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CHARMS AS A MEANS OF CURE.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
Lest one good cut to-m should corrupt the world."

IT is a trite saying that man's highest study is mankind; and of this study few departments are more interesting, and surely none are more perplexing, than that which relates to his beliefs and superstitions. The Protean shape, which in generation after generation these superstitions assume, renders all study of them as complex and puzzling as the unravelling of a skein of silk after it has been subject to the antics of a kitten. The ever-active and playful imagination of man (irresponsible in his earlier ages as the gambols of a kitten) has, generation after generation, woven the original constituents of any given superstition into such a tangled skein that it is a difficult matter, indeed, to find which thread is the one that will lead us to a correct solution of the problem.

The persistency of the life of superstitions is another curious and not lightly to be ignored feature. This persistency reminds one forcibly in its nature of the obstinacy of life exhibited in the English bind-weed, or of the pusley, which is made the hero, if this term be permissible, of Warner's "My Summer in a Garden." Lop off as you may, the excrescences, destroy as you like the flowers, uproot as you will the fundamental principles, yet in some other form, at some other time, the same idea still lives and moves and has its being. It is true, indeed, that as education becomes more diffused the life of superstition is not so apparently active: The scepticism, necessarily a concomitant of education, is an ever-active pruning knife; but it is not by any means an eradicator: it keeps within bounds, but it does not destroy; it subdues, but it does not suppress. Is not the unlucky

thirteen still avoided even in educated circles; should we have to search very far before we found one and another, who deemed it unfortunate that the salt should be spilled at table, and who, perchance furtively, would throw a pinch of the condiment over the shoulder to ward off harm; has Friday yet lost its character of being a day on which no "enterprise of great pith or moment" should be initiated?

Not long since we met with a commercial traveller, a man as shrewd and hard-headed as these men are, who would never travel on a Friday. Yet when rallied upon being superstitious he indignantly denied the accusation: but could only explain his dislike to travelling on a Friday by saying he did not like it.

It is not our intention, however, to enter into a history or analysis of superstitions, but just to jot down some remarks anent the cures supposed to be effected by charms. Excepting in a few districts remote from the busy practical life of to-day, such as Devonshire and Cornwall in the Old Country, charming as a means of cure is at a discount, its place to some extent is, now and again, taken by faith "healing," the Lourdes miracles, and the archbishop laying on of hands. In these reported cures we have but the transmutation of that superstition which believed in charms; and any healing which may have taken place was effected in each case in the same way, viz., by the remedial effect of the imagination, or the subsequently altered circumstances in the patient's environment.

Let one's logic be never so clear, and one's facts never so potent, it is impossible to disabuse the mind of the believer in charms. The "bind-weed" of the superstition has firm hold on his mentality, and its glamour