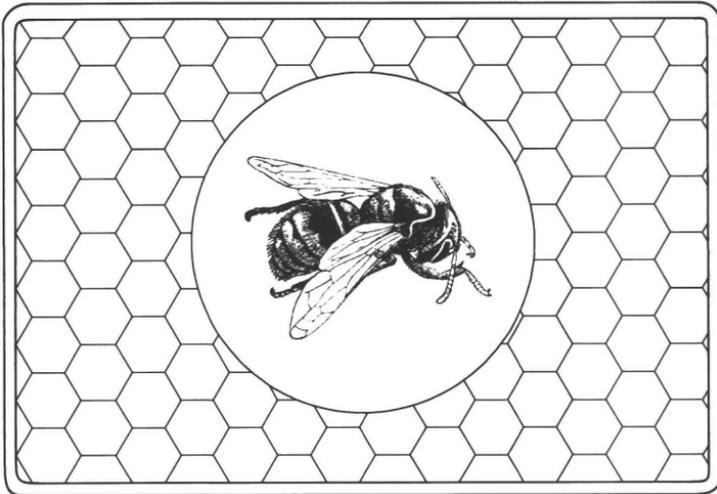


CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
THE MUSEUM OF JURASSIC TECHNOLOGY

Tell the Bees...

BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE &
HYPERSYMBOLIC COGNITION



SUPPLEMENT TO A CHAIN OF FLOWERS

Vol V, No.7

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&
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Sarah Simons
Keeper of the Foundation Collections

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One thing which clearly takes place in the air is an object of wonder to all nations: the death-dealing disturbance called thunder. By it not only are all nations terrified, but fear weighs heavily also upon irrational creatures...is your science bold enough to give the cause and origin of thunder, or is it unable to solve this most difficult problem, for in the face of thunder, the philosophers are no braver than the rest.

Questiones Naturales, ed. M. Müller
Beiträge zur Geschichte der
Philosophie des Mittelalters, 1934.

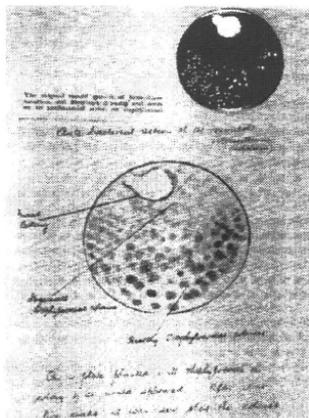


Interior of the Dadant queening room Courtesy Dadant & Sons

Belief, Knowledge & Hypersymbolic Cognition

In 1929, Alexander Fleming, a soft spoken and unassuming bacteriologist from Lochfield, Scotland made the following observations concerning his laboratory work of the previous year. Sensing the importance of the moment, his friend, Edwin Burns, recorded Fleming's observation as follows:

"While working with staphylococcus variants a number of culture plates were set aside on the laboratory bench and examined from time to time. In the examinations these plates were necessarily exposed to the air and they became contaminated with various micro-organisms. It was noticed that around a large colony of a contaminating mould, the staphylococcus colonies became transparent and were obviously undergoing lysis. Subcultures of this mould were made and experiments conducted with a view to ascertaining something of the properties of the bacteriolytic substance, which evidently had been formed in the mold culture and which had diffused into the surrounding medium. It was found that the broth in which the mold had been grown, like the mold broth remedies commonly applied to infections by the country people, had acquired marked inhibitory, bactericidal, and bacteriolytic properties to many of the more common pathogenic bacteria."



In the "discovery" and development of his extraordinary fungal cure, Fleming was drawing on countless years of collective experience which had been handed down as a part of oral tradition—collective knowledge commonly known as vulgar remedies. Broths made from molds grown on

stale bread and rotting fruit had been applied to wounds and other infections with beneficial results for centuries by many people from various cultures. Fleming's "discovery," he readily acknowledged, drew heavily on this history of vulgar remedies.

In less than ten years the world was to be, for the second time in three decades, plunged into the abyss of massive war—a war which was to be possibly the most destructive the world had ever seen. However, in

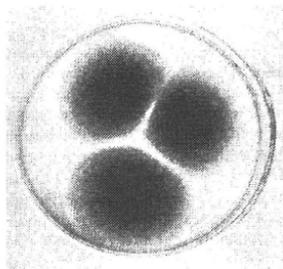


one aspect, this war was to be different from all those that had preceded it. In all previous wars, more lives were lost to infections which set in following trauma than to trauma itself. By the end of the Second World War, those wounded on the battle fields of Europe, Africa, and the Pacific had the extraordinary advantage of being treated with the refined filtrates of Alexander Fleming's newly-developed fungal cure.

Between 1943 and 1945, it has been estimated that as many as 11,000 lives were saved by Fleming's fungal broth, which was, of course, *Penicillium notatum* and *Penicillium chrysogenum*, and the filtrates Fleming developed, clearly, the antibiotic compound we know today as penicillin, with its enchanted beta-lactam molecular ring.

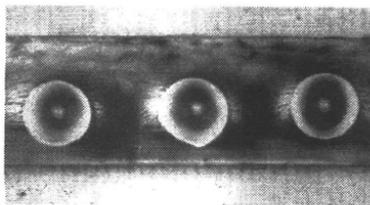
Fleming's fungal cure was not his first application of vulgar remedy in his search to find agents capable of lysing, or destroying, bacteria. Fleming was familiar with the vulgar remedy of spitting on a wound or cut or, similarly, applying tears to an area of infection. And in 1921, following these vulgar leads, Fleming identified and isolated lysozyme, an enzyme found in tears and saliva that exhibits antibiotic activity.

Alexander Fleming was, of course, not alone in the application of common or vulgar knowledge for the treatment of infection and disease. Digitalis, the omnipresent cardiological stimulant used as a medication for a wide variety of heart disorders, is derived from a plant of the figwort family known as purple foxglove or *Digitalis purpurea*, and had been



used for centuries as a vulgar remedy for dropsy by many peoples in many cultures before it was “discovered” by William Withering, an 18th century physician in Staffordshire, England, on a tip from a “wise woman” from Shropshire.

The list of pharmaceutical advances derived from folk remedies is extensive. Aspirin, or acetylsalicylic acid, (our ever-present cure for the pains of day-to-day life) was in common use two thousand years ago in the form of a juice made from the bark of willow. *Belladonna*, *Madagascar Periwinkle*, and *Ipecac*, to name just a few, are all vulgar remedies that have been recognized and developed by modern pharmacology.



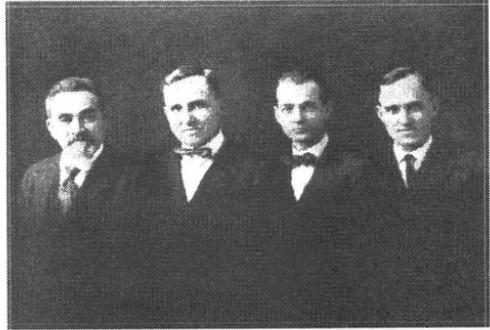
The list goes on and on, and it is commonly thought that many other potential pharmaceutical advances are waiting to be discovered in the extraordinary diversity of botanical and chemical compounds known to the practitioners of folk remedies by the various peoples and various ecologies of the earth. Yet, ironically, as the appreciation of vulgar remedies by the contemporary pharmaceutical establishment has increased, the practitioners of these remedies, and the ecosystems from which they sprang, have proportionally disappeared, and with them the knowledge of thousands of years of collective experience. It has been estimated that many hundreds of potentially invaluable cures have been lost over the past two centuries as contemporary scientifically-based pharmacology has gained ascendancy.

In the early years of the development of modern medical and pharmaceutical practice, vulgar remedies were viewed with disdain. In the 18th and 19th century's medical academies of Vienna, Leipzig, Budapest, and Paris, surgical exhumation and repair of diseased or traumatically damaged tissue was the order of the day. The extraordinary body of knowledge of anatomy and physiology assembled by the physicians and surgeons of the academies during these centuries promised a future of increasingly sophisticated and advanced medical and surgical practice. Folk remedies were viewed as “baneful influences,” irrational relics from the past to be “purged.”

In the early years of the 20th century, however, there began a movement which flourished under the banner of *The Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*. Among individuals from various disciplines, it began to be

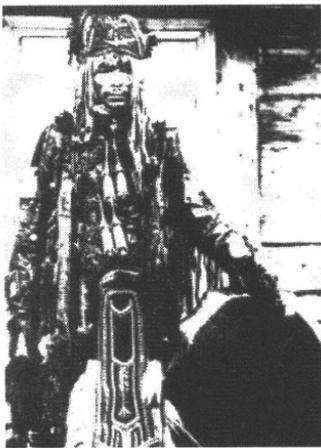
clear that the powerful forces of rationality, in their admirable but relentless quest for a reasonable and enlightened future, were leaving a swath of decimation in the vast yet often fragile body of what was by then known as “vulgar knowledge.”

Although widespread, the movement, as a whole, drew essential inspiration from the writings of Samuel Osprey, who, though born in Scotland, settled in Florida in the decade of the teens where he founded the *Society for the Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*. The work of the society continued through the 20th



Society for the Restitution of Decayed Intelligence

century, and has had far-reaching effects in many ways in many areas of endeavor. We have already noted the extraordinary advances in the field of medicine which resulted from the restitution of decayed intelligence, but many other fields of endeavor have also been strongly affected. In literature, for example, the early years of this century saw such giants as William Butler Yeats and James Joyce, whose writings were profoundly affected by common knowledge. In the musical world, Charles Ives and Aaron Copland, to name just two, drew important inspiration from the music of the common man.



In a similar way, this renaissance of interest in the application of the vast body of vulgar or common knowledge has profoundly affected the fields of ontology and epistemology—the various studies of our methods of comprehending our world—through a renewed interest in, and investigation of, the beliefs and practices often unceremoniously dismissed as “superstition.”

Just as the investigations of various discarded vulgar remedies have led to many important pharmacological discoveries, the investigation of cast-off “superstitions”, or vulgar knowledge, often leads to important

advances in the ways in which we understand the mechanisms of the world around us—ontological understandings. This field of endeavor, however, has been less well developed and is, in fact, only now beginning to be appreciated for the vast, if sometimes overwhelming, vista it presents.

Like the period of the flowering of folk remedies into modern pharmaceuticals, there has been building for some time now an interest in what has come to be called “superstition”—not just from a folkloric perspective, but from a perspective of recognition of the simple efficacy of the beliefs and practices in question and a corresponding wave of interest in the mechanisms by which these often seemingly nonsensical practices work.

“The efficacy of the practice of certain “superstitious” beliefs is not the question. Our efforts now should be in the direction of by what mechanisms, with which subjects, and under what conditions are the practices of these beliefs potent and, contrariwise, by what mechanisms, with which subjects and under what conditions are the practices of these beliefs impotent.”

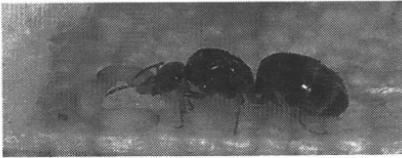
The vista of this field is vast and can be overwhelming. It was, in fact, only toward the end of the last century that this enormous body of vulgar knowledge or traditional belief even came to be gathered (and, unfortunately, dismissed) under the rubric “superstition.” Prior to that time, vulgar knowledge was contiguous with all other knowledge and not ghettoized, so to speak, under the spurious classification of “superstition.”

Many of these beliefs are and have been practiced in surprisingly similar forms, by people separated by hundreds or thousands of miles, and often hundreds or thousands of years. It may be best, in order not to be set hopelessly adrift in this seemingly endless sea of complex and interrelated beliefs, to now take a brief look at a number of them.

Beliefs

Ants' Eggs as an Antidote to Love:

J. F. M. Hoeniger suggests that the explanation for the practice of administering ants' eggs to one afflicted with (and desiring to fall out of)



love lies in the chemical composition of ants' eggs or, more precisely, ant pupae. The sack or membranous tissue which encloses the pupae contains measurable quantities of

the naloxone hydrochloride which exhibits marked anendorfic (endorfin-inhibiting) qualities by effectively blocking the opioid receptor sites in the brain without producing the agonistic response (cell excitation) which typically results from the endorfin bond with the receptor sites produced in the "love" or other endorfin producing states.

A Boy Beaten with an Elder Stick

The growth of a boy beaten with an elder stick will be stunted or checked. Any young animal struck by a willow rod (withy-stick, sally-twig) will cease to grow afterward and may in fact diminish in size. To cure erysipelas (St. Anthony's fire), cut a piece of elder between two knots on which the "sun has never shone" and hang it about the patient's neck. Elder wood is also a cure for epilepsy (falling sickness) or at least a preventive.

"Cut a twigo felder into nine parts, and string the pieces as a necklace tied round the neck of a sufferer from falling sickness and the disease will be cured."

It is prudent to bury the clippings of hair and the parings of nails under an elder bush to prevent harm by contagion to the person from whom the clippings had been taken.

Breaking Eggshells

After eating boiled eggs, the shells should be broken to prevent those with ill-will from drawing or pricking the name of the person having eaten the egg on the unbroken shell, thus causing difficulty.

"Eggshells should be broken after boiled eggs have been eaten or uncanny forces will go to sea in them, and sink good ships."

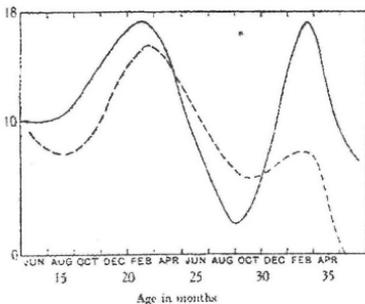
Bridegroom's Lace

One of a bridegroom's shoes (left) should be left untied during the marriage ceremony *"to prevent on the bridal night his being deprived of the power of loosening the virgin zone."*



Child Weaning and the Migration of the Birds

A child weaned at the time that birds migrate from the country will be restless and changeable in after life. Edison Swan, in *The Human Condition*, suggested that the wide-spread existence of this belief is likely connected to the fact that infants are most frequently weaned between the ninth and twelfth month. These months also witness the development of the infant's cyclical clock, or internal 24 - 25 hour cycle. According to Swan's assertion, infants born in the winter months (December through February) come of weaning age in the autumn (September through



November)—the period of the migration of birds. The infant's biological clock, having recently become sensitized to the daily cycles of daylight and darkness, experiences the seasonal waning of daylight hours as an acute loss. Swan asserts that to wean the child during this period when the

sense of loss is already present can create long-enduring conditions of melancholia and/or listlessness.

Child's Caul (Silly Hood)

A caul (or silly hood) is the name given to a membrane covering the



head of some children at birth. Its medical definition is the amnios, one of the three teguments, or membranaceous films, which cover the child in utero. A child born with a caul has, in later life, the gift of second sight. In addition, those born with a caul are exempt from the miseries and calamities of humanity extending even to invulnerability, provided they are always

careful to carry the membrane with them.

Crying Back or "Wishing" the Dying

The dying are held back from their repose by the love that will not give them up. A body cannot get their time over with ease to themselves if there is a person in the room who will not give them up. It will be better for all such who cannot bring themselves to part with those they love to withdraw from the room so that death may enter and claim his rights. If a person is withheld from dying by being cried or wished back, the person called back will "die hard" and be deprived of one or more faculties as a punishment to the parent or other relation who would not acquiesce in the Divine will.



"I said to Mrs. Brennen, 'Poor little Hester lingered a long time. I thought when I saw her that she must have died the same day, but she lingered on.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Brennen, 'It was a great shame o' fher mother. Hester wanted to die and she would not let her die; she couldn't part with her. There she stood, fetting over her, and couldn't give her up and so we said to her she'll never die till you give her up and then she gave her up and she died quite peace fillly.'"

Cuts and Polished Weapons

To heal a cut or a wound made by an instrument, clean and polish the instrument, and the wound will heal cleanly.

"The authors place on record a reaper, who having cut himself with a scythe, explained that no attention was necessary, as he was taking care to keep the weapon bright, and was oiling it regularly, so that his wound would not fester."

Difficulty in Childbirth

Difficult childbirth can be aided by hanging on the sufferer's bed the clothing of a man whose wife is reputed to have been unfaithful to him.

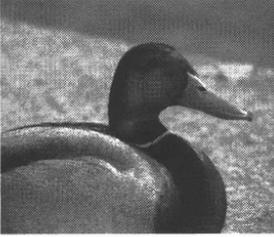
Dog-Rose Gall

"The dog-rose, that pretty libertine of the hedges... is unlucky. Never form any plan while sitting near one, for it will never answer."

On the wild dog-rose there is often a moss-like excrescence which, if placed under the pillow of a person who cannot sleep, will perfectly restore him or her.

"Gather a rose on Midsummer Eve, and carry it home, walking backward, and not speaking a word care fully preserve it in clean white paper without looking. If the paper is then opened on the following Christmas Day, the rose will be as fresh as when gathered and if placed in her bosom, the young man to whom she is to be married will come and snatch it away."

Duck's Breath



Children afflicted with thrush and other fungous mouth or throat disorders can be cured by placing the bill of a duck or goose in the mouth of the afflicted child for an extended period of time. The cold breath of the fowl will be inhaled by the child and the complaint will disappear.

Effects of the Hare on the Lips of the Unborn

If a hare crosses the path of a woman enceinte, she must instantly stoop down and tear her shift or dress lest her child have a hare or "ar-shotten" lip.

"Ye sholde not gyve to yonge maydens to ete the heed o fa hare... and in especyall to them that be with chylde, fr certaynly the y chyl-dren might have clouen lyppes." "I fa Woman with chylde haue her smocke, theat she weares, slyt at the neather ende or skyrt therre o f.the ..chylde.. shal be sa f fom hauing a cloven or hare lyppes. Yea though she chaunce to meete suddenly a Hare, or though a hare doth leape ouer her, or suddenly touch her. Which ha ppens to man y Chyldren by such meanes."



Fasting Spittle

Spitting is practiced nearly universally as an apotropaic (evil averting) charm or conversely in order to bring favor and/or fortune. All varieties of things can be spat upon to good end from infants at the moment of birth to "windfall" money to wounds and unwanted blemishes and growths. The spittle of a person who has fasted for some time (known as fasting spittle) is thought to be more efficacious in these matters than that of one who has recently eaten. Elija Taylor, in his widely read book

Wreath o fRoses, suggests that a mother should lick her infant's birthmark all over every morning, beginning as soon as possible after birth and continuing until the blemish is gone. Spitting as an apotropaic act dates back thousands of years and is so deeply ingrained that many people, unfamiliar with the vulgar qualities of spitting, nonetheless confess to spitting or having an urge to spit when faced with situations that threaten contagion or infection. It is the custom of many priests at a christening to moisten with spittle the nostrils and ears of the child, before touching it with holy water on the forehead.

"The theory of the Canonists behind this superstition - for it was nothing else but superstition - was expressed as follows: Let the nostrils and the ears be touched with spittle, that the nostrils may be opened to receive the odor o fGod and the ears to hear His mandates."

Glass Rod of Health

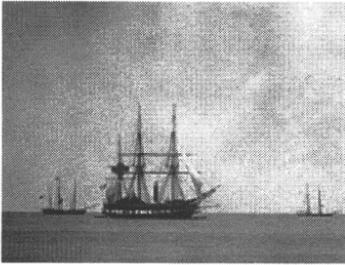
A rod of glass suspended in a house and wiped clean every morning will draw or gather all diseases and contagious maladies round itself thereby keeping the inhabitants free from disease. Similarly, an onion, cut in half and exposed to the air will protect those in the house from contagious disorders.

"...while the end result o freducing the population o fairborne microbes is similar, the operative element in the two practices remains markedly different. While the exposed onion draws microbes to itsel fin much the same way that an ycut fruit or vegetable would, the dailywi pin g o fthe glass rod strips electrons from the rod creating a static charge which draws the airborne microbes to it in much the same way that the static generator draws the bits o fpa per to it when charged. It should be remarked, however, that both forms of practice effect only bacterial infectious agents and have no apparent effect on viral agents."

Hair of the Dog

When a child is bitten by a dog, the bite is effectually cured by binding a few hairs from the dog over the wound.

Halcyon Eggs



The Kingfisher, (Halcyon, Laughing Jackass) is an alcedinoid bird having a straight, deeply cleft bill with smooth edges. The tail is commonly much shorter than the wings. Many species, such as those in North America, feed largely upon fish, which they obtain by diving, often to remarkably great depths.

"During the days when the halcyon (kingfisher) is hatching her eggs (halcyon days), the sea remains so smooth that all that venture upon it do so without incurring risk in storm or tempest."

Holding a Dying Creature

Holding a dying creature during childhood will leave the offender with trembling hands for life.

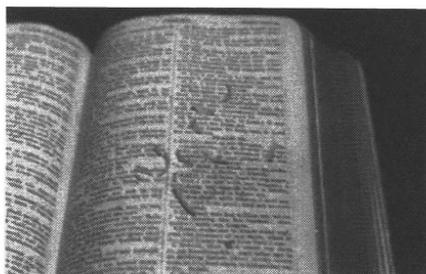
Infants, Children, and Clothing of the Opposite Sex

It is not uncommon to dress children, until the coming of age, in the clothes of the opposite sex as a means of protecting the child, especially boys in the clothes (petticoats) of girls.



"Be fore the birth I always had a boy's nightshirt and a girl's nightgown (quite) ready. I fit was a boy I put on a girl's nightgown and if it was a girl I put on a boy's night shirt. And this is the reason. In all cases the child would then be protected fom harm and what's more the boy, when he grew up would fascinate all girls, and a girl who had had a nightshirt put on her would have young men buzzin round her till she married."

Infant Nails and the Gift of Song



There is a disinclination to cut the nails of an infant before it is one year of age. Alternately, the mother should bite the nails when necessary to keep the baby from disfiguring itself or gloves or mittens should be worn by the infant until its first birthday. To

cut the nails before twelve months will cause the child to be a thief and nails pared on or after the first birthday should be cut over the Bible, thereby guaranteeing that the child will grow up honest and not "light-fingered." Nails and hair should never be cut on a Friday or Sunday and the nail parings should, in all cases, be buried. If the prescription above is followed for the first paring of a child's nail and the parings are buried under an ash tree, the child will possess a beautiful voice for song.

Lithium Carbonate

In the healing traditions of the peoples of the northern latitudes, it is common to find among the implements of the practitioners a small vial of a white, naturally-occurring salt used traditionally in the treatment of mania. This salt has been identified as a simple salt from the alkali metal group known as Lithium Carbonate (Li_2CO_3). In the 1970's this salt, which had been known possibly for thousands of years, was heralded as a remarkable and innovative form of treatment for manic depressive illness (bipolar disorder), severe depression, schizophrenia, various impulse control disorders, and a variety of other conditions including premenstrual syndrome and bulimia nervosa. Although the mechanism for this at once ancient and modern cure is not precisely understood, the most accepted current theory is that Lithium Carbonate works by blocking a specific enzyme known as inositol-1-phosphase within individual neurons, an inhibition that results in decreased cellular responses to neurotransmissions.

Mouse Cures

Among the oldest of beliefs, some of which date back sixty centuries to the Djoser Dynasty in Egypt, are the prescriptions known as mouse cures. Mice are caught and prepared in accordance with multiple recipes for a wide variety of complaints from whooping cough to chilblains. A few of the more common applications of mice are as follows:

Bed-wetting or general incontinence of urine can be controlled by eating mice on toast, fur and all.

“A flayne Mouse, or made in powder & drunk at one tyme, doeth perfectly helpe such as cannot holde o fkee pe their water: es pecially, i fit be used three da yes in this order. This is verie trye and often purued.”

Mouse Pie, when eaten with regularity, serves as a remedy for children who stammer.

“A mouse dissected and a pplied draweth out reeds, darts and other things that stick in the flesh. Mice bruised and reduced to the consistence of an acopon with old wine cause hairs on the e yebrows. Being eaten by children when roasted, they dry up the spittle. The water in which they have been boiled, helps the quinsey. The ashes of the skinne, applied with vinegar, help the pains of the head.”

Names of the Hare

The Names of the Hare in English is *der bat nomon nedar nemnen* (the animal that no one dare name). So powerful is the animal that people will not even say *hare*. They refer to it as “*Wil fed*,” “*Coney*,” or “*that hair y thing*.” But if one person is truly angry with another he will say “*Rabbits to you*.”

“Thou shall not eat any abominable thing. ... as the camel, and the hare and the cone y; fr the ychew the cud, but divide not the hoo f there fre the yare unclean unto you. ...ye shall not eat of their flesh nor touch their dead carcase.”

“Madam, will your ladyship have any of this Hare? ‘No, Madam,’ they say, ‘Tis melancholy Meat.’”

“On the last night of the month, we said our ‘Hares,’ and ‘Rabbits’ in the morning, and wish if we had not spoken between.”

It is prudent to secure well-being and fortune throughout the coming month to call “*Rabbits, Rabbits, Rabbits*” just before going to sleep on the last day of the month, and then “*Hares, Hares, Hares*” first thing in the morning. If said three times in rapid succession, fortune will prove to be kind to the caller throughout the month. If one chances to encounter a hare, it is wise to touch each shoulder with the forefinger and say “*Hare, hare, God send thee care.*”

Owls



Who looks into the nest of an owl will become morose and melancholy for the rest of life. The hooting of a churchyard owl is a positive sign that an unmarried girl of the town had surrendered her chastity.

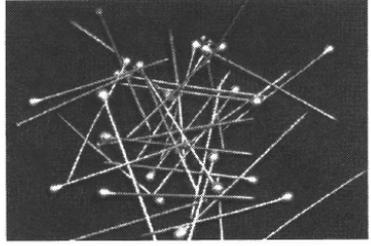
Pins and Needles

It is common practice, on leaving a funeral, to stick a pin in the gate post of the cemetery or burial ground through which the corpse had passed. Similarly, a pin or a small cluster of pins can be stuck in the doorway through which an injured person has passed. Undertakers often carry with them black pins.

“The undertaker promised to stick half-a-dozen black pins in the gate post of the meadow through which the funeral cortege passed. He tells me he himself did so, and thus the path was not made common.”

Pins can be understood to “pick-up” or acquire qualities from persons or objects with which they come in contact.

A dressmaker always keeps the pins she uses when making a wedding-dress, and gives them to her friends for use in picking out horses before betting in a horse-race.”



Or, similarly, pins employed on a corpse for any purpose are never used again, but are always deposited in the coffin and buried with the dead body. A variation of this practice is that often a small bowl is placed on the chest of the deceased in which those coming to “view the corpse” are allowed to place pins.

Pride

To tell the pride of a person, take a hair belonging to that person and pull it smartly between the nails of thumb and finger. The pride of the person is evidenced in accordance with the degree of curl apparent after that operation.

Salted Teeth

A tooth after extraction should be smothered in salt then burnt, for should it be found and gnawed by any animal, the child’s new tooth would be... like the animal’s that had bitten the old one.

“When a boy I remember being told... that the penalty for not burning an extracted tooth is to search for it in a pail of blood after death.”

Scissors at the Wedding Party

One wishing ill to a bridegroom, stands behind the happy man and, holding an open pair of scissors, calls his name. If the groom turns to

answer, the scissors are snapped shut, whereupon the bridegroom is rendered incapable of consummating the marriage.

Shared Milk and the Cure of Fever

To cure a fever, set a bowl of milk before a dog. When the dog has lapped some of the milk, the person ill of the fever drinks from the bowl. The process is repeated as many times as possible until the milk is exhausted, thereby transferring the virus, causing the fever to the animal. As the animal sickens, the human sufferer is cured. Happily, dogs are not susceptible to many strains of virus which infect humans, and the cure of the human can often be enacted without causing the animal to suffer.

Sheep and the Cure of Childhood Respiratory Affliction

A cure for any affliction of the respiratory organs (especially in children), is to carry the sufferer through a flock of sheep as they are let out of the fold in the morning. An equally effective treatment in less rural settings is to carry the similarly afflicted child through a gas works (also in the early morning, if possible).



Sheeted Mirrors

Mirrors should be sheeted or draped during thunder or lightening storms, and photographs should be turned to face the wall as well. Similarly, mirrors should be shrouded in the sick room or in the presence of death or dying. It is ill-advised to look through a mirror at dusk or twilight, and infants should never be allowed to see their reflections at any time of the day.

“They entice young virgins and boys by means of mirrors, and the reflections seen in fingernails, and lure them on in the belief that they love chastity, whereas they hate it.”

“My great aunt used to say that if any one looked too long in a mirror, they would see something they didn’t want to see.”

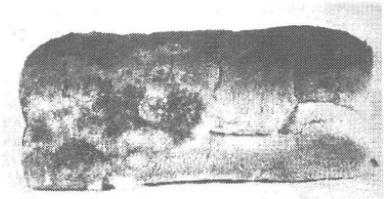
Shrikes, Plovers, and the Crucified Christ

Shrikes and plovers are known to contain the souls of those who assisted at the crucifixion; persons who hear the cries of these “Wandering Souls” are sure to meet mischance.

Sin Eating

The sins of a person recently deceased can be transferred to another person (willing to have them) through the consumption of bread and ale that has passed over the deceased.

“During that period that the cor pse lays on the Bier, a loa fo fbread is brought out and delivered to the sin-eater a fer hav- ing been passed over the cor pse, as also a cu po fbeer or ale, which he then consumes, both bread and ale. In addition, a small token o fmone yis passed over the cor pse, in consideration whereof the sin-eater takes u pon himsel f(i pso facto) all o fthe sins o fthe de funct, and fees him (or her) o fsuch sins that he (or she) may have committed during his or her li f. Having thus been absolved o fhis or her sins, the deceased may then pass on untrammled.”



Telling of the Bees

Of the practices associated with insects, probably no practice is so widely held as that of “Telling the Bees” and, although it varies somewhat among peoples, it is invariably a most elaborate ceremonial. If a member of a family marries, the bees should be told, or they will leave the hive and not return. If a member of the family dies, the bees in their hives must be told, or they will die. The procedure is that, as soon as the master or

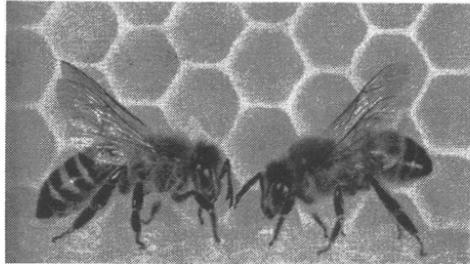
mistress has breathed his or her last, a younger member of the household, often a child, is told to visit the hives and rattling a chain of small keys taps on the hive and whispers three times: (*)

Little Brownies, little brownies, your mistress is dead.

Little Brownies, little brownies, your mistress is dead.

Little Brownies, little brownies, your mistress is dead.

Silence is then observed for a few moments. If the bees begin to hum, they have consented to continue living. A piece of funeral crepe is then tied to the hive and later sweet drink or a piece of funeral cake is brought to the hives for the bees to feed



upon. In addition, the bees are often invited to the funeral. The letter to them is written in the same hand and terms as that to relatives of the deceased: "*You are invited to the funeral of - - which is to take place at - - , &c, &c.*"

There are many corollary practices associated with the telling of the bees, one of the most important being the "heaving up" of the hives. This practice requires that on the day of the funeral as the funeral party is preparing to leave the house the hive and coffin are both "heaved" or lifted at the same moment. It has also been noted that bees dislike "bad behavior" and menstruous women. Care must also be taken that no one uses bad language near the hives, as it disturbs and annoys the bees.

Transmigration of Souls

Plato's doctrine of the transmigration of souls holds that the souls of sober quiet people, untingered by philosophy, come to life as bees. Later than Plato comes Mahomet, who admitted bees, as souls, to paradise and Porphyry said of fountains; "*They are adapted to the nymphs, or those souls which the Ancients call bees.*"

There is a strange story told in Lovecock's *My School and Schoolmasters* which goes as follows: "A fiend and I lay on a mossy bank on a hot day. Overcome by the heat my fiend fell asleep. As I watching drowsily, I saw a bee issue from the mouth of my sleeping fiend, jump down to the ground and



cross along withered grass stubs over a brook cascading over stones, and enter through an interstice into an old ruined building. Alarmed by what I saw, I hastily shook my comrade, who awakened a second or two after the bee, hurrying back had re-entered her through her mouth. My fiend, the sleeper, protested at my waking her, saying that she had dreamt that she

had walked through a fine country and had come to the banks of a noble river, and just where the clear water went thundering down a precipice, there was a bridge, all silver, which she crossed, and entered a noble palace on the other side. She was about to help herself to gold and jewels when I woke her, and robbed her of this fate."

In another such history, the sleeping person was moved by a companion. A few moments later, a bee returned to the spot and scurried hither and thither in terror looking for the sleeping form, but failed to know it. When the sleeper was nudged in his new resting place, she was found to be dead.

"This belief that the bee is a soul of one departed is the origin of the belief of 'Telling the bees.' For souls of the departed, are they not in communion with God?"

Twilight and Night-Flying White Moths

Twilight and night-flying white moths are the souls of the dead, who in this form are allowed to take farewell of this earth.

Urine

Like spittle, urine also has beneficial or protective qualities, and clearly one of the most efficacious and widely practiced counter-charms involves the combination created by the practice of spitting into one's urine. On New Year's Day, it is a common practice for the oldest woman in the family, employing a small brush, to sprinkle with urine the household animals and then, individually, the members of the family as they are getting out of bed.

A Woman After Childbirth

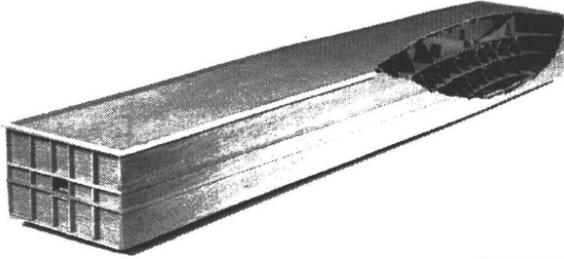
A woman after childbirth is the most dangerous thing on earth. All sorts of uncanny things are around the mother and infant, and if she goes to a river to wash, the fish will go away.



The practices and observations which we have been describing here do not even begin to scratch the surface of the wondrous body of information known as "vulgar knowledge." This extraordinary field of information is the product of the observation, intuition and understanding of the minds of our species, millions of individuals, over many thousands of years. Much of this knowledge has fallen into disrepute in the recent past, a mere few hundred years, a blink of the eye in our collective history.

We would suggest that there is at work in the body of vulgar knowledge a form of collective intelligence about this existence in which we find ourselves, a kind of road map of life compiled by those who have gone before.

Like the bees, we are individuals, yet we are, most surely, like the bees, a group, and, as a group we have over the millennia built ourselves a hive, our home. We would be foolish, to say the least, to turn our backs on this carefully and beautifully constructed home, especially now, in these uncertain and unsettling times.



THE ARK
Scale, 1 inch: 12.5 cubits

FORM OF BEQUEST

I hereby give and bequeath to the Museum of Jurassic Technology the sum of _____ dollars to be applied to the general purposes of the Museum.

signed _____

The Museum is glad to receive Natural History and other specimens, provided they are in good condition and are accompanied by adequate data.