THE WARFARE OF SCIENCE WITH THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM MIRACLES TO MEDICINE.

I. THE EARLY AND SACRED THEORIES OF DISEASE.

NOTHING in the evolution of human thought appears more inevitable than the idea of supernatural intervention in producing and curing disease. The causes of disease are so intricate that they are reached only after ages of scientific labour. In those periods when man sees everywhere miracle and nowhere law,—when he attributes all things which he can not understand to a will like his own,—he naturally ascribes his diseases either to the wrath of a good being or to the malice of an evil being.

This idea underlies the connection of the priestly class with the healing art: a connection of which we have survivals among rude tribes in all parts of the world, and which is seen in nearly every ancient civilization—especially in the powers over disease claimed in Egypt by the priests of Osiris and Isis, in Assyria by the priests of Gibil, in Greece by the priests of Æsculapius, and in Judea by the priests and prophets of Jahveh.

In Egypt there is evidence, reaching back to a very early period, that the sick were often regarded as afflicted or possessed by demons; the same belief comes constantly before us in the great religions of India and China; and, as regards Chaldea, the Assyrian tablets recovered in recent years, while revealing the source of so many myths and legends transmitted to the modern world through the book of Gene-

sis, show especially this idea of the healing of diseases by the casting out of devils. A similar theory was elaborated in Persia. Naturally, then, the Old Testament, so precious in showing the evolution of religious and moral truth among men, attributes such diseases as the leprosy of Miriam and Uzziah, the boils of Job, the dysentery of Jehoram, the withered hand of Jeroboam, the fatal illness of Asa, and many other ills, to the wrath of God or the malice of Satan; while, in the New Testament, such examples as the woman "bound by Satan," the rebuke of the fever, the casting out of the devil which was dumb, the healing of the person whom "the devil ofttimes casteth into the fire"—of which case one of the greatest modern physicians remarks that never was there a truer description of epilepsy—and various other episodes, show this same inevitable mode of thought as a refracting medium through which the teachings and doings of the Great Physician were revealed to future generations.

In Greece, though this idea of an occult evil agency in producing bodily ills appeared at an early period, there also came the first beginnings, so far as we know, of a really scientific theory of medicine. Five hundred years before Christ, in the bloom period of thought—the period of Æschylus, Phidias, Pericles, Socrates, and Plato—appeared Hippocrates, one of the greatest names in history. Quietly but thoroughly he broke away from the old tradition, developed scientific thought, and laid the foundations of medical science upon experience, observation, and reason so deeply and broadly that his teaching remains to this hour among the most precious possessions of our race.

His thought was passed on to the School of Alexandria, and there medical science was developed yet further, especially by such men as Herophilus and Erasistratus. Under their lead studies in human anatomy began by dissection; the old prejudice which had weighed so long upon science, preventing that method of anatomical investigation without which there can be no real results, was cast aside apparently forever.*

* For extended statements regarding medicine in Egypt, Judea, and Eastern nations generally, see Sprengel, *Histoire de la Médecine*, and Haeser; and for

But with the coming in of Christianity a great new chain of events was set in motion which modified this development most profoundly. The influence of Christianity on the healing art was twofold: there was first a blessed impulse—the thought, aspiration, example, ideals, and spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. This spirit, then poured into the world, flowed down through the ages, promoting self-sacrifice for the sick and wretched. Through all those succeeding centuries, even through the rudest, hospitals and infirmaries sprang up along this blessed stream. Of these were the Eastern establishments for the cure of the sick at the earliest Christian periods, the Infirmary of Monte Cassino and the Hôtel-Dieu at Lyons in the sixth century, the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris in the seventh, and the myriad refuges for the sick and suffering which sprang up in every part of Europe during the following centuries. Vitalized by this stream, all mediæval growths of mercy bloomed luxuriantly. To say nothing of those at an earlier period, we have in the time of the Crusades great charitable organizations like the Order of

more succinct accounts, Baas, *Geschichte der Medicin*, pp. 15–29; also Isensee; also Frédault, *Histoire de la Médecine*, chap. i. For the effort in Egyptian medicine to deal with demons and witches, see Heinrich Brugsch, *Die Aegyptologie*, Leipsic, 1891, p. 77; and for references to the *Papyrus Ebers*, etc., pp. 155, 407, and following. For fear of dissection and prejudices against it in Egypt, like those in mediæval Europe, see Maspero and Sayce, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 216. For the derivation of priestly medicine in Egypt, see Baas, pp. 16, 22. For the fame of Egyptian medicine at Rome, see Sharpe, *History of Egypt*, vol. ii, pp. 151, 184. For Assyria, see especially George Smith in Delitzsch's German translation, p. 34, and F. Delitzsch's appendix, p. 27. On the cheapness and commonness of miracles of healing in antiquity, see Sharpe, quoting St. Jerome, vol. ii, pp. 276, 277. As to the influence of Chaldean ideas of magic and disease on neighbouring nations, see Maspero and Sayce, as above, pp. 782, 783. As to the freedom of ancient Greece from the idea of demoniacal intervention in disease, see Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i, p. 404 and note. But, on the other hand, see reference in Homer to diseases caused by a "demon." For the evolution of medicine before and after Hippocrates, see Sprengel. For a good summing up of the work of Hippocrates, see Baas, p. 201. For the necessary passage of medicine in its early stages under priestly control, see Cabanis, *The Revolution of Medical Science*, London, 1806, chap. ii. On Jewish ideas regarding demons, and their relation to sickness, see Toy, *Judaism and Christianity*, Boston, 1891, pp. 168 *et seq*. For avoidance of dissections of human subjects even by Galen and his disciples, see Maurice Albert, *Les Médecins Grecs à Rome*, Paris, 1894, chap. xi. For Herophilus, Erasistratus, and the School of Alexandria, see Sprengel, vol. i, pp. 433, 434 *et seq*.

St. John of Jerusalem, and thenceforward every means of bringing the spirit of Jesus to help afflicted humanity. So, too, through all those ages we have a succession of men and women devoting themselves to works of mercy, culminating during modern times in saints like Vincent de Paul, Francke, Howard, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, and Muhlenberg.

But while this vast influence, poured forth from the heart of the Founder of Christianity, streamed through century after century, inspiring every development of mercy, there came from those who organized the Church which bears his name, and from those who afterward developed and directed it, another stream of influence—a theology drawn partly from prehistoric conceptions of unseen powers, partly from ideas developed in the earliest historic nations, but especially from the letter of the Hebrew and Christian sacred books.

The theology developed out of our sacred literature in relation to the cure of disease was mainly twofold: first, there was a new and strong evolution of the old idea that physical disease is produced by the wrath of God or the malice of Satan, or by a combination of both, which theology was especially called in to explain; secondly, there were evolved theories of miraculous methods of cure, based upon modes of appeasing the Divine anger, or of thwarting Satanic malice.

Along both these streams of influence, one arising in the life of Jesus, and the other in the reasonings of theologians, legends of miracles grew luxuriantly. It would be utterly unphilosophical to attribute these as a whole to conscious fraud. Whatever part priestcraft may have taken afterward in sundry discreditable developments of them, the mass of miraculous legends, century after century, grew up mainly in good faith, and as naturally as elms along water-courses or flowers upon the prairie.

II. GROWTH OF LEGENDS OF HEALING.—THE LIFE OF XAVIER AS A TYPICAL EXAMPLE.

Legends of miracles have thus grown about the lives of all great benefactors of humanity in early ages, and about saints and devotees. Throughout human history the lives of such personages, almost without exception, have been accompanied or followed by a literature in which legends of miraculous powers form a very important part—a part constantly increasing until a different mode of looking at nature and of weighing testimony causes miracles to disappear. While modern thought holds the testimony to the vast mass of such legends in all ages as worthless, it is very widely acknowledged that great and gifted beings who endow the earth with higher religious ideas, gaining the deepest hold upon the hearts and minds of multitudes, may at times exercise such influence upon those about them that the sick in mind or body are helped or healed.

We have within the modern period very many examples which enable us to study the evolution of legendary miracles. Out of these I will select but one, which is chosen because it is the life of one of the most noble and devoted men in the history of humanity, one whose biography is before the world with its most minute details—in his own letters, in the letters of his associates, in contemporary histories, and in a multitude of biographies: this man is St. Francis Xavier. From these sources I draw the facts now to be given, but none of them are of Protestant origin; every source from which I shall draw is Catholic and Roman, and published under the sanction of the Church.

Born a Spanish noble, Xavier at an early age cast aside all ordinary aims, devoted himself to study, was rapidly advanced to a professorship at Paris, and in this position was rapidly winning a commanding influence, when he came under the sway of another Spaniard even greater, though less brilliantly endowed, than himself—Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus. The result was that the young professor sacrificed the brilliant career on which he had entered at the French capital, went to the far East as a simple

missionary, and there devoted his remaining years to redeeming the lowest and most wretched of our race.

Among the various tribes, first in lower India and afterward in Japan, he wrought untiringly—toiling through village after village, collecting the natives by the sound of a hand-bell, trying to teach them the simplest Christian formulas; and thus he brought myriads of them to a nominal confession of the Christian faith. After twelve years of such efforts, seeking new conquests for religion, he sacrificed his life on the desert island of San Chan.

During his career as a missionary he wrote great numbers of letters, which were preserved and have since been published; and these, with the letters of his contemporaries, exhibit clearly all the features of his life. His own writings are very minute, and enable us to follow him fully. No account of a miracle wrought by him appears either in his own letters or in any contemporary document.* At the outside, but two or three things occurred in his whole life, as exhibited so fully by himself and his contemporaries, for which the most earnest devotee could claim anything like Divine interposition; and these are such as may be read in the letters of very many fervent missionaries, Protestant as well as Catholic. For example, in the beginning of his career, during a journey in Europe with an ambassador, one of the servants in fording a stream got into deep water and was in danger of drowning. Xavier tells us that the ambassador prayed very earnestly, and that the man finally struggled out of the stream. But within sixty years after his death, at his canonization, and by various biographers, this had been magnified into a miracle, and appears in the various histories dressed out in glowing colours. Xavier tells us that the ambassador prayed for the safety of the young man; but his biographers tell us that it was Xavier who prayed, and finally, by the later writers, Xavier is repre-

* This statement was denied with much explosive emphasis by a writer in the *Catholic World* for September and October, 1891, but he brought no *fact* to support this denial. I may perhaps be allowed to remind the reverend writer that since the days of Pascal, whose eminence in the Church he will hardly dispute, the bare assertion even of a Jesuit father against established facts needs some support other than mere scurrility.

sented as lifting horse and rider out of the stream by a clearly supernatural act.

Still another claim to miracle is based upon his arriving at Lisbon and finding his great colleague, Simon Rodriguez, ill of fever. Xavier informs us in a very simple way that Rodriguez was so overjoyed to see him that the fever did not return. This is entirely similar to the cure which Martin Luther wrought upon Melanchthon. Melanchthon had broken down and was supposed to be dying, when his joy at the long-delayed visit of Luther brought him to his feet again, after which he lived for many years.

Again, it is related that Xavier, finding a poor native woman very ill, baptized her, saying over her the prayers of the Church, and she recovered.

Two or three occurrences like these form the whole basis for the miraculous account, so far as Xavier's own writings are concerned.

Of miracles in the ordinary sense of the word there is in these letters of his no mention. Though he writes of his doings with especial detail, taking evident pains to note everything which he thought a sign of Divine encouragement, he says nothing of his performing miracles, and evidently knows nothing of them. This is clearly not due to his unwillingness to make known any token of Divine favour. As we have seen, he is very prompt to report anything which may be considered an answer to prayer or an evidence of the power of religious means to improve the bodily or spiritual health of those to whom he was sent.

Nor do the letters of his associates show knowledge of any miracles wrought by him. His brother missionaries, who were in constant and loyal fellowship with him, make no allusions to them in their communications with each other or with their brethren in Europe.

Of this fact we have many striking evidences. Various collections of letters from the Jesuit missionaries in India and the East generally, during the years of Xavier's activity, were published, and in not one of these letters written during Xavier's lifetime appears any account of a miracle wrought by him. As typical of these collections we may take perhaps the most noted of all, that which was pub-

lished about twenty years after Xavier's death by a Jesuit father, Emanuel Acosta.

The letters given in it were written by Xavier and his associates not only from Goa, which was the focus of all missionary effort and the centre of all knowledge regarding their work in the East, but from all other important points in the great field. The first of them were written during the saint's lifetime, but, though filled with every sort of detail regarding missionary life and work, they say nothing regarding any miracles by Xavier.

The same is true of various other similar collections published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In not one of them does any mention of a miracle by Xavier appear in a letter from India or the East contemporary with him.

This silence regarding his miracles was clearly not due to any "evil heart of unbelief." On the contrary, these good missionary fathers were prompt to record the slightest occurrence which they thought evidence of the Divine favour: it is indeed touching to see how eagerly they grasp at the most trivial things which could be thus construed.

Their ample faith was fully shown. One of them, in Acosta's collection, sends a report that an illuminated cross had been recently seen in the heavens; another, that devils had been cast out of the natives by the use of holy water; another, that various cases of disease had been helped and even healed by baptism; and sundry others sent reports that the blind and dumb had been restored, and that even lepers had been cleansed by the proper use of the rites of the Church; but to Xavier no miracles are imputed by his associates during his life or during several years after his death.

On the contrary, we find his own statements as to his personal limitations, and the difficulties arising from them, fully confirmed by his brother workers. It is interesting, for example, in view of the claim afterward made that the saint was divinely endowed for his mission with the "gift of tongues," to note in these letters confirmation of Xavier's own statement utterly disproving the existence of any such Divine gift, and detailing the difficulties which he encountered from his want of knowing various languages, and the

hard labour which he underwent in learning the elements of the Japanese tongue.

Until about ten years after Xavier's death, then, as Emanuel Acosta's publication shows, the letters of the missionaries continued without any indication of miracles performed by the saint. Though, as we shall see presently, abundant legends had already begun to grow elsewhere, not one word regarding these miracles came as yet from the country which, according to later accounts accepted and sanctioned by the Church, was at this very period filled with miracles; not the slightest indication of them from the men who were supposed to be in the very thick of these miraculous manifestations.

But this negative evidence is by no means all. There is also positive evidence—direct testimony from the Jesuit order itself—that Xavier wrought no miracles.

For not only did neither Xavier nor his co-workers know anything of the mighty works afterward attributed to him, but the highest contemporary authority on the whole subject, a man in the closest correspondence with those who knew most about the saint, a member of the Society of Jesus in the highest standing and one of its accepted historians, not only expressly tells us that Xavier wrought no miracles, but gives the reasons why he wrought none.

This man was Joseph Acosta, a provincial of the Jesuit order, its visitor in Aragon, superior at Valladolid, and finally rector of the University of Salamanca. In 1571, nineteen years after Xavier's death, Acosta devoted himself to writing a work mainly concerning the conversion of the Indies, and in this he refers especially and with the greatest reverence to Xavier, holding him up as an ideal and his work as an example.

But on the same page with this tribute to the great missionary Acosta goes on to discuss the reasons why progress in the world's conversion is not so rapid as in the early apostolic times, and says that an especial cause why apostolic preaching could no longer produce apostolic results "lies in the missionaries themselves, because there is now no power of working miracles."

He then asks, "Why should our age be so completely

destitute of them?" This question he answers at great length, and one of his main contentions is that in early apostolic times illiterate men had to convert the learned of the world, whereas in modern times the case is reversed, learned men being sent to convert the illiterate; and hence that "in the early times miracles were necessary, but in our time they are not."

This statement and argument refer, as we have seen, directly to Xavier by name, and to the period covered by his activity and that of the other great missionaries of his time. That the Jesuit order and the Church at large thought this work of Acosta trustworthy is proved by the fact that it was published at Salamanca a few years after it was written, and republished afterward with ecclesiastical sanction in France.*

* The work of Joseph Acosta is in the Cornell University Library, its title being as follows: *De Natura Novi Orbis libri duo et De Promulgatione Evangelii apud Barbaros, sive De Procuranda Indorum Salute, libri sex, autore Josepho Acosta, presbytero Societatis Jesu. I. H. S. Salmanticæ, apud Guillelmum Foquel, MDLXXXIX.* For the passages cited directly contradicting the working of miracles by Xavier and his associates, see lib. ii, cap. ix, of which the title runs, *Cur Miracula in Conversione gentium non fiant nunc, ut olim, a Christi prædicatoribus*, especially pp. 242–245; also lib. ii, cap. viii, pp. 237 *et seq.* For a passage which shows that Xavier was not then at all credited with "the miraculous gift of tongues," see lib. i, cap. vii, p. 173. Since writing the above, my attention has been called to the alleged miraculous preservation of Xavier's body claimed in sundry letters contemporary with its disinterment at San Chan and reinterment at Goa. There is no reason why this preservation need in itself be doubted, and no reason why it should be counted miraculous. Such exceptional preservation of bodies has been common enough in all ages, and, alas for the claims of the Church, quite as common of pagans or Protestants as of good Catholics. One of the most famous cases is that of the fair Roman maiden, Julia, daughter of Claudius, over whose exhumation at Rome, in 1485, such ado was made by the sceptical scholars of the Renaissance. Contemporary observers tell us enthusiastically that she was very beautiful, perfectly preserved, "the bloom of youth still upon her cheeks," and exhaling a "sweet odour"; but this enthusiasm was so little to the taste of Pope Innocent VIII that he had her reburied secretly by night. Only the other day, in June of the year 1895, there was unearthed at Stade, in Hanover, the "perfectly preserved" body of a soldier of the eighth century. So, too, I might mention the bodies preserved at the church of St. Thomas at Strasburg, beneath the Cathedral of Bremen, and elsewhere during hundreds of years past; also the cases of "adipoceration" in various American cemeteries, which never grow less wonderful by repetition from mouth to mouth and in the public prints. But, while such preservation is not incredible nor even strange, there is much reason why precisely in the case of a saint like St. Francis Xavier the evidence for it should be