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POPULAR MEDICINE, CUSTOMS, AND SUPERSTITIONS
OF THE RIO GRANDE.

THE following material, collected by me during the time I was in command of the post of Fort Ringgold, Texas, may be of interest from the light it throws upon the character of the Mexican population of our extreme southern border, but it is not to be accepted as exhausting the subject of the folk-lore of that region, which is simply interminable. Other notes, equally extensive, were gathered at the same time in regard to the theatres, ballads, games, and traditions of the people, but it is impossible, on account of their bulk, to present them here. As many of these Mexicans were engaged in armed attacks upon the Mexican territory, and in armed resistance to the American troops sent to suppress them, it became my duty to make as earnest a study of their character and condition as means would permit.

In making these examinations, care was taken to preserve each statement in the words of the witness, but it is believed that what has been lost in elegance of diction has been more than counterbalanced by a faithful representation of the mode of thought of these descendants of Spaniard and Aztec.

In very many cases the full name or the initials of my informant will be found attached to the "cure." The first authority consulted was a most singular personage. Maria Antonia Cavazo de Garza, born in Rio Grande City, had the reputation of being a "bruja," or witch, but she modestly laid claim to being nothing more than a "curandera" (healer), who knew a great deal about "medicinas" which could effect wonderful results—"con el poder de Dios" (with the power of God). She was at the date of my first meeting with her (1891) about sixty-five or seventy years old, had been married four times and borne seventeen children, the youngest of whom, a good-looking boy of nine or ten, and the last husband, always came with her. She had snappy, black eyes, and a varicose, bottle nose, which, in a moment of unguarded enthusiasm, she had attempted to embellish by an application of tincture of iodine.

Alferecia.—To cure "alferecia," or epilepsy, in children, which is due to the moon's influence. Take a newly born pig and rub the naked baby with this (live) pig from head to foot. The baby will break out into a copious perspiration, and the pig will die. But the fact that epilepsy is a brain trouble seems to be dimly recognized. Maria Antonia says that the child's skull breaks in four pieces (in form of a cross +), and the child then dies.

The pig being an animal introduced from Europe, it would be

well to examine into the superstitions of the Old World in regard to this matter, and we should then see that they have been transplanted to this side of the ocean. Saint Anthony is the friend and patron of the pig in Italy as he is in Mexico, and in the churches of both countries his statue may be seen with his faithful porcine adjunct by his side. Much interesting information on this point is to be extracted from "The Golden Bough" of James G. Frazer, London, 1890.

Amulets and Talismans (Votive Offerings). — Maria Antonia wore at her neck a "miraculous" package which I persuaded her to open. It was made up of a "miraculous" prayer, printed on paper, which had been broken up and reduced to a pulp by the action of time, and of a small piece of blessed wax from one of the candles which had burned upon the altar while mass was going on.

To cure Asthma ("Orguilla"). — Take a talcoyote (badger), bake it in the oven until perfectly dry, grind it up, mix on a "metate" with clean flour, add a stew made of the Rio Grande jackdaw, locally known as the orraca, add a trifle of sugar, and put a little of the above mixture in the patient's food. Give in the moon's first quarter. When the moon ends, the disease will end. All diseases which have had their beginning with a new moon can be made to go out with a waning moon. (*Maria Antonia.*)

Asthma. — Make a drink of hot water and the ripe (black) beans of the ebony roasted. (*M. A.*)

Some people smoke "mariguan" or Indian hemp, in their cigarritos.

Axolotl. — The most curious and incomprehensible superstition of the Mexican people, and one which has the widest dissemination, concerns the curious lizard called the axolotl, a name by which it was known to the Aztecs, although I do not feel prepared to say that they had the superstition concerning it.

The axolotl frequents damp, slimy places, near pools or tanks of water, and all kinds of refuse ("basura").

It will enter the person of a woman, at certain times, and will remain just as long as would a human fœtus.

Young girls, at their first change of life, are especially exposed, and will manifest all the symptoms of pregnancy.

It is within the limits of probability, although I am not sufficiently posted in medical matters to assert that such is the case, that a badly nourished girl would be susceptible to cold, rheumatism, and dropsy at such a critical moment in her life, and that imagination could supply any features that might be lacking to make the romance complete. There are several remedies; one calls for a liberal fomentation with hot goat's milk, and in the other, a young

man appears to marry the girl. Often when women were bathing in the waters of the Rio Grande itself, or in some of the great "acequias," mischievous boys would yell "Axolotl!" and cause a scampering of all the bathers.

Among the Italian peasantry notions of this same kind obtain: "When a man wishes his wife to be faithful, he should take sperma illius mulieris and put it in a bottle, and then catch a lizard with the left hand and put it in the same bottle, and cork up both very tightly and say:—

Here I put the fidelity of
My wife, that she may be
Ever, ever true to me.

Then be careful not to lose the bottle." "Roman Etruscan Remains," Charles G. Leland, New York, Scribners, 1891, page 292. He traces this superstition back to the time of the Roman poet, Marcellus, from whom he quotes.

The following may be included in the same category, although it is expressed very obscurely, and I find it difficult to clearly understand:—

"Il y avait une fois une jeune fille qui, toutes les nuits, allait coucher dans le foin. Chacun lui disait :

"Parie que le *faudoux* ira te fauder!"

"Mais elle n'y faisait pas attention et elle retournait coucher dans le *senés* (grenier à foin). Pourtant le *faudoux* venait la fouler, et elle disait à ses voisins :

"Je ne sais ce que j'ai: je suis plus lassée au matin qu'en me couchant.

"Nous te l'avions bien dit, répondaient-ils, c'est le *faudoux* qui vient te fauder."

And much more of the same import. Paul Sébillot (Vannes, France): "Additions aux Coutumes, etc., de la Haute Bretagne," in "Revue des Traditions Populaires," Paris, 1892.

When speaking of the axolotl, the coyote, and other animals to which are attached myths and superstitions of various kinds, I was disappointed in not learning anything of the wild boar — peccary — or Tabilin — which is so readily domesticated that I am inclined to believe it must have been the "guinea pig," which Garcilasso de la Vega says that the ancient Peruvians "bred in their houses called cocoz." Book vi. (Markham), quoted also in vol. vi. "Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences," 7th Memoir, — "Human Bones of the Hemenway S. W. Archæological Exploration, in Army Medical Museum," p. 200.

Stomach Bitters. — Pour a quart of mescal over a handful of the white flowers and root of the "amargosa" bush.

Cancer. — To cure cancer (which is quite common along the Rio Grande on account of poor food, filth, want of proper clothing, lack of clean and sufficient bedding, and disregard of every law of hygiene). Get the roots of Yerba Gonzalez, Yerba Cancer, and another (name forgotten, but all three sent to National Museum), make a decoction in nine quarts of water. Boil down to one quart, sweeten with sugar or molasses. Dose, from half teaspoonful to a large tablespoonful, according to severity of disease. Begin treatment with appearance of the new moon. (*M. A.*)

Cardiac Troubles. — Make a decoction of "Flor de Peña" and drink. (*M. A.*) (This seems to be a mistaken analogy. The rock flower, if allowed to remain in water over night, expands; hence, it can cause an expansion of the heart, or remove a feeling of oppression from the chest.)

Comets. — Are forerunners of wars and great sicknesses. A white comet means a pestilence; a red comet means war.

When owls hoot at night, or crows caw at midnight, it is a sign that Indians are planning an outbreak. (*M. A.*)

To aid Conception. — There were many names of herbs given me, but as none of them grow in that part of Mexico, I do not repeat them.

They were all made into a decoction, taken internally, and also used as a bath every eight days, the bath to be followed by a purge. Continue this treatment for forty days, observing continence. Then there is to be another day of rest and bathing. Intercourse will then be followed by conception, but the sex of offspring cannot be surmised, as that is a matter which God generally keeps to himself, said Maria Antonia.

The Yerba Gonzalez also aids conception, but the expectant mother must not fail to present herself in a "novena" before the altar of "Maria Purissima," and hang up a "milagro" (votive offering) of silver, in form of a boy, or a girl, according to her desires. A "novena" can also be made with great advantage to the altar of San Ramon Non-nato, near San Luis Potosi, the "patron" or "abogado" of "parturientes." (*M. A.*) This Not-Born Saint Ramon derives his title from having been brought into the world by the Cæsarian operation, as his mother was dying of the Plague.

To reduce Swollen Breasts. — Take the tecalote stone (*i. e.*, the stone of the metate, or corn-meal grinder), warm it in the sun, and with it gently rub the inflamed nipples. (*M. A.*)

Pestles and rubbing stones, such as the tecalote, have had phallic significance attached to them in various parts of the earth, but I do not feel that the evidence of such symbolism is very strong in the present case.

Diseases of Urinary Organs, Bladder, and Kidneys (Blennorrhagia).
— Make a decoction of colazmecate ; put it to cool in the light of the moon, sweeten with sugar. Take a cupful, fasting daily, for nine days. (*M. A.*)

(Colazmecate is a squatty plant, with fine thorns, much like a rose-bush.)

To bring Milk to the Breasts of Women, or to expand breasts not fully developed. — Drink twice daily an “atole,” or gruel, made out of powdered and toasted mulberry twigs. (*M. A.*)

To cure Consumption. — Take a black cat, kill it, and extract all the bones ; rub the consumptive with the flesh from head to foot, and let him drink the cat’s blood mixed with warm water. (*M. A.*)

The analogue of this notion can be traced in the far East.

It is believed by Chinamen that cat’s meat is a remedy for lung diseases. It is served in most of the Canton restaurants cooked in various ways.

Maria Antonia had a pronounced dislike for Captain Pilcher, our post surgeon. It was no doubt a strictly professional antipathy due to loss of patronage, but it manifested itself on every occasion. “There ! Look ! I have told you how to cure consumption. Can that little doctor do that ? Valgame Dios !”

Now the term “little,” as applied to my friend Pilcher by Maria Antonia and myself, could in no sense be translated as small, Pilcher being one of the most heavily built men in the army ; it simply expressed our contempt for his ignorance of witchcraft, moon-medicine, milagros, love-philters, and such important matters in the medical curriculum, and I am sorry to have to confess that when I saw that the key to Maria Antonia’s good will lay in an abuse of Pilcher, I said several things not exactly complimentary.

“Know how to cure consumption ! Why, my dear little friend, I assure you that he has never heard of your remedies ! I do not believe he could keep witches out of this house if he were to try for a week. That’s the reason why I have sent for you. I believe that you know more about witchcraft than DeWitt and Pilcher put together. And as for the best method of using black cats, they don’t know as much as your little boy. Caramba ! I have no use for such people !”

Cosmetics. — If a young lady wants to have a soft skin, and a clear ruddy complexion, she must wait till the eve of St. John’s Day, and then rub the face with a piece of the umbilical cord of a young male child, and she’ll have a ruddy complexion, if the moon be full at the time, and she have previously washed her face with a soap made of fresh hog’s lard and “teguézquite,” a kind of soap used in Monterey. (*M. A.*)

The Mexicans still have the same faith in the beautifying properties of a lotion of urine which Strabo relates as one of the characteristics of their Celtiberian grandmothers.

Young ladies will first rub their faces and hands with fresh beef tallow, and then, just before going to bed, apply a lotion of the warm urine of a little boy. (*M. A.*)

Cosmetics to remove Freckles.—Scrape some white potatoes into a bowl of cold water, and there let them remain for eight days. Wash with the water and the freckles will disappear. But an infallible specific for imparting beauty to the complexion is some of the first urine of a male child.

Crispillæ.—In the week before Christmas, the Mexican women busy themselves in the preparation of a cup-shaped, sweetish, greasy fried cake, which is given form by being patted over the cook's knee. This cake can be identified with the "crispillæ" of the Normans, described by Ducange in his *Glossarium*. Long before the time of the Normans, long before the time of Christ, it was made by the shepherd-bandit comrades of Romulus and Remus, in honor of the goddess Fornax. On the Rio Grande, it is called "Buñuelo."

Cross.—When a woman has consented to an interview with an old lover, but does not wish to be led into any criminality, she will have her good resolutions strengthened if she make the sign of the cross on the inside of the lower hem of her dress skirt. This should be made by placing four large pins in the necessary positions. (*M. A.*)

"Thorns, in the form of a cross, were either laid in the window, or should be put in a window, to keep witches from entering." "Roman Etruscan Remains," Charles G. Leland, New York, Scribners, 1891, page 108.

"In a Tuscan incantation to break love:" . . . "When you wish to prevent a young man from visiting a girl, in any house, take shoemaker's wax and four nails. Make of these a cross, and put such crosses under the seat whereon the lover and maid sit. And the end will be that they will quarrel, and he will no more come to the house." *Idem*, page 296. Such crosses are again mentioned when you wish to bewitch a man. Page 354.

An obstructive power is also ascribed by the Bretons to the figure of the cross:—

"Une petite pièce placée sur une route avec certaines paroles, fait verser les charrettes; il en est de même des croix tracées sur la poussière du chemin, si elles ont aussi été accompagnées de conjurations." "Additions aux Coûtumes, etc., de la Haute Bretagne," in "Révue des Traditions Populaires," Paris, 1892, Paul Sébillot.

Cross-eyed Men. — There is implicit credence in the superstition that it is an unlucky thing to meet a cross-eyed person, especially on a trail or country-path. "Don't pass him," urged all my informants; "better turn off the trail and go at once to the right; but if you can't help passing him, try not to look at him, and say your prayers." Then the oldest of the party began to recite a prayer which, he said, was appropriate and efficacious. It called on our Saviour, the Blessed Lady, and all the Saints, to save from lightning, tempest, poison, murder, drowning, all sudden death, and *all misfortune*.

Dandruff. — 1. Make a lather from any of the saponaceous roots peculiar to the country — lechuguilla, amole, or pita, but do not use the guyacan (*lignum vitæ*); it is a good detergent, but burns the skin.

2. Make an infusion of the bulb of the drago: apply locally.

To expedite Delivery. — 1. The woman should drink water in which has been dissolved earth from the Church of our Lady of San Juan, a pueblo close to San Luis Potosi. (*M. A.*)

(I sent a lozenge or cake of this calcareous earth to the U. S. National Museum. It was stamped with the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other sacred symbols.)

2. Take hinojo (fennel) leaves, boil them in hot water, with rose of Castile and brown sugar, one quarter pound. Boil until it looks like red wine. Give a teacupful to the woman, and the child will be born at once. (*M. A.*)

3. A decoction of "mariguan," made with sweetened water, given in doses of half a teacupful, is of benefit.

4. Give filings of the lodestone in water. (*M. A.*)

Surgeon H. S. Turrell, United States Army, states that during his tour of service on the Rio Grande, near El Paso, Texas, some years ago, he found that a fomentation or smoking with the "hediondilla" was used with what was claimed to be good results.

Drago. — Bulb used by Mexican Indians, in smoking, to induce ecstatic visions: the leaves also are used.

When dry, the bulb is said to make fine tinder.

The bulb is also used to eradicate dandruff.

Dream Book. — It is a mighty poor family in the Rio Grande valley that do not own and keep for constant consultation, an "oracula," or dream book, in which every possible combination of dream thought has its corresponding prediction.

To cure Dysentery and Diarrhœa. — Take the blue flowers of the "corihuella" (morning-glory), make a tea, sweeten with sugar, and take a cupful every morning. (*M. A.*)

Sore Eyes. — The tips of mesquite branches, rubbed up in water,

and allowed to stand all night, and then applied as a lotion, will cure sore eyes.

If the excrement of a swallow fall in your eyes, you will surely lose the sight. (*Federico Rodriguez.*)

To cure Sore Eyes and Weakness of Vision. — Bathe them with water in which has been steeped a piece of the umbilical cord of a first child. (*M. A.*)

Evil Eye. — The evil eye, or blight, — mal ojo, meaning bad eye, or simply ojo, is a spell cast upon children by people who look at them steadily, and generally speak kindly to them. If you can find the man who has "echado el ojo" upon a child, make him fill his mouth with water and eject it into the child's mouth. The child will recover at once.

If you cannot find out who has cast the "ojo" on a child, take the herb called "Yerba de Cristo," boil it in water, and wash the infant from head to foot with the decoction. Then take a raw egg, and make with it, while in the shell, the sign of the cross three times on the baby's breast, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Break the egg, throw away the shell, put both yolk and white on a plate under the child's cradle. The egg will cook, the child will get well, and the villain who cast the evil eye be afflicted with bleary eyes! (*M. A.*)

United States Commissioner Walter Downs told me that he had seen a horse which the Mexicans asserted had been hurt by the "ojo" (evil eye). The man accused of casting the spell admitted his guilt, but said that he would cure the animal at once. He filled his mouth with water, spat upon the horse's neck, and rubbed and patted the place until dry.

Mr. Downs said that the horse got well, which was, of course, all the better for the reputation of the charlatan.

Maria Antonia confirmed all that I had learned about the method of cure by having the culprit eject water from his own mouth into that of the child.¹

She said, too, that any "Juez" in the Rio Grande Valley would commit a man accused of such a crime as casting the evil eye; but since so many "Americanos" were coming down to that country, some of the judges thought it to be more prudent to enter a charge of being a tramp, disorderly conduct, or something else of that general character.

What is the meaning of the following expression, "Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye?" Proverbs, chap. xxiii. verse 6. The italics are as given in the Testament.

¹ If the man refuse to apply this remedy, upon request, he will suffer from violent headache, which will last while the child is sick.

Fevers.— Make a decoction of the bulb of the "peyote." Use as a drink and as a lotion for feet and head.

The "peyote" is a cactus, bearing a small white flower, and growing close to the ground. (*M. A.*)

The inner white membrane of the pomegranate is also good.

Chills and Fevers.— Will be produced if you indulge too freely in the fruit of the nopal cactus (tuna), or in the colonche or cider made from it. (The Apaches say the same thing. The remedy is to drink more of the colonche.)

Fire Worship.— United States Deputy Marshal A. B. Betts, while taking a cup of tea with me one afternoon, said very anxiously: "Cap'n, you seem to know most everything that ain't enny use to ennybody, 'n' I reckon you kin tell me what's the matter with my wife. I do believe she'd be all right, if it was n't for the old woman" (a term of irreverence applied to his mother-in-law, a most estimable lady).

"Last Saturday," continued Betts, "I spat in the fire."

"Ah! que Judio!" she exclaimed. "No mas que Judios escupen en la lumbre!" ("Oh! what a Jew you are! Only Jews spit in the fire!")

Betts went on to say that he could get no explanation from either of the women, but that his mother-in-law took a new axe, laid the edge against a piece of firewood, with back to the flame, and when he started to move it "Don't do that, or your wife will die before morning," she said. But Doña Maria Antonia Cavazo de Garza made the whole matter clear as mud. "You must never spit in the fire. Fire comes from 'la providencia de Dios' (the Providence of God). It is just like the sun, and *represents God*, who made it for our comfort. He who would spit in the fire would spit in the face of God. The Jews spat in the face of God when they crucified Jesus Christ, and that is why Jews will spit in the fire."

Besides explaining to Betts what the old "curandera" had said, I showed him the following from the "Journal of American Folk-Lore:"—

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.— I think many customs may be traced to a belief in the efficacy of this sign. In six months spent in different towns of England and Wales, I noticed that when the grate-fire was dull, and ordinary means failed to brighten it, my landlady would set a straight poker upright against the grate, thus forming the sign. No one would ever explain this arrangement, but she would say with an air of embarrassment, "I thought I'd try it."

After my return home I mentioned this once to an intelligent English-woman of the lower class, and after some hesitation she answered, "Oh! it's all nonsense, of course, but at 'ome they always said it was calling the witch to make the fire burn."

In New England, when only open fireplaces were in use, it was customary to rake up the fire at night, and, standing the andirons in a straight line in front, lay the shovel across them.

More than once I have been told by an intelligent person that, to prevent any annoyance from a mosquito-bite, "you should score a cross with your thumb-nail on the bitten place; it will never smart again."

All these, I think, are survivals of the ancient custom. (*Pamela McArthur Cole*. "Journal of American Folk-Lore," vol. vi. (1893), p. 146.)

These superstitions about fire are of course nothing but vestiges of pyrodelia, but whether derived from a Castilian or an aboriginal source, or both, it would be hard to say. In "The Snake Dance of the Moquis," I gave a picture of "The Little God of Fire," and a brief outline of the fire procession of the Zuñis. Mr. James Stephenson has treated exhaustively upon the fire dance of the Navajos, and Mr. F. H. Cushing is quoted as follows: "Mr. Cushing's explanation, derived from Zuñi folk-lore and belief, is this: 'The matriarchal grandmother, or matron of the household deities, is the fire. It is considered the guardian, as it is also, being used for cooking, the principal "source of life" of the family.'" Frank H. Cushing, quoted by Dr. Washington Matthews, U. S. A., vol. vi., Seventh Memoir, Nat. Acad. of Sciences. "The Human Bones of the Hemenway Southwestern Archæological Exploration, in U. S. A. Med. Museum, Washington, D. C.," p. 149.

Another form of pyrodelia to be detected in the religious ceremonies of the Mexicans, the Pueblos, the Tarasco and the Opata Indians, is the burning of copal as an incense; this may be a survival from Aztec or other aboriginal pyromancy; the same custom exists among the peasantry of the rural portions of Italy. "Powdered resin was thrown in the flames." "Roman Etruscan Remains," Leland, page 318.

The same peasantry still recite invocations to the spirit of fire. *Idem*, page 312.

Fishing. — Mexicans during Holy Week fish in the Rio Grande, and march to the river bank to the music of guitars.

Fits and Swoons. — Maria Antonia had a little boy who had reached the age of eighteen months. Retarded dentition made him critically ill; he had fits and was "dead" for twenty-four hours. She made a vow to Our Lady that, if the child should be "restored to life," she would offer an appropriate "milagro," in silver, and hear mass, on bended knees, holding a lighted wax taper in each hand. The child recovered; the vow was paid; the mass and the tapers cost one dollar.

Guinea Worm. — In the summer of 1891, Surgeon Theodore DeWitt had a patient who stated that once, on a very hot day, he

stepped into a "charco," or puddle of cold water, and was soon after seized with excruciating pains in the leg, which compelled him to take to his bed and remain there for eight days; that little "things," in shape and size not unlike the seeds of the Chili pepper, kept coming out of his skin, in each case leaving a slight cicatrix. Dr. DeWitt thought that the trouble bore some resemblance to the African Guinea worm, and was caused by a parasite.

To cure Hæmorrhoids. — Make an ointment out of the fat of a "tejon" (this word properly means badger, but locally, along the Rio Grande, it signifies a raccoon) and the plant called "oreja de raton" (mouse's ear); add five well-burned bottle corks. Apply locally on a rag. At the same time make a tea by boiling a piece of armadillo shell in hot water. (*M. A.*)

Harvest. — Mr. George Lewis described a procession of Mexican women in Rio Grande City during a great drought, about 1880.

They marched around the parched fields praying for rain. Sure enough, the rain came, but in such torrents that it washed all the crops away. One of the women explained, in all seriousness, that they must have inadvertently made the rounds of the field once too often!

I have personally marched in just such a procession at the pueblo of Taos, New Mexico, in 1881.

The Heavens. — The Mexicans have a folk-lore of the heavens, as well as of the earth. The milky way is the road of Santiago, guarded by three sentinels — the belt of Orion.

If a woman bear triplets, they are put under the protection of the three stars known as the Three Kings; if girls, under that of the three called the Three Marys.

There are two stars close together, called the Eyes of Saint Lucy. (*M. A.*)

Horseshoes. — Nailed over door of a house, to bring good luck; over door of a store, to bring custom. But some people nail them under their beds, and not over their doors. (*M. A.*)

Leland says of the horseshoe, among the Italian peasantry, that to insure good luck "it is to be kept always in the bed." "Roman Etruscan Remains," page 367.

Sweating Images. — In a recent number of "Scribner's Magazine," I gave a brief description of the sweating Madonna of Agualeguas ("La Virgen suadanda"), whose sacred shrine I visited several years ago. In a little pamphlet, "La Novena de San Ramon," Mexico, 1889, there are references to sacred images which sweated — "han sudado tres imagenes, estando ellos affigidos" (p. 10). This belief in sweating images must be very ancient; it exists in Asia among the Buddhists. A Chicago paper, last summer, describing

the seven wonders of Corea, said: "The seventh Corean wonder is a sweating Buddha. This is guarded in a great temple, in whose court for thirty yards on all sides not a single blade of grass grows. No tree, no flower will flourish on the sacred spot, and even wild creatures are careful not to profane it."

To make Black Ink.—Take half-ripe pods of the black ebony, or the huisachi, and boil with water, to which have been added small quantities of alum, powder, sulphur, and iron. Decant, strain, and bottle for use. (Mighty poor ink.)

Insecticide.—The "rocio," which bears a small, yellow flower, banishes all kinds of insects, especially bedbugs and fleas.

The leaves of the "canelon" (china berry) drive away moths, and the berry itself will make robins drunk and fishes stupid.

Saint John's Day.—Every Mexican, big or little, will take a bath on Saint John's Day, and, if possible, in the Rio Grande, and then new, or at least clean, raiment is donned from head to foot. Hair and nails are also cut on this day. (*Federico Rodriguez.*)

On Saint John's Day, every good Mexican must get on some kind of a plug and prance about in the blazing sun. On this day is played the game of "Correr el Gallo," in which, along the Upper Rio Grande, a live cock or hen is torn to pieces by the racing contestants. Having previously described this game in "The Snake Dance of the Moquis," I wish to say here nothing further except that on the Lower Rio Grande more humane sentiments prevail, and a paper figure replaces the live chicken. All these Saint John's Day customs are Moorish, as may be seen by consulting Lockhart's "Ancient Spanish Ballads." Edinburgh, 1823, pp. 175 *et seq.*

Keening.—At funerals in the Rio Grande valley, one may see groups of women carelessly chatting and smoking cigarritos, but the moment the coffin leaves the house, all break out in concert in a sobbing wail which rends the air,—a regular Irish kean.

Lightning.—It is very dangerous to stand under a mesquite, ebony, or huisachi tree during a storm. These trees certainly attract lightning, probably because they are so full of resin. (*Federico Rodriguez.*)

Lodestone.—The Mexicans generally believe in the powers of the lodestone ("Piedra Iman," Loving Stone) over the human affections. But there are two kinds of the stone, the male or "macho" and the female or "hembra," the former being "chino," or curly and black, and the latter "liso," or smooth, and reddish brown. Men should always employ the male variety, and women the other.

"If you want the Piedra Iman to act"—said Maria Antonia—"you must give it water to drink every Friday: you must put it in a vessel of water for half an hour. Then *feed* it with *steel* (not *iron*);

filings. Put upon this a tress of the girl you love and the 'Iman' will draw her to you. You must tell the name of the man or woman you love to the stone before it will act." When you wish a love-philter to act efficaciously, be sure to carry a piece of your lodestone in pocket. (*M. A.*)

At first glance, the ceremonial observances of the humble "curanderas" of our southwestern border would seem to be mummery, pure and simple; but a more careful examination may perhaps discover a distinguished ancestry for all these practices which at least cannot have been the invention of those who are yet addicted to them. No more rational principle can be adopted in a philosophical investigation into the origin of religions than that which teaches the importance of searching through the lore and custom of the folk for vestiges and tattered remnants, which, when patched together, bring to light their original purpose and design. It is simply a waste of time to look for the truth in the pages of poets and commentators, who, in nearly every case, distort, embellish, or conceal, instead of making a candid exposition of facts within their knowledge; not in all cases are their perversions to be characterized as mendacious; only too frequently have the ravages of time, the havoc of war, or the influx of foreign elements wrought changes in ceremonial, destroyed original records, or brought about an indifference to custom and ritual once deemed holy and essential, so that no recourse is left save an appeal to the generally never failing aid of folk-tradition as exemplified in folk-wont. This may possibly be the case in the lodestone ceremonial of the Rio Grande Valley; it may conserve in a hazy, distorted way, such as was to be expected from the ignorant minds through which it has been transmitted, a recollection of religious acts in which the pagan priesthood of ancient Rome did not disdain to indulge. Such, at least, would seem to be a not especially violent interpretation to be attached to the following words from the Latin poet, Claudian, who wrote during the reign of the Emperor Honorius, and about the year 409, when the Goths under Alaric sacked and pillaged the Eternal City.

Christianity had already gained possession of the Empire, and it is most probable that the rites which Claudian attempts to describe were already obsolescent or known only to the chosen few. His poem is entitled "The Magnet."

A stone there is by the name of Magnet,
Colorless, unattractive, despised;
Its lot is not to adorn the hair of the Cæsars,
Or the alabaster throat of the virgin,
Nor does it set off as a clasp the warrior's tunic;
Yet the powers of this dark stone are prized above the fairest gems.

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That stone — it lives ! but to iron it owes its life,
 And by the unbending bar it is fed ;
 Iron is its nourishment, its stimulus, its banquet ;
 It renews through iron its exhausted strength
 This rude aliment animates its members
 And long preserves a latent vigor.
 The iron absent, the magnet languishes.
 Sadly numbed with hunger, it succumbs,
 And thirst dries up its opened veins.

Mars, with blood-stained lance chastising cities —
 Venus, who resolves the miseries of mortals by her tender gifts,
 Have in common the sanctuary of a golden temple.
 The divinities have not the same image ;
 Mars appears in the glistening iron,
 The Loving Stone represents the Cyprian goddess.
 The priest with the accustomed rites celebrates their union.
 The torches light the dance, myrtle crowns the temple gate,
 The nuptial purple veils the lover's couch ;
 Then appears a prodigy unheard of :
 Venus of her own force ravishes her spouse.
 Recalling the bonds of which the gods were witnesses,
 Her voluptuous breathing attracts the limbs of Mars ;
 Around the helmet of the god her arms are clasped,
 And with live chains she holds him captive.

A secret ardor consumes the lode-stone
 Whose blandishments the hardened steel cannot resist.

Quoted in "The Life of Columbus," Aaron Goodrich, New York, Appleton & Co., 1874, pp. 40, 41, and 42.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the identity of sentiment between the words of the classic writer and those expressed by the nineteenth century "curandera" of the Mexican frontier ; each believed that the magnet was alive ; that the iron was its food, and although the ritual described by the Roman was not to be imitated by the Mexican, that was because all ancient religious practices are now, as they have for centuries been, under the ban of the Christian Church.

Leland becomes a great help in the consideration of the above. He tells us, first, that the magnet is used in Italian incantations. "Roman Etruscan Remains," Charles G. Leland, New York, Scribners, 1891, page 264. The magnet had to be baptized on Friday, which is the great day of the witches.

Witches who are happy on Friday.

Idem, page 309, quoting a Tuscan incantation.

Witches great and small,
 Meet to consider
 What they must be doing
 On Friday and Tuesday.

Idem, page 203.

On Tuesdays and Fridays they gather earth from people's footprints, and with this can do great harm. *Idem*, page 301.

This idea is the same as is held by the Mojave Indians, who, however, have improved upon it to this extent. Whenever a witch or several witches has or have brought upon the tribe some such poorly understood epidemic as the "hoop-me-koff" (*i. e.* the whooping-cough), the medicine-men proceed to find the witch or witches by carefully inspecting all trails leading to the infected hut, and by taking up a pinch of earth from any suspected footprint they believe that they can prevent the escape of the delinquent, and eventually apprehend her or them. See my article, "Cosmogony and Theogony of the Mojaves of the Rio Colorado," in "Journal of American Folk-Lore."

Leland also says that the "conjuring stones" of the negro Voudoos "once a week should be dipped or touched with whiskey." *Idem*, page 372.

Love-philters. — Maria Antonia Cavazo de Garza vouched for all the following: —

1. "Take some of the bulb of the Yerba Gonzalez (specimen sent to the U. S. National Museum), dry it, reduce to powder, put some inside the shoe of the young woman, at time of catamenial purgation; she cannot help falling in love with you."

2. "Kill a jack-rabbit; take out its eyes, dry them, grind into a powder; put this in tobacco, make a cigarette, and give to the young lady to smoke. The result will be as above."

3. Or, take the insect called cantaria (it seems to me that this is a kind of potato-bug, allied to the cantharis, although my informant insists that she knows cantharides and buys them in the "botica," or drug-store, for making "parchas," or plasters, — and that this is a different insect), dry, grind to powder, put a very small pinch into a cigarette, and let the young woman smoke as before, or let it be put in her food or drink.

A young Mexican in Rio Grande City, Texas, whose name I have, assured me that he once went to consult a "vieja" — old woman — in the city of San Luis Potosi, to ask her help in securing the affections of a young woman who scorned him; by her advice he induced the young lady to smoke a package of cigarittos prepared by himself of tobacco previously dampened and dried by methods fully described in my volume on "Scatalogic Rites." He was successful in his suit, and attributed his good fortune to the suggestions of the old woman.

Lumbago. — Take the bulb of the "sacasal," dry and reduce to powder, mix with "brea" (tar). Apply as a plaster, the surface of which should be sprinkled with mescal. Apply to the small of the

back. Vouched for as remedial in all cases of "lame back," sprains, contusions, etc. (*M. A.*)

The sacasal is a bulbous plant, with straight, stiff, delicate branches, covered with tiny thorns, and much resembles, except in its pigmy size, the majestic "pitaya," or giant cactus. It bears a small red flower.

Bathe with a decoction of the white flowers of the "amargosa" (*q. v.*).

"*Mariguan*" is *Cannabis Indica*, Indian Hemp. It is used to aid in expulsion of the placenta, said to be of great value in making love-philters, and is frequently used with the toloachi, or stramonium. For that reason, it has been called the "loco," or crazy weed, but shares that designation with several other plants. A very fine canvas is made from the fibre of the stalk. The flower is small and white.

Many of the Mexicans add powdered mariguan to their cigarrito tobacco, or to their mescal. A bite of sugar, after taking mariguan in any form, intensifies its effects. Indian hemp is the basis of the hasheesh of the East.

Hasheesh is principally composed of the husks of the innocent hempseed, but after its preparation loses its innocence and becomes one of the greatest curses of the East. One report states that hash-eesh disturbs the functions of the systems of digestion and circulation; that it injures the senses and motive powers; that it disturbs the cerebral functions. The phantoms seen by and the tendencies manifested in those who are intoxicated with hasheesh generally indicate the usual habits of thought and moral character of the intoxicated person, or the thoughts and passions by which the man was possessed on the day that he became intoxicated or at the moment in which the symptoms of poisoning began to make themselves manifest. Persons given to the use of hasheesh who become maniacs are apt to commit all sorts of acts of violence and murder.

Sometimes the intoxication of hasheesh impels the person under its influence to suicide or the commission of acts forbidden by morality. All authors are unanimous, basing their opinion on numerous observations among Eastern peoples, that the long use of hasheesh weakens the body and causes atropy, dulls the mind, and creates hypochondria, idiocy, and mania. Those who indulge in hasheesh have a fixed look without expression and an idiotic appearance. According to statistical information obtained from the lunatic asylums of Cairo and Bengal, the majority of the maniacs and idiots become such from the abuse of hasheesh. In most Eastern countries the importation, cultivation, and sale of hasheesh is forbidden, but it is used in large quantities, nevertheless. — *Waverley Magazine.*

Marriage, Divination in.—How to tell whether a bride is to bear twins, or only one child. Marriages are most fertile and happy when entered into on the first of the new moon. The morning after marriage, let the bride walk out from her bed, first putting on her clothing, and stepping out with the *left* foot. If the left foot and left leg make two shadows, she is pregnant with two sons; if one shadow, then with one son only. The pregnant woman generally consults a "partera," who is, usually, a "wise woman," and knows a great many secrets not known to doctors.

The "partera" places a basin full of water in front of the bride, who should lay aside all clothing but the "camisa." The "partera" not only tells how many shadows there are, but can frequently predict the sex of the child, or children, to be born.

Thus, if the water in the basin seem to become cloudy, the child is to be a girl; if it remain crystalline, a man: the reason being that a man's existence is out in the open air, clear to the observation of everybody, but a woman leads a life generally of seclusion, and is always wrapped up and under the charge of somebody. The bride must next jump across the pan of water; if its surface become ruffled, her labor is to be protracted; if it remain smooth, she is to have a happy gestation and an easy delivery. (*M. A.*)

"*Medidas*," or *measures*, are pieces of ribbon or tape, which represent the exact size of the head, arm, waist, leg, hand, or foot of some saint's statue. If a man suffer from headache, let him wear around his forehead the "medida" of the head of some statue of the Madonna, or a favorite saint. These "medidas" are frequently inscribed with letters in gold or silver, telling whence they came, etc.

Their use is not confined to Roman Catholic countries. Protestants are fully as much addicted to this superstition, as shown in my monograph, "The Medicine Men of the Apache," in volume ix. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, D. C.

To cure Melancholia.—Take a small piece of the bone of a giant (fossil bone), powder it, and put it in the patient's drink. (*M. A.*)

Menstrual Troubles.—Make an infusion of the "matamoreal," use internally and locally as a fomentation. (*M. A.*)

Mescal.—The alcoholic menstruum for the administration of all medicines not given in infusion or decoction is obtained by the distillation of the roasted and fermented heart of the American aloe.

It is very strong in spirit, and tastes like fiery Scotch whiskey. A good punch can be made of it. Many Mexicans like to have it "curado," or flavored either with pineapple, lemon, orange, or strawberry juice. Others prefer to add lime water and the burning berries of the chilchipin. The latter mixture was positively prohibited by an edict of the Emperor Charles V. as early as 1528, as I

have shown in "The Laws of Spain in their Application to the American Indians." Salt is also placed on the tongue before taking a drink of mescal.

"*Milagros.*" — The "milagros" hung up in the Mexican churches are, as may be gathered from the text of this article, votive offerings. They are generally made of silver, sometimes of gold, and occasionally of wax, and in the form of a boy, girl, head, hand, foot, leg, heart, horse, cow, donkey, ear of corn, or any other object upon which heaven has sent its blessings in response to the prayers of the suppliant.

In no respect do they differ from the votive offerings which the Romans hung up in their temples in honor of Æsculapius.

Moon-lore. — Never cut timber, wheat, corn, or anything else in the shape of a crop before the full of the moon; it will wither and die.

I found it hard to get any explanation of this, until an old man said that while the moon was growing, sap was always flowing, and that anything cut with the sap still in it could n't give products that would endure.

When the moon is young, don't scrape your nails, you'll make them grow thick: wait for the full moon.

At the time of new moon, there is no ceremonial spitting, jumping, or touching of silver among the Mexican women of the Rio Grande, but it is considered a good practice to recite the "Oracion" (Lord's Prayer). (*M. A.*)

Maria Antonia called the halo around the moon, "casa de la luna," or moon's house, which is one of the names the Apaches have for it.

Mortuary Ceremonies. — At the Mexican funerals (of adults) which I have attended in the small villages, tiny bows of "crespon" or crape are distributed, which are to be worn above left elbow. Each man lights a candle and marches in procession to the church, where he kneels, still keeping the candle alight.

The women blow out their candles and keep them till the next evening, when they are again lighted and the merits of the deceased rehearsed, but no men are present.

Rockets are frequently used to notify friends on neighboring ranchos when the procession is ready to start.

Cutting Nails and Hair. — Cut your finger-nails every Friday, and you'll not have the toothache. (*M. A.*)

When you cut your finger-nails or hair, see that the moon is full. Be careful to burn your hair; do not throw it in the path of other people, because it might do them harm. Never, under any circumstances, pick up human hair lying in the road, especially woman's hair.

"Voudoos warn against throwing hairs about." "Roman Etruscan Remains," Charles G. Leland, New York, Scribners, 1891, page 298, quoting Miss Mary A. Owen.

Don't cut the nails on Tuesdays or Fridays. (Read what has been said under the paragraph on the lodestone.) On the other hand, Federico Rodriguez says *cut* your nails on Friday.

If your sight fails, cut your nails at the full of the next moon, and you will speedily be cured.

Young girls must cut their hair on Saint John's Day, if they wish to have their hair grow long.

On Saint John's Day you must cut your hair and nails, bathe from head to foot, and put on new garments. (*M. A.*)

New Water. — No myth was more interesting to me than the fact upon which I stumbled at "Agua Nueva" (New Water), that a perfectly rational explanation could be had of the miracle by which Moses made water flow by striking the rock.

At "Agua Nueva" there is a rock surface, underneath which is a large lake or series of springs of cool, pure water; wherever the thin stratum of rock is pierced, water is found for the villagers and their herds. Is it not reasonable to suppose that Moses, guided by his Midianite brother-in-law, found in the desert just such a stratum of rock superimposed upon just such a supply of water? Oriental imagery would make a miracle out of a very commonplace business.

New Year. — The first day of the year is also a good time for putting on new coats, new hats, new shoes, etc., according to Federico Rodriguez, but my observation convinces me that it does not compare in importance to Saint John's Day.

Nose-bleed. — To stop nose-bleed, put a string of coral beads around the neck.

Nouer l'Aiguillette. — All that the English, French, and Germans formerly believed on this subject is still believed by the Rio Grande Mexicans.

The men keep a lock of their sweetheart's hair, not so much as a pledge of affection, as a preventive of aberration.

Juan Martinez showed me at Fort Ringgold, in July, 1891, a lock of the hair, tied with a ribbon, of his sweetheart, Silvestra Rodriguez, received in exchange for a lock of his own. "So long as I hold on to this," he said, "she can't love anybody else, and even were she to be married to another man, the marriage would be in vain, if I did not consent, provided I tied three knots in this tress." He added — "I *know* that this is true."

"By locking a padlock when a couple are married one can stop all intimacy between them." "Roman Etruscan Remains," Leland, page 365.

Numbers. — If three men light their cigarritos from the same match, bad luck will surely overtake one of them soon. (*Alberto Leal.*)

Omens. — It means good luck for a family when a she-cat comes to the house.

To have your path crossed by a coyote is a bad sign. It is a sign of sudden death. My informant knew a soldier who was *en route* to catch up with his regiment, and who saw a coyote crossing his path. He laughingly told about it, but had n't been with the column more than an hour when the rifle of a comrade went off accidentally and killed him.

When a hen crows, look out for a sudden death in the family to which the hen belongs.

Paralysis. — There is a singular berry growing in the Rio Grande valley, the fruit itself pleasant to the taste and harmless, but the seed poisonous and bringing on paralysis of the lower limbs. This plant is called the coyotillo, because the coyote is too cunning to be deceived by it; the coyote will eat the berry, but reject the seeds. The infant (six year old) son of Manuel Guerra was treated for this kind of paralysis by Surgeon Theodore DeWitt, U. S. Army, at Fort Ringgold, in 1891.

Mr. MacAllan informs me that he has experimented upon sheep, goats, dogs, and cats, and that the seeds do paralyze the hind-quarters. A similar property is possessed by the hydrocyanic acid in kernels of peaches and almonds, and the same effect might be produced were there enough of it.

Remedy: Bathe frequently in a tepid infusion of tepocate weed.

To cure Paralysis. — Take the herb called "poléo," boil it, flower, leaf, root, and all, to make a hot bath, into which put the patient. Take a separate jugful of the above, add brown sugar, and administer as a drink while patient is in bath. He'll break out into a profuse perspiration. If this be done at time of new moon, and at eleven o'clock at night, the patient will be cured in eleven days. (*M. A.*)

Pilgrimages. — Pilgrimages are resorted to for the cure or alleviation of various physical ailments.

There is the chapel of San Ramon Non-nato, near San Luis Potosi, the chapel on the mountain outside of Monterey (not now much used), and the more famous "Vigen Sudanda of Agua-leguas," and "Nuestra Señora del Chorro," south of Linares. This last is a stalactitic statue, in a cave high up the flank of a mountain, from which gushes a powerful spring, or "chorro," whence the name. It is an Aztec idol consecrated to new uses and venerated to-day, as it has been perhaps for thousands of years.

Expulsion of the Placenta. — Dr. Taylor of San Diego, Texas, a graduate of Edinburgh, and a scholarly gentleman, since deceased, told me that he had found in his practice examples of a deep-rooted belief in the efficacy of a draught of the urine of the husband.

He was much surprised when I explained to him that such a belief was once general in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany, and, perhaps, other portions of Europe.

The placenta must not be burned, but buried where animals cannot invade, because it would be a great desecration to have animals uproot and perhaps eat what had been part of a body that was to be baptized. (*M. A.*)

First Sergeant James T. Murphy, Troop "C," Third Cavalry, informs me that the Mexican "parteras" (midwives) administer a snuff made of powdered mariguan to induce sneezing, by which great muscular effort they contend the effect desired is at once produced.

Rheumatism. — 1. To cure rheumatism, stroke the head of a little girl three times — a golden-haired child preferred.

2. Rub the legs with the white inner pulp of the nopal cactus.

3. Apply in form of a plaster or embrocation the white flowers of the "barba de chivata" (goat's beard). This burns exactly like mustard.

Saliva. — When your feet are asleep, spit on your fingers and make the sign of the cross under the knee, or on the instep.

Skunk. — The urine of a skunk blinds dogs and men. (The Aztecs and the Apaches used to believe the same.)

The urine of the skunk, when ejected during a dark night, makes a luminous curve like a comet.

The bite of the skunk will surely cause rabies.

Smoking. — The Mexicans use, besides tobacco, the mariguan, the toloachi, and the drago.

Snuff is made of tobacco, mariguan, and rocio.

To cure Smallpox ("Viruelas"). — Make a brew of steeped barley, stewed in water, to which add the "pezon," or stem, of the "calabaza," or pumpkin; drink. It will drive out the pustules. Then take fresh hog's lard, wash it in nine waters, and rub all over the body, to keep the pustules from spreading or marking the patient. (*M. A.*)

(This is possibly of Aztec derivation. The "pezon" is a sacred emblem among the Zuñis, as Mr. F. H. Cushing has shown.)

The Mexicans do not isolate smallpox sufferers, but try to make children catch the disease, and "have it over with." This will account for the numerous cases of blindness to be seen in the lower Rio Grande valley.)

Tiña (Scab on the Head). — Apply to the head the urine and

excrement of a black cow. It will cure promptly, even if the scab have lasted seven years. (*M. A.*)

To cure Snake Bite. — Take the root of the huaco (which bears a small blue flower), mash and pour on it enough mescal to cover. Drink as much as you can, and also apply locally as a lotion.

(I am inclined to attribute a pre-Columbian origin to this. The huaco was very highly considered by many of the tribes of New Spain, and until lately there was a "Flor de Huaco" gens in one of the pueblos of New Mexico near head of the Rio Grande.)

Lieutenant Joseph T. Dickman, Third Cavalry, United States Army, furnishes me with the cure by the huaco more in detail. He tells me that the belief is that half a dozen bulbs of the plant put in a flask of whiskey or mescal will, with one drink daily, afford immunity from the bite of the rattlesnake. The bruised bulb should be applied to the wound, after the usual steps of cutting and sucking have been completed; but, in this case, none of the medicine is to be taken internally.

To cure all Insect Bites. — Apply a lotion of the leaves and flowers of the "Escobilla de Castilla" (a low, stunted bush, with yellow flowers).

Kill a chicken and apply the hot entrails as a poultice to the wound. (*Major Louis Morris, Third U. S. Cavalry.*)

To relieve a Stiff Neck. — Mexican women, of the more ignorant sort, are accustomed to tie around their necks the drawers of a man named Juan, and, conversely, for the same ailment, men make use of the petticoat of a woman named Juana. (*Señor Arguelles, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.*)

Leland describes an Italian charm: "When a woman has a sore throat she must take her own apron and measure or fold it in a cross thrice for three mornings in succession." (After which it is to be presumed she wears it.) "Roman Etruscan Remains," page 367.

To cure the Sting of a Bee. — Apply a plaster of mud or cow-dung.

Toloachi is stramonium, or Jamestown weed. Has been used by medicine-men of the Hualpais to produce visions and induce prophecy.

The Mexican women put it in potions to be drunk by recreant lovers. It is said to produce dementia lasting for twelve months. (See "Mariguan.")

Italian witches still administer "certain poisons, such as stramonium, which causes strange delusions." Charles G. Leland, "Roman Etruscan Remains," page 208.

The superstition — half fear, half veneration — surrounding such plants as the mariguan, the toloachi, the drago, and the coyotillo is the residuum of a much larger plant-worship, which made the Aztecs

adore the maguey, and the Opatas bow down before the giant cactus — "Adoraban la pitalla, fruta deliciosa de que tambien hacian un licor fuerte." (*Father Alegre*, "Historia de la Cia. de Jesus en Nueva España." Mexico: 1841. Vol. i. p. 307. Speaking of A. D. 1595.)

An anonymous writer in the "Evening Star," Washington, D. C., January 13, 1894, has an interesting article upon the use of Indian hemp and Jamestown weed by our southwestern tribes, and further remarks may be found in "On the Border with Crook," and in "The Medicine Men of the Apache," speaking of the medicine-men of the Hualpais.

Toothache. — Make a tea of the little lemon perfumed berries of the "colima."

Cures by Transference. — The Mexicans speak of certain diseases which they call "enfermedades trasbolicas," that is, diseases which can fly away from one patient to another. It is hard to tell what diseases come under this category, but slow fevers are generally included. The means taken to effect cures and the ideas underlying this system of necromantic therapeutics, are exactly what are to be found in the musty pages of Franz Paullini, Etmuller, Beckherius, Flemming, Porta, Rosinus Lentilius, Schurig, and others of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which I cited *in extenso* in my work on "The Scatologic Rites of all Nations." One example only will be given, from Starr County, Texas, in 1891.

When the patient is very low, take a black hen¹ and half a pound of mustard; make a plaster of the mustard by using hot water; with this, smear the hen from head to foot, and then burn her alive in a bake-oven. (Mustard is probably only of recent use in this connection.) Meantime, a man who was baptized Juan for a first name furnishes the material for a plaster which must envelop the invalid's body for a change of the moon (eight days). At the expiration of that time, deposit the plaster in a hole dug at the intersection of two roads or streets (an old Roman idea). The plaster was to be covered with mud, and, if possible, a lock of the patient's hair should be added. If any stranger dig up this baleful package, the disease will leave the original sufferer and fly to ("trasvolar") the new victim. (*M. A.*)

¹ (Notice the black hen of mediæval superstition. Of course, the hen superstitions must all be importations from Europe.) Consult the works of James Mooney, and an article called "Folk-Lore from Ireland," by Ellen Powell Thompson, in *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, October-December, 1893, vol. vi. p. 262.

Leland states that spells with black hens are still employed by the Tuscan witches, and that the same methods as are in use to-day were employed by the lake-dwellers of Switzerland, as is proved by some of their relics. *Roman Etruscan Remains*, page 354.

Diseases of Urinary Organs, Bladder, and Kidneys. Take some of the Monterey soap (made of hog's lard and native soda), make it into a thin lather; leave it out all night in the moonlight; in the morning, add sugar to sweeten, and give to patient. After that, let him take a tablespoonful of syrup made from Yerba Gonzalez — one before each meal. (*M. A.*)

Warts. — To cure a wart ("mezquino"), wait till you see a rainbow in the sky; then tie a hair around the wart, and as the rainbow disappears, so will the wart. (*Federico Rodriguez.*)

Weather Signs. — When an ox licks his forefoot, kicks out violently and repeatedly with his hind feet, or runs about uneasily, it is a sure sign that a storm is coming.

When the winged ants come out of the ant-hills, look out for heavy showers. They come out to escape; the wingless ants which remain in the hill are drowned.

Whenever a sand-storm or a cyclone occurs in the valley of the Rio Grande, the people out in the fields or travelling along the roads stop and pick up a handful of dust, which they throw in the air. First Sergeant James T. Murphy, Troop "C," Third Cavalry, United States Army. This practice is of Indian derivation.

Witchcraft. — Maria Antonia was emphatic in her expression of belief that there were lots of "brujas" (witches) around, who took delight in doing harm to you personally, or in spreading sickness among your cattle, blighting your crops, or ruining your fruit-trees.

Everybody believed in witches; there might be some fool "Americanos" who would say they did not, but she was sure that they were only talking for talk's sake. However, what the "Americanos" did concerned her but little. She had been told that many "Americanos" were not "Christianos." She would n't talk to a man who was so wickedly stupid that he refused to believe what every one of good sense knew to be so. "Don't you believe in 'brujas,' mi capitán? "Why, surely, comadrecita, — do you not see that I am different from those fool Gringos who come down here pretending to know more than their grandparents did? What I am anxious to learn is, what is the cure, or the best preventive, so that I may run no danger of being 'maleficiado' myself."

The best remedy, Maria Antonia said, was to offer to San Antonio, or other powerful patron who works miracles in that particular line, a "milagro" of silver made in the form of the limb of the live stock or the fruit-tree which had been bewitched. She had never known that to fail, but then there were other remedies, too, which I might as well learn.

"Saint Anthony protects his friends from many troubles, but specially from witchcraft." Charles G. Leland, "Roman Etruscan Remains," page 240.

There are not only witches in the world, but a class of people whom she styles "gente de chusma," who seem to be allied to our fairies. They fly about from place to place on the winds. They have sold their souls to the Devil and must never think of God when they die. Their souls fly about from place to place. They will not enter a house where there is mustard. You must take mustard—that in a bottle will do—and make with it a cross upon the wall, alongside of the bed upon which you are to sleep. (*M. A.*)

To keep away witches, the Italian peasantry "sprinkle mustard-seed on the door-sill." Charles G. Leland, "Roman Etruscan Remains," page 203.

Once there was a man down here (Rio Grande City, Texas), who owed a washerwoman five dollars and refused to pay her. Now this washerwoman was a witch, and she filled this man full of worms, but Maria Antonia was called in just in time and gave him a strong emetic and a strong purge, and then dosed him with a decoction of Yerba de Cancer, Yerba Gonzalez, and Guayuli, and expelled thirteen worms ("gusanos") with green heads and white bodies.

To keep away witches: Smoke, drink, or chew powdered "mari-guan" every morning. This herb is also given secretly in the food of admirers who have grown insensible to the charms of cast-off and despairing sweethearts. (*M. A.*)

To cure a man who has been rendered impotent by witchcraft: Take out from the lamp hanging in front of the Blessed Sacrament a few drops of oil, put upon a clean rag, and anoint the genitalia. Drop a little more of the oil upon a pan of live coals, saying: "I do this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Then seek the woman who is beloved, and all obstacles will disappear, but the witch who has caused all the trouble will die at once. (*M. A.*)

"There is another method of using oil, not for divination or warring on witches, but to bewitch, that is, to fascinate men. It consists in stealing from a church some of the oil of baptism, if you can get it; if not, that which is blessed and put into the lamps before the Virgin and saints will do quite as well. And if a girl anoints her lips with it, the man who kisses her

Will be seized with a strange, wild love;
He'll heed not the dark world beneath him,
He'll heed not the heavens above."

Charles G. Leland, "Roman Etruscan Remains," pages 314, 315.

To cure a man who has fallen violently in love, through witchcraft: Take a shilling's worth of sweet oil, and another of brandy made in Parras (State of Coahuila); mix, and give in doses of a large spoonful until the patient has vomited freely; then give him some beef tea, made hot, but without salt, fat, or tallow. The patient will

break out into a profuse sweat, and will vomit again — but he must now be careful of himself, lest he take cold. Let him now eat what he pleases, and go to sleep. When he wakes up in the morning, he will be completely cured of his infatuation. (*M. A.*)

To keep witches away from you at night : When about to retire, kneel down and say the following prayer, in a low voice : —

Cuatro esquinas tiene mi casa.
(My house has four corners.)
Cuatro angeles que la adoran.
(Four angels adore it.)
Lucas, Marcos, Juan, y Mateo.
(Luke, Mark, John, and Matthew.)
Ni brujas, ni hechiceras.
(Neither witches, nor charmers.)
Ni hombre malhechor.
(Nor evil-doing man.)
(Must harm me, understood.)

En el Nombre del Padre.
(In the Name of the Father.)
Y del Hijo, y del Espiritu Santo.
(And of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.)

Recite the above three times, and witches can neither harm you nor enter your house. (*M. A.*)

I have two sets of prayers to counteract witchcraft : One to "San Cipriano," printed in Saltillo, in 1888, in the press of Ignacio C. de la Peña. It is too long to be copied entire, but includes an invocation for preservation from sudden death, lightning, earthquake, fire, calumny, evil tongues, bad thoughts, all enemies, visible and invisible, and for all who are bewitched ("maleficiados"), or likely to be. The second, entitled "Novena de San Ramon Non-nato," Mexico, 1889, does not specify witchcraft in direct terms.

The last punishment inflicted for witchcraft within the limits of the United States was that imposed by Judge Sam Stewart of Rio Grande City (Fort Ringgold), Texas, in 1876.

As nearly as I can arrange the story from my notes and my recollection of the judge's account, it was about like this : A young man of good Mexican family was slowly wasting away under the attack of a disease, the exact nature of which quite baffled the local medical talent. All the medicines on sale in the "Botica del Aguila" (Eagle Drug Store) had been sampled to no purpose, and the sick man's condition had become deplorable. The physicians, who disagreed in everything else, concurred upon the one point that he had but a few days longer to live. At this juncture, a friend suggested to the mother that she call in one of the numerous old hags, who, under the name of "curanderas," combine in equal portions a knowledge

of kitchen botany, the black art, humbuggery pure and simple, and a familiarity with just enough prayers and litanies to give a specious varnish to the more objectionable features of their profession. The "curandera" responded promptly, and made her diagnosis almost with a glance of the eye.

"Your son," she said to the grief-stricken mother, "has neither consumption nor paralysis. The doctors can't tell what ails him, but I can see it all, and with the power of God can soon make him well again."

"What is the matter with him, then, my dear little friend?" "Black Thomas cats. When I came into the room, the floor was a foot deep with Thomas cats which had jumped out of your son's throat, but they became frightened when they saw me and scampered back again. I'll soon get rid of them all."

Her intentions may have been good, but she got rid of nothing. Her "remedios" produced no effect, and the patient kept on sinking.

Just then a rival "curandera" came up to the mother and said: "That woman is deceiving you. She don't know what she's talking about. Why your son never has been troubled by Thomas cats—but I can tell you at once what ails him."

"Tell me, then, in the name of God."

"It is bull-frogs. I can see them jumping over each other and running into and out from his mouth."

To make a long story short, the first "curandera" would not give up the case, but insisted on holding on to what, in the language of to-day, would be called a decidedly soft snap, and the town, as is usual in such cases, taking up a quarrel in which it did n't have the slightest interest, became divided into the two bitterly hostile factions of the "bull-froggers" and the "Thomas-catters." The street became blocked with a crowd of partisans and excitement ran high. Judge Stewart surrounded the whole gang and had them run down to court, where he dismissed all but the ten "curanderas" (for there were ten altogether), who were loudly proclaiming their influence with witches.

"Have you ever seen any witches?" he asked of the first.

"Oh yes, indeed, many times. Why only last Wednesday, the witches picked me up at midnight and took me out on the Corpus Christi road, and up above the clouds, where they played pelota (football) with me, and when they got tired of that, they dropped me into a mesquite thicket, and here you see my clothes all torn to rags to prove that I am telling the truth."

The next one said she could get into any house, no matter whether the doors were open or shut.

The third could tell where to find hidden money, and so on through the list.

The judge wasted no time on the culprits, but fined them all ten dollars apiece, and sentenced them to a month each in the county jail, and when they begged for clemency and told him that they were poor humble women, he brusquely replied: "That's nothing. You can all get out through the keyholes, and you all know where to find buried money to pay your fines. That is all there is about it."

This article has become so much longer than I at first intended that it must now close without a description of the remedies and treatment employed in a very extended practice by the old charlatan "San Pablo," of Los Olmos, or, to a much more limited extent, by the hermit who lives in the cave near Peneño. However, these men are exponential rather of the superstition which would credit them with therapeutic power, mundane or supernatural, than of the more generally disseminated practices and ideas which constitute the folk-lore of the Rio Grande.

John G. Bourke.

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