

to the student of human nature,—that human nature which is ever the same, in all ages and countries.

Among the collection of coins now upon exhibition at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park, in Philadelphia, are certain English gold coins, issued by Charles II. and James II., known as "touch-pieces," which were given to those unfortunates whom, in conformity with the superstition of the times, the reigning sovereign "touched" for the cure of the King's Evil, a disease so named because it was thought to be healable only by the hand of a monarch.

In days when many believed that the kingly office was of divine origin, it was natural that the imaginations of those people of feeble vitality and often of weak or deficient mental power should be so far affected as to cause such bodily changes as we know to be produced by a strongly excited imagination, and, further, that those persons who were thus cured and those who heard of such cures should attribute the effect to the virtue of the kingly touch,—not to the influences of any mere processes.

The superstition was a very old one in England, where it can be traced back to the reign of Edward the Confessor, and in the chronicle of William of Malmesbury will be found the narrative of several cures of this disease effected by that sovereign in England as well as in Normandy. It is considered remarkable that no other author who lived at or near the time of Edward the Confessor has spoken of this marvellous gift, and the most singular fact of all is that the bull by which he was canonized is stated to contain no allusion whatever to any of the sanations performed by him through the royal touch. But the old chroniclers who have narrated these miracles inclined to the belief that the healing virtue proceeded from the great personal sanctity of the monarch, rather than from any hereditary virtue in the line of royal succession or from the powers bestowed by the consecration and investiture at his coronation.