
AN ACCOUNT OF
THE DANCING MANIA OF
EUROPE AND OF
EPIDEMIC CONVULSIONS
IN KENTUCKY.

BY THOMAS B. FUTCHER, M. B. (TOR.),
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE,
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

10

N. C. KILLAM, PRINTER
603 WEST LEXINGTON ST., NEAR GREENE
BALTIMORE

[Reprinted from OLD MARYLAND, March, 1905.]

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
DANCING MANIA OF EUROPE
AND OF
EPIDEMIC CONVULSIONS IN KENTUCKY

THOMAS B. FUTCHER, M. B. (TOR.),

Associate Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University,
BALTIMORE.

I.—THE DANCING MANIA.

One of the earliest and most widespread psychological disturbances of which we have authentic records was the so-called "Dancing Mania," which made its appearance towards the latter end of the fourteenth century. It was even international in extent. This was a remarkable convulsive malady, which excited the astonishment of contemporaries for more than two centuries. While it has since been popularly known as the "Dancing Mania," it was at the time called St. John's or St. Vitus' dance on account of the Bacchantic leaps by which it was characterized, and it gave to those affected, whilst performing their wild dance, screaming and foaming with fury, all the appearance of persons possessed. It did not remain confined to particular localities, but was propagated by the sight of the sufferers

over the whole of Germany and the neighboring countries to the northwest, whose people were all prepared for its reception by the nervous apprehension which had been excited by the "Black Death," the effects of which had not yet completely subsided. Most of my information in regard to this remarkable malady was secured from Hecker's very interesting work on the "Epidemics of the Middle Ages."

As early as the year 1374, gatherings of men and women, who had come from Germany, were seen at Aix-la-Chapelle, who, united by one common delusion, exhibited to the public both in the streets and in the churches the following remarkable spectacle: They formed circles, hand in hand, and appearing to have lost control over their senses, continued dancing regardless of the bystanders, for hours together, in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. They then complained of extreme oppression and groaned as if in the agonies of death until they were swathed in cloths bound tightly around their waists, upon which they again recovered and remained free from complaint until the next attack. This practice of swathing was resorted to on account of the abdominal distension, which followed these spasmodic attacks, but the bystanders frequently relieved patients by more vigorous measures—such as thumping and trampling upon the individuals' abdomens. While dancing, the victims never saw or heard, being insensible to external

impressions through the senses. They were haunted by visions and their imaginations conjured up spirits whose names they shrieked out. Others during the paroxysm saw the heavens open and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary.

When the disease was firmly established the individual attacks commenced with epileptiform convulsions. Those affected fell to the ground senseless, panting and laboring for breath. They foamed at the mouth, and, suddenly springing up, began their dance amidst strange contortions.

It was only a few months before this demoniacal disease had spread from Aix-la-Chapelle, where it appeared in July, over the neighboring Netherlands. In Liege, Utrecht, Tongres and many other towns of Belgium the dancers appeared with garlands in their hair and their waists girt with cloths that they might, as soon as the paroxysm was over, receive immediate relief on the development of the abdominal tympany or distension. This bandage was, by the insertion of a stick, easily twisted tight. Many, however, obtained more relief from kicks and blows on the abdomen, which they found numbers of persons ready to administer, for whenever the dancers appeared the people assembled in crowds to gratify their curiosity with the remarkable performance. Eventually the increasing number of those affected excited no less anxiety than the attention that was paid to them. In towns and villages they took possession of the

religious houses. Processions were everywhere instituted on their account, and masses were said and hymns were sung; while the disease itself, of the demoniacal origin of which no one entertained the least doubt, excited everywhere astonishment and horror. In Liege the priests had recourse to exorcisms, and endeavored by every means in their power to allay the evil, which threatened so much danger to themselves; for those possessed, assembling in multitudes, frequently poured forth imprecations against them and menaced their destruction. The clergy became daily more and more confirmed in their belief that those affected were sectarians, and on this account they hastened their exorcisms as much as possible, in order that the evil might not spread among the higher classes, for hitherto scarcely any but the poor had been attacked, and the few people of responsibility among the laity and clergy who were found among them were persons whose natural frivolity was unable to withstand the excitement of novelty, even though it proceeded from demoniacal influence. The exertions of the priests were more or less effective, for exorcism was a powerful remedy in the fourteenth century. At all events, in the course of ten or eleven months, the St. John's dancers were no longer to be found in any of the cities of Belgium,

A few months after the "Dancing Mania" made its appearance at Aix-la-Chapelle, it broke out at Cologne, where the number of those

affected reached more than five hundred, and about the same time at Metz, the streets of which place have been said to have been filled with eleven hundred dancers. Peasants left their ploughs, mechanics their workshops, housewives their domestic duties to join the wild revels, and Metz became the scene of the most ruinous disorder. Immoral desires were excited and too often found opportunities for wild enjoyment. The numerous beggars, stimulated by vice and misery, availed themselves of this new complaint to gain a temporary livelihood. Girls and boys left their parents, and servants their masters, to amuse themselves at the dances of those possessed, and frequently themselves became victims. About one hundred unmarried women were seen raving about in consecrated and unconsecrated places, and the consequences can easily be imagined. Gangs of beggars, who understood how to imitate accurately the gestures and convulsions of those really affected, moved about from place to place seeking maintenance and adventures, and thus did much towards spreading the disease over a wider territory, because in epidemics of this kind the susceptible are affected as easily by the appearance as by the reality. The unaffected citizens found it necessary eventually to expel these impostors, although it took several months for the Rhenish cities to do so.

Strassburg was visited by the "Dancing Mania" in 1418, forty-four years after its outbreak at Aix-la-Chapelle. The same infatuation excited

many of the same people there as in the towns of Belgium and the lower Rhine. Many were seized at the sight of those affected, aroused at first by their confused and absurd behaviour, and then by their constantly following the swarms of dancers. The latter were seen day and night dancing through the streets accompanied by musicians playing on bagpipes and by innumerable spectators attracted by curiosity. To it were added anxious parents and relatives, who came to look after those among the misguided multitude who belonged to their respective families. Imposture played its part in this city, but the morbid delusion seems to have predominated. The civic authorities took the matter in hand and divided the affected individuals into separate parties, to which they appointed responsible superintendents to protect them from harm, and also to restrain their turbulence. They were consequently conducted on foot and in carriages to the chapels of St. Vitus near Zabern and Rotestein, where the priests were in attendance to work upon their misguided minds by masses and other religious ceremonies. After the service was completed they were led in procession to the altar, where they made small offerings of alms, and where it is probable that many were, through the influence of devotion and the religious surroundings, cured of this mental aberration. It is worthy of note, at all events, that the "Dancing Mania" did not recommence at the altars of St. Vitus, and that from him alone assistance was

implored, and through his miraculous interposition a cure was effected, which was beyond the reach of human skill.

The personal history of St. Vitus may be of interest in this connection. He was a Sicilian youth, who, together with others, suffered martyrdom at the time of the persecution of the Christians, under Diocletian, in the year 303. The legends regarding him are obscure, and he would probably have been passed over without notice among the innumerable martyrs of the first centuries had not the transfer of his body to St. Denys and thence, in the year 836, to Corvey, raised him to a higher rank. From this time on it may be supposed that many miracles were effected at his new sepulchre, and St. Vitus was soon ranked among the fourteen saintly helpers. His altars were multiplied and became widespread, and the people had recourse to him in all sorts of distresses and worshipped him as a powerful intercessor. As the worship of these saints was, however, at this time stripped of all historical connections, a legend was invented at the beginning of the fifteenth century, or perhaps even so early as the fourteenth, that St. Vitus had prayed to God that he might protect from the Dancing Mania all those who should solemnize the day of his commemoration and fast upon its eve, and that thereupon a voice from heaven was heard saying, "Vitus, thy prayer is accepted." Thus St. Vitus became the patron saint of those afflicted with the "Dancing Mania."

It may be well to mention here that the name of St. Vitus' dance is now applied to an entirely different affection from the Dancing Mania. Sydenham, the famous English physician of the sixteenth century, rather unfortunately applied this name to a nervous affection prevailing mostly in young children, and now known under the more technical name of 'chorea.' This is not the only instance in medicine in which we know a disease by a name, the original significance of which has been lost.

As already stated the St. Vitus' dance continued to manifest itself from time to time during a period lasting fully two centuries. While at times it would seem to be waning it would spring up with renewed vigor at intervals. It attacked people of all stations, especially those who led a sedentary life, such as shoemakers and tailors; but even the most robust peasants abandoned their labors in the fields as if they were possessed by evil spirits. They would gather together at certain appointed places, and, unless prevented by the lookers on, continue to dance without intermission until they were completely exhausted and out of breath. In many instances they were deprived of their senses, and often dashed their brains out against the walls and corners of buildings, or rushed precipitately into rivers where they found watery graves. Their actions were so violent that bystanders could only succeed in restraining them by placing benches and chairs in their way, so, by the high leaps they were

thus forced to take, their strength became the more readily exhausted. As soon as this occurred they fell apparently lifeless to the ground, and by very slow degrees again recovered their strength.

A cure effected by these stormy attacks was in many cases so perfect that some patients returned to the factory or plough as if nothing had occurred. Others, on the contrary, suffered from more or less serious and permanent injury to their health. Physicians were astonished to observe that women, in advanced stages of pregnancy, were capable of going through an attack of the disease without the slightest injury to their offspring, which they protected merely by a bandage passed around the abdomen. It is a remarkable fact that the affected individuals were strikingly influenced by music. For this reason the magistrates hired musicians for the purpose of carrying the St. Vitus' dancers more quickly through the attacks, and even directed that athletic men should be sent among them in order to complete the exhaustion, a procedure which had often been observed to produce a good effect. The wearing of red garments was prohibited because at the sight of this color those affected became so furious that they flew at the persons who wore it and were so bent upon doing them an injury that they could with difficulty be restrained. They frequently tore their own clothes whilst in the paroxysm, and were guilty of other improprieties, so that the more opulent employed attend-

ants to accompany them to take care that they did no hurt to themselves or others.

Causes of the Condition.—It will be remembered that the Dancing Mania was sometimes called St. John's dance. According to the authority of Hecker, John the Baptist, or St. John, was originally far from being a protecting saint to those who were attacked, or one who would be likely to give them relief from a malady considered to be the work of the devil. On the other hand, the manner in which he was worshipped afforded an important and very evident cause for its development. From an early period, certainly as far back as the fourth century, St. John's day was solemnized with all sorts of strange and rude customs, of which the original mystical meaning was variously transformed among different nations by superadded relics of heathenism. Bacchanalian dances were the constant accompaniment of this half-heathen, half-Christian festival. At the period with which we are concerned the Germans were not the only people who lost their mental equilibrium in keeping the festival of St. John the Baptist. It is worthy of note that in Abyssinia, a country entirely separated from Europe, where Christianity has maintained itself in its primeval simplicity against Mohammedanism, St. John is even today worshipped as a protecting saint by those who are attacked with the dancing malady.

When in July, 1374, the first evidences of the Dancing Mania made their appearance in Aix-la-

Chappelle, the name of St. John is supposed to have been in the mouths of all the inhabitants, and Hecker is inclined to the view that the wild revels of St. John's day, A. D. 1374, gave rise to this mental plague. A contributory factor no doubt arose from the fact that there had been great distress among the inhabitants of the villages of the Rhine and Maine for some months previous to St. John's day. Throughout the whole of June prior to the festival of St. John, individuals were said to have felt a disquietude and restlessness, which they were unable to overcome. They were dejected, timid and anxious. They wandered about in an unsettled state, being tormented with twitching pains, which seized them constantly in various parts of the body, and they eagerly looked forward to the eve of St. John's day in confident hope that by dancing at the altars of this saint, or at that of St. Vitus (for in Breisgau aid was equally sought from them) they would be freed from all their sufferings. In this hope they were not disappointed, and they remained for the rest of the year free from any further attack, after having by dancing and raving about for three hours satisfied an irresistible demand of nature.

It was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Dancing Mania was made the subject of medical research and stripped of its unhallowed character as the work of demous. This was accomplished by Paracelsus, who, born near Zurich in 1493, aimed to withdraw diseases

from the pale of miraculous interpositions and saintly influences, and explain their causes upon principles deduced from his knowledge of the human frame. He wrote as follows: "We will not, however, admit that the saints have power to inflict diseases, and that these ought to be named after them, although many there are, who in their theology lay great stress on this supposition, ascribing them rather to God than to nature, which is but idle talk. We dislike such occasional nonsensical gossip as is not supported by symptoms, but only by faith, a thing which is not human, whereon the Gods themselves set no value."

These words he addressed to his contemporaries who were as yet incapable of appreciating doctrine of this sort, for the belief in enchantment still remained everywhere unshaken. Paracelsus divided the St. Vitus' dance into three kinds:

(1.) That which arises from the imagination, which was the original cause of the dancing plague. (*Chorea imaginativa.*)

(2.) That which arises from sensual desires, depending on the will. (*Chorea lasciva.*)

(3.) That which arises from corporal causes. (*Chorea naturalis.*)

No great praise can be bestowed on Paracelsus' treatment of the disease, but it was in conformity with the notions of the age in which he lived. Hecker says: "For the first kind, which often originated in passionate excitement, he had a

mental remedy, the efficacy of which is not to be despised, if we estimate its value in connection with the prevalent opinions of those times. The patient was to make an image of himself in wax or resin and by an effort of thought to concentrate all his blasphemies and sins in it. 'Without the intervention of any other person, to set his whole mind and thoughts concerning these oaths in the image'; and when he had succeeded in this, he was to burn the image so that not a particle of it should remain. In all this there was no mention made of St. Vitus or any of the other mediatory saints, which is accounted for by the circumstance, that, at this time, an open rebellion against the Romish Church had begun, and the worship of saints was by many rejected as idolatrous. For the second kind of St. Vitus' dance—that arising from sensual irritation, with which women were far more frequently affected than men, Paracelsus recommended harsh treatment and strict fasting. He directed that the patients should be deprived of their liberty; placed in solitary confinement, and made to sit in an uncomfortable place, until their misery brought them to their senses, and to return to their accustomed habits. Severe corporal chastisement was not omitted; but, on the other hand, angry resistance on the part of the patient was to be sedulously avoided, on the ground that it might increase his malady, or even destroy him; moreover, where it seemed proper, Paracelsus allayed the excitement of the nerves by

immersion in cold water. On the treatment of the third kind we shall not here enlarge. It was to be effected by all sorts of wonderful remedies, composed of the quintessences; and it would require, to render it intelligible, a more extended exposition of peculiar principles than suits our present purpose."

Dancing Mania in Italy.—A peculiar dancing affection to which the name Tarantism was given broke out in Italy between 1400 and 1500. The name Tarantism was given to the malady owing to the prevailing belief that it was caused by the bite of the tarantula, a ground-spider very common in Apulia. The fear of this insect was so general, that its bite was in all probability much oftener imagined, or the sting of some kind of insect mistaken for it, than actually received.

The symptoms of Tarantism, which Perotti, a contemporary writer, enumerates as consequent upon the bite, or supposed bite, of the tarantula, were practically as follows: Those who were bitten generally fell into a state of melancholy, and appeared to be stupefied and not in possession of their senses. This condition was in many cases united with so great a sensibility of music that at the very first tones of their favorite melodies they sprang up, shouting for joy, and danced on without intermission until they sank to the ground exhausted and almost lifeless. In other persons the disease did not take this cheerful form. The patients wept constantly and spent their days in great misery and anxiety. Others

in morbid fits of love cast their longing eyes on women, and instances of death are recorded, which are said to have occurred under a paroxym of either laughing or weeping.

Although Tarantism at first was confined to the provinces of Apulia, it later spread to other Italian provinces. A rather curious feature of the condition was that, unlike in the Dancing Mania of Germany, those suffering from Tarantism did not abhor red colors, but were rather soothed by them. Certain colors, however, did have a certain effect upon them. About the only thing that gave any relief, and had any soothing effect upon the disease was music in various forms. In fact, this was practically the only remedy, which seemed to have any tendency to put a cessation to the individual's propensity to dance.

Tarantism prevailed more or less extensively throughout the whole of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The fear of the bite itself was expected from the wound, which these insects inflicted. If those, who were bitten, escaped with their lives they were said to be seen pining away in a spirit of melancholy. It was no doubt the fear of the bite of these insects rather than the actual bite, which wrought upon the nervous system of these people, and gave rise to the remarkable symptoms which have been described. What the factors were that led to such an unstable psychical condition, which would permit the minds of the people to be disturbed in this

way, has not been satisfactorily explained. We know that the bite of the tarantula does not have the effects here described, and the symptoms were undoubtedly manifestations of extremely unstable nervous systems on the part of the native Italians.

Dancing Mania in Abyssinia.—A form of the Dancing Mania called Tigretier, on account of its occurring most frequently in the Tigre country of Abyssinia, prevailed in the early years of the nineteenth century from 1800 on. This condition resembled in many features the forms of Dancing Mania already described, but was not apparently so widespread as either the original Dancing Mania or Tarantism. It is rather curious that the malady should have extended down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and also that in the case of Tigretier music seems to have been the remedy which gave most relief.

II.—EPIDEMIC CONVULSIONS.

We now come a little nearer home, and will describe a remarkable convulsive malady which affected large numbers of persons in the States of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia about the year 1800. As is often the case, religious fervor seemed to be the exciting factor in bringing about this curious epidemic. It has been well described by Dr. David Yandel (Brain: A Journal of Neurology. Vol. IV, 1881-1882, p. 339) under the heading of "Epidemic Convulsions." He secured his information in regard to the dis-

ease from notes left by his father, who was a practitioner in Louisville during the time that the epidemic prevailed.

The extraordinary religious excitement, in which these nervous disorders arose, commenced in Logan County, Kentucky, under the preaching of Rev. James McGready, described as a man of "hideous visage and thunder tones," with a highly impassioned style of eloquence. The excitement soon abated, but was renewed in a more intense form three years later, and continued to grow until it reached its height about the year 1800. Families came in wagons forty, fifty and one hundred miles to attend the meetings, and it became necessary to establish camps for their accommodation. These camp meetings generally continued for four days, from Friday to Tuesday morning, but sometimes they lasted a week. They succeeded each other at frequent intervals, and thus the fervor of religious feeling was kept up. The woods and paths, leading to the camp grounds, seemed alive with people. The concourse became immense. At one of the gatherings the attendance was computed to be 20,000 persons. A spectacle presented was described by Dr. Davidson, a contemporary, in the following words: "The glare of the camp-fires falling on a dense assemblage of heads simultaneously bowed in prayer, and reflected back from long ranges of tents upon every side; hundreds of candles and lamps suspended among the trees, together with numerous torches flash-

ing to and fro, throwing an uncertain light upon the tremulous foliage; the solemn chanting of hymns, swelling and falling on the night winds; the impassioned exhortations, the earnest prayers, the sounds, shrieks or shouts bursting from persons under intense agitation of mind; the sudden spasms, which seized upon scores and unexpectedly dashed them to the ground—all conspired not only to invest the scene with terrific interest, but to work up the feelings to the highest pitch of excitement." It is said that the meetings were protracted to a late hour of the night, keeping the feelings long upon the stretch. The preaching was fervid and impassioned, many of the preachers, unable to control their emotions during the ceremony, going about in "a singing ecstasy," shouting and shaking hands with others as much excited as themselves. In this way everything was done to "heap fuel on the fire," and it was at such meetings that thousands fell in convulsive seizures to the ground. The spectacle of persons falling down in paroxysms of feeling was first exhibited at Gasper River Church, in one of McGready's congregations, in the summer of 1779. The movement proved highly contagious and spread in all directions. After rousing appeals to the feelings of the listeners, and especially during spirited singing, one and another of the audience would fall to the ground and swoon. Not only nervous women, but robust young men were overpowered. Some fell suddenly as if struck by lightning, while

others were seized with a general tremor before they fell, shrieking aloud. A few shrieks never failed to start the epidemic going, and to cause men and women to fall to the ground. A sense of "pins and needles" was complained of by many of the subjects, and others felt a numbness of the body and lost all control of their muscles. It soon grew into a habit, and those who had once fallen were ready to fall again under conditions by no means exciting. Women, who had suffered repeated attacks, sometimes fell from their horses on the way to or from the meeting houses.

The condition in some of the cases was cataleptic, lasting generally from a few minutes to two or three hours, but in some instances lasting many days. Others were violently convulsed as in epilepsy. The majority were speechless, but some were capable of conversing throughout the paroxysm. The sensibilities were numbed. Many, who fell hard to the ground, or, in running madly about, encountered stumps of trees, felt no pain from the violence. So many fell at Cabin Creek camp meeting, it is stated, that to prevent their being trodden upon, "they were laid out in order on two squares of the meeting house, covering the floor like so many corpses." At one camp meeting two hundred were attacked; at another three hundred, while at a third the number who fell were believed to have reached three thousand.

One of the features of this remarkable condition was popularly known as the "jerks." These

"jerks" first appeared at a sacramental meeting in East Tennessee, where several hundred people of both sexes were seized with this convulsive movement. The Rev. B. W. Stone has left a vivid description of it. Sometimes, he says, the subject was affected in a single member of his body, but in others the spasm was universal. When the head alone was affected it would be jerked from side to side so quickly that the features of the face could not be distinguished. When the whole system was affected, he continues, "I have seen the person stand in one place and jerk backward and forward in quick succession, the head nearly touching the floor behind and before. All classes, saints and sinners, the strong as well as the weak, were thus affected. I have seen some wicked persons thus affected, and all the time cursing the jerks while they were thrown to the earth with violence." The first form in which these spasmodic movements made their appearance was that of a simple jerking of the arms from the elbow down. When they involved the entire body they were described as being most distressing to watch. The head was thrown backward and forward with a rapidity that alarmed the spectators, causing the hair, if it were long, to crack and snap like the lash of a whip. The Rev. Richard McNemar gives the following account of a case of jerks as being a characteristic type of the malady as it prevailed: "A young man of a pious family, the son of a tanner, feigned sickness one Sunday morning to

avoid going that day to the camp meeting. He kept his bed until he was assured that all the family, except a few negro children, had left the premises, and was much pleased at the success of his stratagem. As he lay quietly in his bed his thoughts naturally turned to the camp meeting in progress. The assembled multitude, excited, agitated, convulsed, rose up vividly before his mind. All at once, while occupied with the scene, he felt himself most violently jerked out of bed and dashed around the walls in a manner utterly beyond his control. Prayer, he remembered, was efficacious in such circumstances, and he fell upon his knees in the hope that it would prove a sedative in his case. It turned out as he hoped, and he returned to bed happy at finding the spirit exorcised, but the enemy soon returned; the jerks were as bad as ever, but were again allayed by prayer. Dressing, he now went to the tanyard and set about currying a hide to occupy his mind. He rolled up his sleeves, and grasping his knife was about to commence the operation, when suddenly the knife was flung out of his hand, and he was jerked violently backwards over logs and against fences as before. Gaining relief by resorting once more to prayer, he ventured to resume his occupation, but was again seized with convulsions, and at last forsook the tanyard and betook himself to strong cries for mercy, at which he was found engaged by the family on their return from the meeting in the evening."

The nervous disorder sometimes assumed other grotesque forms besides those that have been described. The subjects often rolled over and over on the ground or ran violently until worn out with the exercise. Hysterical laughter was another modification. Laughter was only occasional at first, but it grew until in 1803 the "holy laugh" was introduced systematically as a part of religious worship. Sometimes half the congregation, apparently in a devout spirit, would be heard laughing aloud in the midst of a lively sermon. As the excitement grew, infatuated subjects took to dancing and at last barking like dogs. McNemar says they actually assumed the posture of dogs, "moving about on all fours, growling, snapping the teeth and barking with such exactness of imitation as to deceive anyone whose eyes were not directed to the spot." Not only the poorer classes were thus affected, but even persons of the highest rank in society.

It is rather remarkable that notwithstanding the intensity and duration of this nervous disorder, no cases were recorded from which permanent insanity resulted. As to the nature of the affection, it was undoubtedly in the majority of cases due to the overwrought nervous systems resulting from prolonged religious excitement. The convulsions once started in the congregation spread quickly throughout it until all the fit subjects were convulsed. Repetition greatly increased the proneness to the disorder, which was encouraged by the masses on the supposition

that it was a true religious exercise. As already stated, the epidemic was rather widespread in its range. It continued to reappear for several years, and involved a district of country extending from Ohio to the mountains of Tennessee, and even into the old settlements of the Carolinas. Lorenzo Dow relates that at a religious meeting in the courthouse at Knoxville, when the Governor of Tennessee was present, he saw 150 people jerking at one time, but at other places the frenzy reached a greater height, and it is recorded that at a religious meeting in Kentucky not less than 3,000 persons fell to the ground in convulsions. These so-called "epidemic convulsions" eventually died out in a few years.

It will be seen that in all the epidemics thus far cited religious enthusiasm seemed to be a large determining factor. In this connection I might quote a few lines from an excellent article on "Fanaticism in the United States," by James M. Buckley, LL. D., the author of "Faith Healing, Christian Science and Kindred Phenomena," which appeared in the *Century Magazine* for December, 1903.

Under the heading of "Determining Causes of Fanaticism" he says, "the determining causes of fanaticism are as numerous as objects of thought or action. Granted a predisposition, if there be no sufficient counteracting influence, any topic may develop it. But that which would excite it in one person might not affect another, and what might affect a man at one period might

have little or no effect on him at a later time. In purely personal, social relations there is no more fanaticism than elsewhere; but usually it does not become epidemic except in cases of large families of races. At the stage which human nature has reached the social relations furnish more exciting objects of desire than others. Love and infatuation may react in the wildest fanaticism, and frequently it may be distinguished from simple hatred, envy or jealousy. In certain parts of Kentucky the fatal feuds, which from time to time shock the nation, are a compound of fanaticism and other elements. Everywhere only exceptional persons are free from the possibility of being unreasonably agitated at the mention of some name or act. Hence those, who arrange a banquet or reception, have always to consider what subjects must be tabooed, and what guests placed near one another.

"The crop of religious fanatics is perennial, and unless a perpetual miracle should interrupt the operation of common causes, may be expected to appear so long as human nature remains what it is. Next in frequency and for similar causes government and its machinery—civil, military and naval—form centres of fanaticism. In religion and politics it is always liable to become epidemic.

"A hobby is often, if not always, a cause of fanaticism. It may be merely a relief avocation."