally seized upon him, he was soon satisfied as to the issue,

in that **Mars and Saturn happened to be in conjunction** (Mohsen, Vol. II., page 416) (M 182).

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and it was not until the later **Christian idea of a God of love** in control of the universe became widespread,

and the still later scientific teaching of the regulation of health and disease by the rulings of natural law, became generally accepted,

that this blinding **belief in the fate-ruling power of the stars was shaken**.

At one time, all the great courts of Europe had their astrologers;

and even **Melanchthon**, the reformer,³ was a believer in much of this astrology,

believing that his own last sickness was incurable

only because **Mars and Saturn happened to be in conjunction**.

SOURCE

[See 8:2.8, above.]

V: CERTAIN OLD TIME BELIEFS REGARDING DISEASE, REMEDIES, AND PHYSICIANS (Sperry 43)

[INTRODUCTION] (Sperry 43)

For example, it was believed by many that a ring, made from a coffin and slipped over a cramping limb, would stop the spasms (S 44).

Tumors could be driven away by nine blows from the hand of a dead man (S 44).

For the tooth ache, drive a nail into an oak tree (S 45).

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8:8.4 We cannot yet regard ourselves as entirely free from the deceptions and delusions of astrology, as long as intelligent farmers continue to plant their potatoes by the light of the moon, and otherwise gauge their agricultural pursuits by the phases of the moon, or the flight of the stars.

We sometimes regard ourselves as having wholly outlived a superstition, when, in so far as faith and fear are concerned, we continue to be victims of every principle of its erroneous teaching.

LATER HEALTH DELUSIONS

8:9.1 Deliverance from the more ancient delusions of demonology and astrology did not come in a single generation. Numerous disease delusions sprang up on the heels of these departing sophistries. The following absurd medical practices are among the teachings found in a not very distant past:

8:9.2 A ring made from the wood of a coffin and slipped over a cramping limb, was supposed to be a sure cure for spasms.

8:9.3 Tumors and cancers could be effectually driven away by nine blows from the hand of a dead man.

8:9.4 To drive a new nail into an oak tree, was a sure cure for toothache.

SOURCE

KING'S EVIL (Sperry 45)

The reigning monarch was the agent used for the cure of various infirmities, but chiefly for dispersing scrofulous tumors, such as are still popularly known in some regions by the name of "king's evil."

This treatment was usually called "his (or her) Majesty's Touch."

The entire ceremony consisted of a solemn laying on of hands, the recitation of a prayer or of a good-luck phrase, and the hanging of a coin about the neck of the patient, who was then dismissed with the royal benediction (S 45).

That this method was generally accredited and extensively employed we must believe, for it is claimed that Charles II, during twelve years of his reign, touched nearly one hundred thousand afflicted persons (S 46).

WEAPON OINTMENT (Sperry 46)

[contd] Another interesting method of treating diseases was known as the "Weapon Ointment Cure."

This marvelous unguent was used for the healing of all manner of bruises and wounds. Its composition and mode of preparation were quite complicated.

Among the articles necessary for its composition were human blood,

pulverized mummy,

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8:9.5 "King's Evil" was a name given to scrofula,

for it was supposed to be cured by His Majesty's touch;

that is, the king, by laying hands on the sick and reciting a prayer,

was supposed to cure thousands of scrofulous sufferers every year.

8:9.6 The "weapon ointment" cure

was a remedy consisting of a large number of different things

including human blood,

pulverized mummy,

SOURCE

moss that had grown on the skull of a thief who had been hung in chains, and certain portions of animal tissue which must be obtained while the animal was in a peculiar physiological condition (S 46).

When used it was to be applied, not to the wound, but to the weapon which had inflicted the wound, while the latter was to be carefully cleansed and dressed, and then let alone (S 47).

Lord Bacon, while he could not confidently accept all of the claims made for it, said he could not disprove them.

He thought and wrote much upon the subject. His final conclusion was that “we must accept the facts, and leave them unexplained.”

Hildanus, one of the greatest surgeons of that day,

acknowledged that the remedy had merit. In trying to explain its action,

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and moss that had grown on the skull of a thief.

The peculiar part of the procedure was that

this ointment was to be rubbed on the weapon that had inflicted the wound,

and this was supposed to cure the cut.

Even Lord Bacon, in his day, would not presume to deny the efficacy of this treatment,

but failing to account consistently for it,

he said, “We must accept the facts, and leave them unexplained.”

He must have felt as the modern scientists feel when standing in the presence of the psychological frauds and deceptions of our own day. It is very difficult to refute superstition as long as it apparently cures disease and heals the sick.

Even Hildanus, an eminent surgeon of that day,

failing satisfactorily to explain the workings of the “weapon ointment,”

SOURCE

he admitted some help from the cleansing of the wound; "but," he seriously asserts, " ... the devil must have a hand in the business, and, as he is by far the longest headed and most experienced of all dealers with disease, he cannot find this a matter of any great difficulty" (S 47).

SYMPATHETIC POWDER (Sperry 48)

[contd] Before the Weapon Ointment had fallen into disuse,

a similar remedy was announced and became even more popular. This medicine was called the "Sympathetic Powder."

The claims for it were that, if applied to the blood-stained garments of a wounded person,

it would heal the wound, even though the victim were at a great distance from the garments, and unconscious of the application (S 48).

VII: MEDICAL SUPERSTITION AND INSANITY (Magnus 191)

[contd] The history of medicine is conjoined with the evolution of theology to an extent which makes them almost inseparable,

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said, "The devil must have a hand in the business."

8:9.6 Following the widespread use of the weapon ointment,

a so-called sympathetic powder came into general use.

These powders could be applied to the blood-stained garments of a wounded person,

thereby quickly and effectually healing the wound.

SUPERSTITION AND INSANITY

SOURCE

and this may best be seen from a study of the management of the insane, which is a continuous record of cruelty based upon medico-theological **superstition**.

Perhaps the most heartrending chapter of unphilosophical theology teems with the narration of thousands of unfortunate beings murdered, tortured, and mis-handled by the finesse in the interpretation of Biblical texts (M 191).

The belief which had flourished in most of the Oriental religions from remote antiquity, that ... lunacy was due to **diabolic possession**, became rooted in the early Christian Church and flourished for eighteen centuries ... (M 192).

Later it was thought that the **moon** had a direct influence upon perturbation of the mind;

hence, the term "**lunacy**" developed (M 192).

[!]

[T]he Church originated a process by which the possessed were to be treated. Sacred salves and holy water, the breath or the spittle of the officiating priest, the touching of relics, or a visit to holy places, were the principal therapeutic agents employed (M 193).

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8:10.1 The **superstition** of the ancients respecting the insane led to the most unfortunate and inhuman treatment of these mental sufferers.

The insane of past ages were the most maltreated of all the afflicted.

The idea that mental diseases and insanity were directly attributable to **demoniacal possession**

resulted in producing such a prejudice against the mentally unbalanced of olden times that they received but little or no sympathy and care from their fellow-men.

8:10:2 Another idea respecting insanity was that some forms of mental derangement came from allowing the **moon to shine directly upon the face**.

Indeed, it was this belief that gave origin to the name **lunacy**—from Luna, the moon.

In the good old days,

mental patients would have some superstitious remedy tried on them,

SOURCE

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and if they made no immediate improvement, they were cast out from civilization as victims of lunacy, or else they were regarded as having become possessed of devils.

8:10:3 From the records of some of the ancient churches it would appear that the physician-priests regarded themselves as sometimes successful in their efforts to

This mild form of treatment did not, however, long continue. Soon measures were directed toward driving out the evil spirit from the possessed...

... Adjuvants to [shouting vile epithets at the devil to drive him out] consisted in "frightening" the devil by long words, difficult to pronounce, commonly derived from Oriental languages,

by the administration of malodorous and filthy "drugs," and similar practises (M 194).

[contd] It was claimed that many devils were thus driven out, and the annals of the Church contain numerous records of persons cured in this manner. "The Jesuit Fathers at Vienna, in 1583, glorified in the fact that in such a contest they had cast out twelve thousand, six hundred and fifty-two living devils" (White) (M 195).

Places in which the insane were confined were known as "fool towers" and "witch towers" (M 195).

frighten the devils out of the insane by the employment of incantations, the use of long words,

and the administration of certain malodorous and filthy drugs.

In 1583, the Jesuit Fathers of Vienna boasted that they had by these means cast out 12,658 living devils.

8:10.4 At a later date,

lunatics were sometimes confined in what were known as "fool towers," and still later they were incarcerated in the "witch towers."

SOURCE

Modern alienists have wrought wonders; their successful operations are not published daily press, but any visitor who knows what an insane asylum was fifty years ago, and who spends a few hours in a modern hospital for the treatment of lunatics, will observe what appears but little short of the miraculous (M 198-99).

VI: MORE RECENT THEORIES AND FASHIONS IN THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE; ALLOPATHY AND HOMEOPATHY (Sperry 51)

[contd] What is known as the “Old School of Medicine”—that out of which the present self styled “Regular Profession” evolved—

enjoyed, during the early part of the last century, quite as fully, perhaps, as any other “system” or “school” of medicine ever has, the confidence of the people upon whom it was practiced.

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It is certainly a cause for universal rejoicing and gratitude that in the case of these mental sufferers, the superstitions of the dark ages no longer guide society in its treatment of the insane.

Great progress has been made in the past fifty years by all civilized nations in the treatment of the insane and the mentally unbalanced.

At the present time, in most parts of the United States, the mental patients confined in State institutions receive thorough-going, up-to-date, and scientific treatment for their mental maladies.

MEDICAL ERRORS AND SUPERSTITIONS

8:11.1 Even our orthodox schools of medicine,

during the past century,

were not altogether free from

SOURCE

Recoveries under its methods were generally regarded as cures resulting from the employment of those methods.

Many persons now living can remember when it was customary to **confine a fever patient in a close, hot room,**

refuse him water to drink,

take from his veins **large quantities of blood,**

and then **“put him through a course of medicine.”**

Often he was fed with mercury till the mucous membranes of his mouth became soft as sponge and leaked spittle in streams;

till his **gums and his tongue were horribly swollen,** soft as putty and black as tar;

till his **teeth,** in some instances, could be picked out with the fingers, and his breath became intolerable; and then most of these horrible conditions—the result of the medicine—were called the effects of the disease, which, they assured the public, would surely have killed the patient but for the remedies administered (S 51-52).

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absurd and superstitious practices.

Teachings which have been long accepted in the medical profession are indeed difficult to get away from. That this is true has been shown repeatedly during the past fifty years.

The absurd and unreasonable practice of **confining fever patients in close and unventilated rooms,**

denying the famishing sufferers all water—either for drinking or bathing purposes—

at the same time drawing from their depleted systems **large quantities of blood,**

and **putting them through a “course of medicine”**

consisting largely of calomel,

until sometimes the **mouth and gums were horribly swollen**

and the **teeth** ready to fall out—

such a method of treating fever patients represents the tenacity with which the practices of the past cling to the procedures of the present.

The science of medicine has made tremendous progress during the past fifty years, having delivered itself from a vast amount of ancient superstition and medical delusion. In recent years, amazing progress has been made in the march away from superstition and empiricism in our modern methods of treating the sick and healing disease.

8:11.2 Among the last of the greater ancient delusions regarding the treatment of disease to pass out of our modern system of medicine, was

Less than one hundred years ago the lancet was a very important part of a doctor's outfit. In those days women must be bled, and bled freely, ten or fifteen times a year. In England, at one time, the operation of blood letting was regarded as so simple and devoid of danger that the surgeon's skill was not required.

the universal practice of blood-letting,

a practice largely in vogue within the last hundred years.

The barbers attended to most of it;

In England, the barbers were commissioned to perform this service.

[!]

They were regarded as the surgeons of that day,

and to-day, in every city and village of England and America, relics of the old custom are seen in the conventional business sign of the barber—

and it is said that the present-day barbers' sign—a pole of red and white stripes—originated from this practice,

SOURCE

a pole on which the white stripes represent the bandage, and the other colors, red or blue, represent the blood (S 52).

[Source?]

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the white representing the bandage and the red standing for the blood.

8:11.3 While physicians of to-day have largely delivered themselves from the bondage and errors of these ancient medical superstitions, the common people are still more or less tainted by these erroneous ideas of disease, as shown by the current use of such phrases as “disease striking in,” “drawing out inflammation,” “driving out pain,” together with the notion that disease is a punishment for moral wrong-doing, or a providential visitation for spiritual misdeeds. Ancient notions die hard, and superstition is slow to release its victims; accordingly, the deliverance of the common people from the thralldom of medical superstition has been painfully slow.

MODERN MEDICAL SUPERSTITION

8:12.1 In recent years, medical superstition seems to have crystallized itself into numerous modern “mind cures” and “faith-healing” cults. By mind cure and faith healing we refer to those exclusive systems of treatment known by these terms; we shall not undertake to enumerate these faith-cure systems and “isms,” for they are legion. They all operate on the same general lines.

8:12.2 There exists to-day the same willingness on the part of the people to be misled and deceived as was found in the minds and hearts of our forefathers; and the power of these modern humbugs of healing is found to consist in their ability apparently to cure disease. Having relieved physical pain and seemingly cured bodily disease, the teachers of these systems force their peculiar religious and ethical views upon their converts as the price of retaining healing and regaining health.

8:12.3 In a subsequent chapter, it will be shown that these various cults and isms all accomplish their healing work in accordance with certain definite laws. The fact that their devotees improve in health and find actual or pretended deliverance from disease, in no wise vouches for the truthfulness of their teachings or the trustworthiness of their claims to divine sanction and authority.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

8:13.1 1. Superstition has ever paraded in the garments of faith. Medical superstition has travelled hand in hand with religious superstition.

8:13.2 2. The ancients attributed disease to the anger of the gods, and went so far as to provide a different god for each disease.

8:13.3 3. The magicians were a special class of priests who claimed to work miracles by the aid of the gods. They employed medicine, charms, and prayers.

8:13.4 4. While the vast majority of these ancient health practices were utterly nonsensical, vast numbers of people were apparently helped or cured.

8:13.5 5. Demonology explained disease on the ground that the patient was possessed by an evil spirit, by the devil. This doctrine is still prevalent, many believing themselves to be “under the power of the enemy.”

8:13.6 6. The early “temple sleep” and the later “church sleep” were procedures in which the patient went to sleep in the temple or the church, and while unconscious the saints were supposed to come down and treat the sick—even to perform surgical operations.

8:13.7 7. Relics have been looked upon as health restorers from a very early date. Pilgrimages to the holy shrines have restored thousands of sick ones to health.

8:13.8 8. The medical schools of the monks in mediæval times turned out a great army of “miracle-workers.” Their teachings ranged from healing by prayer to subsequent witchcraft demonstrations.

8:13.9 9. Later, there appeared the providential idea of disease. This led to the practice of all sorts of methods calculated to appease the wrath of God. This idea is widespread to-day.

8:13.10 10. From the dawn of history, astrology, the forerunner of astronomy, has been connected with health and disease. This belief originated the ancient almanacs— forerunners of our modern combined calendars and patent medicine advertisements.

8:13.11 11. The latter-day health delusions are too numerous to mention, including “king’s touch,” “weapon ointment,” and “sympathetic powders.”

8:13.12 12. The barbarous treatment of the insane in past ages was due to the prevalence of the belief in demoniacal possession.

8:13.13 13. The practice of medicine in the last century was not entirely free from its empiric courses of medicine, atrocious blood-letting, and “driving out inflammations.”

8:13.14 14. Modern medical superstition has crystallized itself into numerous cults, mind cures, and faith-healing procedures. The ability to cure disease is commonly regarded as proving that the healer is a special and accredited agent of God.

1. *Compare:* [T]he Egyptian and Babylonico-Assyrian manuscripts, so far known, show an intimate admixture of true observation of nature with theistic speculations—*i.e.*, a treatment of medicine which, altho it took account of physico-natural manifestations, was still deeply tinctured with superstition (M 4).

2. *Contrast:* The magicians adopted various modes of procedure in the treatment of the sick: they either attempted, as do our modern quacks, to create the impression, by administering medicine, that they were actually able to direct the treatment of the ailing in a rational manner, or they restricted themselves to various kinds of magical observances (M 32).

3. Sadler would have known that Melancthon was a Protestant reformer from having read Ellen G. White's *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (1888).