

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SICK ROOM.*

By JOHN HUNTER, M.B., TORONTO.

Medical, biblical and classical literatures furnish abundant evidence of potent influence of mental or psychic factors in healing disease. A physician hands back a cheque for the amount of all a neurasthenic—a nervous wreck from financial disaster—had paid him for former services, and this act cures the patient; Saul's paroxysms of insanity are assuaged by the music of David's harp, and people afflicted with divers diseases have been healed by intercessory prayer or laying on of hands of prophet, priest or king.

Passing over the mediæval ages, when that religio-medical hybrid—in whom the duties of priest and physician were the work of one individual—was rampant, and coming to our own day, proclaimed in the rostrum's stamping rhetoric and in the spring poet's tender sonnet to be "The foremost on the files of time," what do we find? A "trek" of the laity from the services of, and faith in, scientific medicine, greater than any recorded by history of people from one region to another. "Cults" which disguise their ignorance and avarice under the beneficent garbs of religion and medicine, spring up as luxuriantly as wild mustard. "Yellow" advertisements set forth their audacious claims, and are carried by religious and lay press into every household. Many who read these become their victims. Incomes of physicians diminished, with equipment of our hospitals and charities crippled by loss of money that flows so profusely into the coffers of these cults. Great edifices, almost unrivalled in magnitude, style of architecture and wealth of ornamentation are erected, paid for, and dedicated to founders of such cults out of funds that ought to go to physicians, hospitals and charities.

If we examine this "trek" of the laity from scientific medicine and orthodox religion, do we find causes akin to what led to the great "treks" recorded in history, viz., a hope to better social and physical conditions; a desire for greater civil and religious liberty; longing to satisfy innate cravings for something new; appeals of avarice or ambition for wealth or notoriety acquired by earlier adventurers in new fields? The founders of these cults, being "wise as serpents," are astute enough to appeal to all these psychic factors. They teach their

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