

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *FROM FETICH TO HYGIENE.*

#### I. THE THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF EPIDEMICS AND SANITATION.

A VERY striking feature in recorded history has been the recurrence of great pestilences. Various indications in ancient times show their frequency, while the famous description of the plague of Athens given by Thucydides, and the discussion of it by Lucretius, exemplify their severity. In the Middle Ages they raged from time to time throughout Europe: such plagues as the Black Death and the sweating sickness swept off vast multitudes, the best authorities estimating that of the former, at the middle of the fourteenth century, more than half the population of England died, and that twenty-five millions of people perished in various parts of Europe. In 1552 sixty-seven thousand patients died of the plague at Paris alone, and in 1580 more than twenty thousand. The great plague in England and other parts of Europe in the seventeenth century was also fearful, and that which swept the south of Europe in the early part of the eighteenth century, as well as the invasions by the cholera at various times during the nineteenth, while less terrible than those of former years, have left a deep impress upon the imaginations of men.

From the earliest records we find such pestilences attributed to the wrath or malice of unseen powers. This had been the prevailing view even in the most cultured ages before the establishment of Christianity: in Greece and Rome especially, plagues of various sorts were attributed to the wrath of the gods; in Judea, the scriptural records of various plagues sent upon the earth by the Divine fiat as a punishment for sin show the continuance of this mode of

thought. Among many examples and intimations of this in our sacred literature, we have the epidemic which carried off fourteen thousand seven hundred of the children of Israel, and which was only stayed by the prayers and offerings of Aaron, the high priest; the destruction of seventy thousand men in the pestilence by which King David was punished for the numbering of Israel, and which was only stopped when the wrath of Jahveh was averted by burnt-offerings; the plague threatened by the prophet Zechariah, and that delineated in the Apocalypse. From these sources this current of ideas was poured into the early Christian Church, and hence it has been that during nearly twenty centuries since the rise of Christianity, and down to a period within living memory, at the appearance of any pestilence the Church authorities, instead of devising sanitary measures, have very generally preached the necessity of immediate atonement for offences against the Almighty.

This view of the early Church was enriched greatly by a new development of theological thought regarding the powers of Satan and evil angels, the declaration of St. Paul that the gods of antiquity were devils being cited as its sufficient warrant.\*

Moreover, comets, falling stars, and earthquakes were thought, upon scriptural authority, to be "signs and wonders"—evidences of the Divine wrath, heralds of fearful visitations; and this belief, acting powerfully upon the minds of millions, did much to create a panic-terror sure to increase epidemic disease wherever it broke forth.

---

\* For plague during the Peloponnesian war, see Thucydides, vol. ii, pp. 47-55, and vol. iii, p. 87. For a general statement regarding this and other plagues in ancient times, see Lucretius, vol. vi, pp. 1090 *et seq.*; and for a translation, see vol. i, p. 179, in Munro's edition of 1886. For early views of sanitary science in Greece and Rome, see Forster's *Inquiry*, in *The Pamphleteer*, vol. xxiv, p. 404. For the Greek view of the interference of the gods in [disease, especially in pestilence, see Grote's *History of Greece*, vol. i, pp. 251, 485, and vol. vi, p. 213; see also Herodotus, lib. iii, c. xxxiii, and elsewhere. For the Hebrew view of the same interference by the Almighty, see especially Numbers xi, 4-34; also xvi, 49; 1 Samuel xxiv; also Psalm cvi, 29; also the well-known texts in Zechariah and Revelation. For St. Paul's declaration that the gods of the heathen are devils, see 1 Cor. x, 20. As to the earlier origin of the plague in Egypt, see Haeser, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Medicin und der epidemischen Krankheiten*, Jena, 1875-'82, vol. iii, pp. 15 *et seq.*

The main cause of this immense sacrifice of life is now known to have been the want of hygienic precaution, both in the Eastern centres, where various plagues were developed, and in the European towns through which they spread. And here certain theological reasonings came in to resist the evolution of a proper sanitary theory. Out of the Orient had been poured into the thinking of western Europe the theological idea that the abasement of man adds to the glory of God; that indignity to the body may secure salvation to the soul; hence, that cleanliness betokens pride and filthiness humility. Living in filth was regarded by great numbers of holy men, who set an example to the Church and to society, as an evidence of sanctity. St. Jerome and the Breviary of the Roman Church dwell with unction on the fact that St. Hilarion lived his whole life long in utter physical uncleanness; St. Athanasius glorifies St. Anthony because he had never washed his feet; St. Abraham's most striking evidence of holiness was that for fifty years he washed neither his hands nor his feet; St. Sylvia never washed any part of her body save her fingers; St. Euphraxia belonged to a convent in which the nuns religiously abstained from bathing; St. Mary of Egypt was eminent for filthiness; St. Simon Stylites was in this respect unspeakable—the least that can be said is, that he lived in ordure and stench intolerable to his visitors. The *Lives of the Saints* dwell with complacency on the statement that, when sundry Eastern monks showed a disposition to wash themselves, the Almighty manifested his displeasure by drying up a neighbouring stream until the bath which it had supplied was destroyed.

The religious world was far indeed from the inspired utterance attributed to John Wesley, that "cleanliness is near akin to godliness." For century after century the idea prevailed that filthiness was akin to holiness; and, while we may well believe that the devotion of the clergy to the sick was one cause why, during the greater plagues, they lost so large a proportion of their numbers, we can not escape the conclusion that their want of cleanliness had much to do with it. In France, during the fourteenth century, Guy de Chauliac, the great physician of his time, noted particularly that cer-

tain Carmelite monks suffered especially from pestilence, and that they were especially filthy. During the Black Death no less than nine hundred Carthusian monks fell victims in one group of buildings.

Naturally, such an example set by the venerated leaders of thought exercised great influence throughout society, and all the more because it justified the carelessness and sloth to which ordinary humanity is prone. In the principal towns of Europe, as well as in the country at large, down to a recent period, the most ordinary sanitary precautions were neglected, and pestilences continued to be attributed to the wrath of God or the malice of Satan. As to the wrath of God, a new and powerful impulse was given to this belief in the Church toward the end of the sixth century by St. Gregory the Great. In 590, when he was elected Pope, the city of Rome was suffering from a dreadful pestilence: the people were dying by thousands; out of one procession imploring the mercy of Heaven no less than eighty persons died within an hour: what the heathen in an earlier epoch had attributed to Apollo was now attributed to Jehovah, and chroniclers tell us that fiery darts were seen flung from heaven into the devoted city. But finally, in the midst of all this horror, Gregory, at the head of a penitential procession, saw hovering over the mausoleum of Hadrian the figure of the archangel Michael, who was just sheathing a flaming sword, while three angels were heard chanting the *Regina Cœli*. The legend continues that the Pope immediately broke forth into hallelujahs for this sign that the plague was stayed, and, as it shortly afterward became less severe, a chapel was built at the summit of the mausoleum and dedicated to St. Michael; still later, above the whole was erected the colossal statue of the archangel sheathing his sword, which still stands to perpetuate the legend. Thus the greatest of Rome's ancient funeral monuments was made to bear testimony to this mediæval belief; the mausoleum of Hadrian became the castle of St. Angelo. A legend like this, claiming to date from the greatest of the early popes, and vouched for by such an imposing monument, had undoubtedly a marked effect upon the dominant theology throughout Europe, which was constantly developing a great body of

thought regarding the agencies by which the Divine wrath might be averted.

First among these agencies, naturally, were evidences of devotion, especially gifts of land, money, or privileges to churches, monasteries, and shrines—the seats of fetiches which it was supposed had wrought cures or might work them. The whole evolution of modern history, not only ecclesiastical but civil, has been largely affected by the wealth transferred to the clergy at such periods. It was noted that in the fourteenth century, after the great plague, the Black Death, had passed, an immensely increased proportion of the landed and personal property of every European country was in the hands of the Church. Well did a great ecclesiastic remark that “pestilences are the harvests of the ministers of God.” \*

Other modes of propitiating the higher powers were penitential processions, the parading of images of the Virgin or of saints through plague-stricken towns, and fetiches innumerable. Very noted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were the processions of the flagellants, trooping through various parts of Europe, scourging their naked bodies, shrieking the penitential psalms, and often running from wild excesses of devotion to the maddest orgies.

Sometimes, too, plagues were attributed to the wrath of lesser heavenly powers. Just as, in former times, the fury of “far-darting Apollo” was felt when his name was not re-

---

\* For triumphant mention of St. Hilarion's filth, see the *Roman Breviary* for October 21st; and for details, see S. Hieronymus, *Vita S. Hilarionis Eremitæ*, in Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. xxiii. For Athanasius's reference to St. Anthony's filth, see works of St. Athanasius in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. iv, p. 209. For the filthiness of the other saints named, see citations from the *Lives of the Saints*, in Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. ii, pp. 117, 118. For Guy de Chauliac's observation on the filthiness of Carmelite monks and their great losses by pestilence, see Meryon, *History of Medicine*, vol. i, p. 257. For the mortality among the Carthusian monks in time of plague, see Mrs. Lecky's very interesting *Visit to the Grand Chartreuse*, in *The Nineteenth Century* for March, 1891. For the plague at Rome in 590, the legend regarding the fiery darts, mentioned by Pope Gregory himself, and that of the castle of St. Angelo, see Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, vol. ii, pp. 26-35; also Story, *Castle of St. Angelo*, etc., chap. ii. For the remark that “pestilences are the harvest of the ministers of God,” see reference to Charlevoix, in Southey, *History of Brazil*, vol. ii, p. 254, cited in Buckle, vol. i, p. 130, note.

spectfully treated by mortals, so, in 1680, the Church authorities at Rome discovered that the plague then raging resulted from the anger of St. Sebastian because no monument had been erected to him. Such a monument was therefore placed in the Church of St. Peter ad Vincula, and the plague ceased.

So much for the endeavour to avert the wrath of the heavenly powers. On the other hand, theological reasoning no less subtle was used in thwarting the malice of Satan. This idea, too, came from far. In the sacred books of India and Persia, as well as in our own, we find the same theory of disease, leading to similar means of cure. Perhaps the most astounding among Christian survivals of this theory and its resultant practices was seen during the plague at Rome in 1522. In that year, at that centre of divine illumination, certain people, having reasoned upon the matter, came to the conclusion that this great scourge was the result of Satanic malice; and, in view of St. Paul's declaration that the ancient gods were devils, and of the theory that the ancient gods of Rome were the devils who had the most reason to punish that city for their dethronement, and that the great amphitheatre was the chosen haunt of these demon gods, an ox decorated with garlands, after the ancient heathen manner, was taken in procession to the Colosseum and solemnly sacrificed. Even this proved vain, and the Church authorities then ordered expiatory processions and ceremonies to propitiate the Almighty, the Virgin, and the saints, who had been offended by this temporary effort to bribe their enemies.

But this sort of theological reasoning developed an idea far more disastrous, and this was that Satan, in causing pestilences, used as his emissaries especially Jews and witches. The proof of this belief in the case of the Jews was seen in the fact that they escaped with a less percentage of disease than did the Christians in the great plague periods. This was doubtless due in some measure to their remarkable sanitary system, which had probably originated thousands of years before in Egypt, and had been handed down through Jewish lawgivers and statesmen. Certainly they observed more careful sanitary rules and more constant abstinence from dangerous foods than was usual among Christians; but

the public at large could not understand so simple a cause, and jumped to the conclusion that their immunity resulted from protection by Satan, and that this protection was repaid and the pestilence caused by their wholesale poisoning of Christians. As a result of this mode of thought, attempts were made in all parts of Europe to propitiate the Almighty, to thwart Satan, and to stop the plague by torturing and murdering the Jews. Throughout Europe during great pestilences we hear of extensive burnings of this devoted people. In Bavaria, at the time of the Black Death, it is computed that twelve thousand Jews thus perished; in the small town of Erfurt the number is said to have been three thousand; in Strasburg, the Rue Brulée remains as a monument to the two thousand Jews burned there for poisoning the wells and causing the plague of 1348; at the royal castle of Chinon, near Tours, an immense trench was dug, filled with blazing wood, and in a single day one hundred and sixty Jews were burned. Everywhere in continental Europe this mad persecution went on; but it is a pleasure to say that one great churchman, Pope Clement VI, stood against this popular unreason, and, so far as he could bring his influence to bear on the maddened populace, exercised it in favour of mercy to these supposed enemies of the Almighty.\*

---

\* For an early conception in India of the Divinity acting through medicine, see *The Bhagavadgītā*, translated by Telang, p. 82, in Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*. For the necessity of religious means of securing knowledge of medicine, see the *Anugīta*, translated by Telang, in Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, p. 388. For ancient Persian ideas of sickness as sent by the spirit of evil and to be cured by spells, but not excluding medicine and surgery, and for sickness generally as caused by the evil principle in demons, see the *Zend-Avesta*, Darmesteter's translation, introduction *passim*, but especially p. xciii. For diseases wrought by witchcraft, see the same, pp. 230, 293. On the preference of spells in healing over medicine and surgery, see *Zend-Avesta*, vol. i, pp. 85, 86. For healing by magic in ancient Greece, see, e. g., the cure of Ulysses in the *Odyssey*, "They stopped the black blood by a spell" (*Odyssey*, xix, 457). For medicine in Egypt as partly priestly and partly in the hands of physicians, see Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii, p. 136, note. For ideas of curing of diseases by expulsion of demons still surviving among various tribes and nations of Asia, see J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a Study of Comparative Religion*, London, 1890, pp. 184-192. For the Flagellants and their processions at the time of the Black Death, see Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, New York, 1888, vol. ii, pp. 381 *et seq.* For the persecution of the Jews in time of pestilence, see *ibid.*, p. 379 and following, with authorities in the notes. For the expulsion of the Jews from Padua, see the *Acta Sanctorum*, September, tom. vii, p. 893.

Yet, as late as 1527, the people of Pavia, being threatened with plague, appealed to St. Bernardino of Feltro, who during his life had been a fierce enemy of the Jews, and they passed a decree promising that if the saint would avert the pestilence they would expel the Jews from the city. The saint apparently accepted the bargain, and in due time the Jews were expelled.

As to witches, the reasons for believing them the cause of pestilence also came from far. This belief, too, had been poured mainly from Oriental sources into our sacred books and thence into the early Church, and was strengthened by a whole line of Church authorities, fathers, doctors, and saints; but, above all, by the great bull, *Summis Desiderantes*, issued by Pope Innocent VIII, in 1484. This utterance from the seat of St. Peter infallibly committed the Church to the idea that witches are a great cause of disease, storms, and various ills which afflict humanity; and the Scripture on which the action recommended against witches in this papal bull, as well as in so many sermons and treatises for centuries afterward, was based, was the famous text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." This idea persisted long, and the evolution of it is among the most fearful things in human history.\*

---

\* On the plagues generally, see Hecker, *Epidemics of the Middle Ages, passim*; but especially Haeser, as above, III. Band, pp. 1-202; also Sprengel, Baas, Isensee, *et al.* For brief statement showing the enormous loss of life in these plagues, see Littré, *Médecine et Médecins*, Paris, 1875, pp. 3 *et seq.* For a summary of the effects of the black plague throughout England, see Green's *Short History of the English People*, chap. v. For the mortality in the Paris hospitals, see Desmazes, *Supplices, Prisons et Graces en France*, Paris, 1866. For striking descriptions of plague-stricken cities, see the well-known passages in Thucydides, Boccaccio, De Foe, and, above all, Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*. For examples of averting the plagues by processions, see Leopold Delisle, *Études sur la Condition de la Classe Agricole, etc., en Normandie au Moyen Age*, p. 630; also Fort, chap. xxiii. For the anger of St. Sebastian as a cause of the plague at Rome, and its cessation when a monument had been erected to him, see Paulus Diaconus, cited in Gregorovius, vol. ii, p. 165. For the sacrifice of an ox in the Colosseum to the ancient gods as a means of averting the plague of 1522, at Rome, see Gregorovius, vol. viii, p. 390. As to massacres of the Jews in order to avert the wrath of God in pestilence, see *L'École et la Science*, Paris, 1887, p. 178; also Hecker, and especially Hoeniger, *Gang und Verbreitung des Schwarzen Todes in Deutschland*, Berlin, 1880. For a long list of towns in which burnings of Jews took place for this imaginary cause, see pp. 7-11. As to absolute want of sanitary precautions, see Hecker, p. 292. As to condemna-

In Germany its development was especially terrible. From the middle of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth, Catholic and Protestant theologians and ecclesiastics vied with each other in detecting witches guilty of producing sickness or bad weather; women were sent to torture and death by thousands, and with them, from time to time, men and children. On the Catholic side sufficient warrant for this work was found in the bull of Pope Innocent VIII, and the bishops' palaces of south Germany became shambles,—the lordly prelates of Salzburg, Würzburg, and Bamberg taking the lead in this butchery.

In north Germany Protestantism was just as conscientiously cruel. It based its theory and practice toward witches directly upon the Bible, and above all on the great text which has cost the lives of so many myriads of innocent men, women, and children, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Naturally the Protestant authorities strove to show that Protestantism was no less orthodox in this respect than Catholicism; and such theological jurists as Carpzov, Damhouder, and Calov did their work thoroughly. An eminent authority on this subject estimates the number of victims thus sacrificed during that century in Germany alone at over a hundred thousand.

Among the methods of this witch activity especially credited in central and southern Europe was the anointing of city walls and pavements with a diabolical unguent causing pestilence. In 1530 Michael Caddo was executed with fearful tortures for thus besmearing the pavements of Geneva. But far more dreadful was the torturing to death of a large body of people at Milan, in the following century, for pro-

---

tion by strong religionists of medical means in the plague, see Fort, p. 130. For a detailed account of the action of Popes Eugene IV, Innocent VIII, and other popes, against witchcraft, ascribing to it storms and diseases, and for the bull *Summis Desiderantes*, see the chapters on *Meteorology* and *Magic* in this series. The text of the bull is given in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, in Binsfeld, and in Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, Leipzig, 1869, vol. i, pp. 222-225, and a good summary and analysis of it in Soldan, *Geschichte der Hexenprocesse*. For a concise and admirable statement of the contents and effects of the bull, see Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, vol. iii, pp. 40 *et seq.*; and for the best statement known to me of the general subject, Prof. George L. Burr's paper on *The Literature of Witchcraft*, read before the American Historical Association at Washington, 1890.

ducing the plague by anointing the walls; and a little later similar punishments for the same crime were administered in Toulouse and other cities. The case in Milan may be briefly summarized as showing the ideas on sanitary science of all classes, from highest to lowest, in the seventeenth century. That city was then under the control of Spain; and, its authorities having received notice from the Spanish Government that certain persons suspected of witchcraft had recently left Madrid, and had perhaps gone to Milan to anoint the walls, this communication was dwelt upon in the pulpits as another evidence of that Satanic malice which the Church alone had the means of resisting, and the people were thus excited and put upon the alert. One morning, in the year 1630, an old woman, looking out of her window, saw a man walking along the street and wiping his fingers upon the walls; she immediately called the attention of another old woman, and they agreed that this man must be one of the diabolical anointers. It was perfectly evident to a person under ordinary conditions that this unfortunate man was simply trying to remove from his fingers the ink gathered while writing from the ink-horn which he carried in his girdle; but this explanation was too simple to satisfy those who first observed him or those who afterward tried him: a mob was raised and he was thrown into prison. Being tortured, he at first did not know what to confess; but, on inquiring from the jailer and others, he learned what the charge was, and, on being again subjected to torture utterly beyond endurance, he confessed everything which was suggested to him; and, on being tortured again and again to give the names of his accomplices, he accused, at hazard, the first people in the city whom he thought of. These, being arrested and tortured beyond endurance, confessed and implicated a still greater number, until members of the foremost families were included in the charge. Again and again all these unfortunates were tortured beyond endurance. Under paganism, the rule regarding torture had been that it should not be carried beyond human endurance; and we therefore find Cicero ridiculing it as a means of detecting crime, because a stalwart criminal of strong nerves might resist it and go free, while a physically delicate man, though

innocent, would be forced to confess. Hence it was that under paganism a limit was imposed to the torture which could be administered; but, when Christianity had become predominant throughout Europe, torture was developed with a cruelty never before known. There had been evolved a doctrine of "excepted cases"—these "excepted cases" being especially heresy and witchcraft; for by a very simple and logical process of theological reasoning it was held that Satan would give supernatural strength to his special devotees—that is, to heretics and witches—and therefore that, in dealing with them, there should be no limit to the torture. The result was in this particular case, as in tens of thousands besides, that the accused confessed everything which could be suggested to them, and often in the delirium of their agony confessed far more than all that the zeal of the prosecutors could suggest. Finally, a great number of worthy people were sentenced to the most cruel death which could be invented. The records of their trials and deaths are frightful. The treatise which in recent years has first brought to light in connected form an authentic account of the proceedings in this affair, and which gives at the end engravings of the accused subjected to horrible tortures on their way to the stake and at the place of execution itself, is one of the most fearful monuments of theological reasoning and human folly.

To cap the climax, after a poor apothecary had been tortured into a confession that he had made the magic ointment, and when he had been put to death with the most exquisite refinements of torture, his family were obliged to take another name, and were driven out from the city; his house was torn down, and on its site was erected "The Column of Infamy," which remained on this spot until, toward the end of the eighteenth century, a party of young radicals, probably influenced by the reading of Beccaria, sallied forth one night and leveled this pious monument to the ground.

Herein was seen the culmination and decline of the bull *Summis Desiderantes*. It had been issued by him whom a majority of the Christian world believes to be infallible in his teachings to the Church as regards faith and morals;

yet here was a deliberate utterance in a matter of faith and morals which even children now know to be utterly untrue. Though Beccaria's book on *Crimes and Punishments*, with its declarations against torture, was placed by the Church authorities upon the *Index*, and though the faithful throughout the Christian world were forbidden to read it, even this could not prevent the victory of truth over this infallible utterance of Innocent VIII.\*

As the seventeenth century went on, ingenuity in all parts of Europe seemed devoted to new developments of fetichism. A very curious monument of this evolution in Italy exists in the Royal Gallery of Paintings at Naples, where may be seen several pictures representing the measures taken to save the city from the plague during the seventeenth century, but especially from the plague of 1656. One enormous canvas gives a curious example of the theological doctrine of intercession between man and his Maker, spun out to its logical length. In the background is the plague-stricken city: in the foreground the people are praying to the city authorities to avert the plague; the city authorities are praying to the Carthusian monks; the monks are praying to St. Martin, St. Bruno, and St. Januarius; these three saints in their turn are praying to the Virgin; the Virgin prays to Christ; and Christ prays to the Almighty. Still another picture represents the people, led by the priests, executing with horrible tortures the Jews, heretics, and witches who were supposed to cause the pestilence of 1656, while in the heavens the Virgin and St. Januarius are inter-

---

\* As to the fearful effects of the papal bull *Summis Desiderantes* in south Germany, as to the Protestant severities in north Germany, as to the immense number of women and children put to death for witchcraft in Germany generally for spreading storms and pestilence, and as to the monstrous doctrine of "excepted cases," see the standard authorities on witchcraft, especially Wächter, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Strafrechts*, Soldan, Horst, Hauber, and Längin; also Burr, as above. In another series of chapters on *The Warfare of Humanity with Theology*, I hope to go more fully into the subject. For the magic spreading of the plague at Milan, see Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi* and *La Colonna Infame*; and for the origin of the charges, with all the details of the trial, see the *Processo Originale degli Untori*, Milan, 1839, *passim*, but especially the large folding plate at the end, exhibiting the tortures. For the after-history of the Column of Infamy, and for the placing of Beccaria's book on the *Index*, see Cantu, *Vita di Beccaria*. For the magic spreading of the plague in general, see Littré, pp. 492 and following.

ceding with Christ to sheathe his sword and stop the plague.

In such an atmosphere of thought it is no wonder that the death statistics were appalling. We hear of districts in which not more than one in ten escaped, and some were entirely depopulated. Such appeals to fetich against pestilence have continued in Naples down to our own time, the great saving power being the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. In 1856 the present writer saw this miracle performed in the gorgeous chapel of the saint forming part of the Cathedral of Naples. The chapel was filled with devout worshippers of every class, from the officials in court dress, representing the Bourbon king, down to the lowest lazzaroni. The reliquary of silver-gilt, shaped like a large human head, and supposed to contain the skull of the saint, was first placed upon the altar; next, two vials containing a dark substance said to be his blood, having been taken from the wall, were also placed upon the altar near the head. As the priests said masses, they turned the vials from time to time, and the liquefaction being somewhat delayed, the great crowd of people burst out into more and more impassioned exostulation and petitions to the saint. Just in front of the altar were the lazzaroni who claimed to be descendants of the saint's family, and these were especially importunate: at such times they beg, they scold, they even threaten; they have been known to abuse the saint roundly, and to tell him that, if he did not care to show his favour to the city by liquefying his blood, St. Cosmo and St. Damian were just as good saints as he, and would no doubt be very glad to have the city devote itself to them. At last, on the occasion above referred to, the priest, turning the vials suddenly, announced that the saint had performed the miracle, and instantly priests, people, choir, and organ burst forth into a great *Te Deum*; bells rang, and cannon roared; a procession was formed, and the shrine containing the saint's relics was carried through the streets, the people prostrating themselves on both sides of the way and throwing showers of rose leaves upon the shrine and upon the path before it. The contents of these precious vials are an interesting relic indeed, for they represent to us vividly that period when men who

were willing to go to the stake for their religious opinions thought it not wrong to save the souls of their fellow-men by pious mendacity and consecrated fraud. To the scientific eye this miracle is very simple: the vials contain, no doubt, one of those mixtures fusing at low temperature, which, while kept in its place within the cold stone walls of the church, remains solid, but upon being brought out into the hot, crowded chapel, and fondled by the warm hands of the priests, gradually softens and becomes liquid. It was curious to note, at the time above mentioned, that even the high functionaries representing the king looked at the miracle with awe: they evidently found "joy in believing," and one of them assured the present writer that the only thing which *could* cause it was the direct exercise of miraculous power.

It may be reassuring to persons contemplating a visit to that beautiful capital in these days, that, while this miracle still goes on, it is no longer the only thing relied upon to preserve the public health. An unbelieving generation, especially taught by the recent horrors of the cholera, has thought it wise to supplement the power of St. Januarius by the "Risammento," begun mainly in 1885 and still going on. The drainage of the city has thus been greatly improved, the old wells closed, and pure water introduced from the mountains. Moreover, at the last outburst of cholera a few years since, a noble deed was done which by its moral effect exercised a widespread healing power. Upon hearing of this terrific outbreak of pestilence, King Humbert, though under the ban of the Church, broke from all the entreaties of his friends and family, went directly into the plague-stricken city, and there, in the streets, public places, and hospitals, encouraged the living, comforted the sick and dying, and took means to prevent a further spread of the pestilence. To the credit of the Church it should also be said that the Cardinal Archbishop San Felice joined him in this.

Miracle for miracle, the effect of this visit of the king seems to have surpassed anything that St. Januarius could do, for it gave confidence and courage which very soon showed their effects in diminishing the number of deaths. It would certainly appear that in this matter the king was

more directly under Divine inspiration and guidance than was the Pope; for the fact that King Humbert went to Naples at the risk of his life, while Leo XIII remained in safety at the Vatican, impressed the Italian people in favour of the new *régime* and against the old as nothing else could have done.

In other parts of Italy the same progress is seen under the new Italian government. Venice, Genoa, Leghorn, and especially Rome, which under the sway of the popes was scandalously filthy, are now among the cleanest cities in Europe. What the relics of St. Januarius, St. Anthony, and a multitude of local fetiches throughout Italy were for ages utterly unable to do, has been accomplished by the development of the simplest sanitary principles.

Spain shows much the same characteristics of a country where theological considerations have been all-controlling for centuries. Down to the interference of Napoleon with that kingdom, all sanitary efforts were looked upon as absurd if not impious. The most sober accounts of travellers in the Spanish Peninsula until a recent period are sometimes irresistibly comic in their pictures of peoples insisting on maintaining arrangements more filthy than any which would be permitted in an American backwoods camp, while taking enormous pains to stop pestilence by bell-rings, processions, and new dresses bestowed upon the local Madonnas; yet here, too, a healthful scepticism has begun to work for good. The outbreaks of cholera in recent years have done some little to bring in better sanitary measures.\*

---

\* As to recourse to fetichism in Italy in time of plague, and the pictures showing the intercession of Januarius and other saints, I have relied on my own notes made at various visits to Naples. For the general subject, see Peter, *Études Napolitaines*, especially chapters v and vi. For detailed accounts of the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood by eye-witnesses, one an eminent Catholic of the seventeenth century, and the other a distinguished Protestant of our own time, see Murray's *Handbook for South Italy and Naples*, description of the Cathedral of San Gennaro. For an interesting series of articles on the subject, see *The Catholic World* for September, October, and November, 1871. For the incredible filthiness of the great cities of Spain, and the resistance of the people, down to a recent period, to the most ordinary regulations prompted by decency, see Bascome, *History of Epidemic Pestilences*, especially pp. 119, 120. See also the *Autobiography* of D'Ewes, London, 1845, vol. ii, p. 446; also, for various citations, the second volume of Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*.

