

heathenish customs, which in many Christian countries were preserved and transferred, after introduction of Christian religion and holidays, to St. John's day. Bones, horns, other articles of refuse were heaped together in a great conflagration, while persons danced around it, carried the flame in circuit or even sprang through the fire. The secrecy with which these feasts were conducted in spite of priestly interdiction lent a particular excitement and flavor to them and these emotions were probably accentuated during the period of the plague. Thus also in the first appearance in Aix-la-Chapelle the name of St. John appears to have been referred to by the dancers. Hecker believes therefore, that the Festival of St. John, in 1374, brought to a crisis a long prepared psychic state, while cure for it was sought in appeals to St. Vitus who had acquired a great reputation as a helper or apothecary to the physically afflicted.

Similar customs to those practised in connection with St. John's holiday were retained by most nations of Europe and Asia and it is interesting that the dancing malady even made its appearance in the Christian part of Abyssinia where John was worshipped as its saint.

All countries have suffered more or less from similar strange dancing disorders. In Italy it assumed alarming proportions in the so-called Tarantism. This made its appearance first in Apulia and then spread over the whole of Italy, remaining epidemic for centuries. The first account of it has been given by Perotti (1430 to 1480). It was universally put down as caused by a particular spider and, although superstition with regard to its effects had existed long ago, it was again the physical and mental exhaustion by plague, erysipelas, leprosy, small pox, etc., which prepared the ground for a general sympathetic epidemic, through a morbid sensitiveness of the human mind. A general conviction spread that music and dancing distributed the poison through the body and expelled it through the skin. But if any poison remained, music would bring on renewed paroxysms. Thus regular feasts of Tarantula were established, the performances and crazy customs of which have been accurately described by an eye witness, Matthioli. All sorts of people and nationalities were affected by it, including Spaniards, Albanians, Gypsies, Negroes, and even deaf people, who could not hear the music, were, by sheer imitation of sight, infected. It continued to the Seventeenth century and then gradually declined.

In Abyssinia also there occurs in the Tigre country a disease called Tigretier. It consists of convulsive body movements, especially in women, which are excited by musical instruments—trumpets—followed by a wild dance, the performers being delighted while the music lasts, discontent when it ceases. It is generally preceded by a period of lingering body decline, poor nutrition and a stuttering speech. Catalepsy