

most complete, and is that of men skilled in the medical art who were eye-witnesses and assisted in the ceremonies. Of course now no one believes that there was virtue in the royal touch any more than that the philosopher's stone could convert baser metals into gold. If the King could cure scrofula, how is it that during Charles II's reign scrofula was more prevalent than for many years previously? No doubt it was because people neglected ordinary methods of treatment, in their desire to be cured miraculously.

The only way it is possible to explain the evidence of Browne and Wiseman is that they were ardent royalists, and held the efficacy of the royal touch to be as much a party tenet as the divine right of kings, and that by doing so they pleased the court and so advanced their own interests. Had they doubted it, they would have incurred the suspicion of being disaffected to the government.* Failures of cure were attributed, as in our own day, to want of faith, as one writer puts it, "none ever failed of receiving benefit unless their little faith and credulity starved their merits."

Curing diseases by the laying on of hands was practiced with great success by Valentine Greatraikes, an Irish gentleman of good family, who served under Cromwell both in a military and civil capacity. At the Restoration, being deprived of his offices, he undertook to cure the king's-evil by touch, or stroking, as it was called; he succeeded so well in this that he extended the field of his labors and treated epilepsy, asthma, convulsions, deafness, etc., by the same method. The latter diseases being all due to disorders of the nervous system, benefit was no doubt frequently obtained through the effect of the imagination. "Imagination," says Lord Bacon, "is next akin to a miracle-working faith." Greatraikes's fame soon spread, and he was sent for from far and near; the Earl of Orrery and Lord Conway patronized him, and he even deceived the great Robert Boyle. At length he arrived in London, where for some time he was most popular. The majority of his admirers were ladies, and on the more hysterical of the sex he performed marvelous cures. Soon, however, the tongues of slander and ridicule assailed him, and he retired to his native country and obscurity. Many others succeeded Greatraikes. John Everett, or Leverett, the seventh son of a seventh son, and a gardener, practiced the "manual exercise," and declared that after touching thirty to forty a day he felt the goodness go out of him. No doubt these people practiced unconsciously what Mesmer many years after practiced by design. On the subject of Mesmerism and spiritualism I do not propose to enter. Of late years cures by the laying on of hands,

* One Thomas Rosewell was actually tried for high treason in 1684 for saying that "people made a flocking to the King, upon pretense of being healed of the king's-evil, which he could not do, but that they, being priests and prophets, could by their prayers do as much." Rosewell was tried by the celebrated Judge Jeffries and found guilty, but afterward pardoned.—(Wadd's "Mems and Maxims," p. 136.)