

HOW AMERICA GOT ITS NAME

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RECENT research has brought to light the possibility that the continent of America was not named after Amerigo Vespucci, the Florentine contractor, as has hitherto been thought.

On reference to the Customs Roll for the Port of Bristol for the years 1496 to 1499, we find that upon his return from his second voyage, John Cabot received the pension which had been conferred upon him by the King from the hands of the Collectors of Customs of the Port of Bristol. Two payments of £20 each were made.

At that time the senior of the two Collectors, and the one who probably handed him the pension, was Richard Ameryk, one of the leading citizens of Bristol, and sheriff in 1503. It is very possible that the name given to the new continent by its discoverer was Amerika, in honour of the man who had paid him his pension. We know that Cabot was very lavish with gifts of land to his friends, and that he gave his barber two or three islands. What, then, is more likely than he should honour the Collector? In one deed the latter is styled "Ap Meryke", but the authenticity of the name of Ameryk is proved beyond doubt by the fact that one-third of the Manor Clifton, a suburb of Bristol, was owned at that time by Richard Amerycke. Researches are being made into the whole question, and it is to be hoped that credit will be given to Bristol for being concerned in the naming as well as the discovery, of the new continent.

No doubt there are many people who know little or nothing of the memorable voyage of John Cabot.

On March 5th, 1496, the following Letters Patent were granted by King Henry the Seventh:—

Henry, by the Grace of God, etc. Be it known to all, that we have given and granted, and by these presents do give and grant to our well-beloved John Cabot, citizen of Venice; to Louis, Sebastian, and Sanctius, sons of the said John, and to their heirs and deputies, full and free authority, leave and power, to sail to all parts, countries, and seas of the East, of the West, and of the North, under our banners and ensigns, with five ships of whatsoever burthen or quality they be; and as many mariners and men as they will take with them in the said ships, upon their

own proper costs and charges, to look out, discover, and find whatsoever isles, countries, regions, or provinces of the Heathens and Infidels, wheresoever they be, and in what part soever of the world, which before this time have been unknown to all Christians. We have granted to them jointly and separately, and to their deputies, and have given them our license, to set up our banners and ensigns in every village, town, castle, isle, or continent of them newly found; and that the said John and his sons, and their heirs, may subdue, occupy, and possess, as our vassals and lieutenants, getting to us the rule, title and jurisdiction, of the said villages, towns, etc., yet so that the said John and his sons, and their heirs, of all the fruits, profits, and commodities growing from such navigation, shall be held and bound to pay to us, in wares or money, the fifth part of the capital gain so gotten, for every voyage, as often as they shall arrive at our port of Bristol, at which port they shall be obliged only to arrive, deducting all manner of necessary costs and charges by them made: we giving and granting unto them and their heirs and deputies, that they shall be free from all payment of customs on all such merchandise as they shall bring with them from the places so newly found. And moreover, we have given and granted to them, and their heirs and deputies, that all the firm land, villages, towns, etc., they shall chance to find may not without license of the said John Cabot, and his sons, be frequented and visited, under pain of a forfeiture of the ships and goods of those who shall presume to the places so found: willing and commanding all and singular our subjects, as well on land as on sea, to give good assistance to the said John and his sons, and their deputies; and that as well in arming and furnishing their ships and vessels, as in provision of food, and buying victuals for their money, and all other things by them to be provided necessary for the said navigation, they do give them all their favours and assistance. Witness myself, at Westminster, the 5th March, in the eleventh year of our reign.

Early in the spring of 1497 Cabot set sail from Bristol on his epoch-making voyage, in the little ship *Matthew*, and in June, on St. John's Day, he sighted land, which he named *Prima Vista*, or *Newfoundland*. The actual spot where he landed has never been definitely settled, although there have been numerous conjectures on the subject. He is said to have brought back three natives with him, probably inhabitants of the country near the coast.

On October 11th, Lorenzo Pasqualigo, writing to a cousin, says:—

The Venetian, our countryman, who went with a ship from Bristol (the *Matthew*) in quest of new islands, is returned, and says that seven hundred leagues hence he discovered land, the territory of the Great Cham. He coasted for three hundred leagues, and landed, and has brought hither to the King certain

snare which had been set to catch game, and a needle for making nets; he also found some felled trees, wherefore he supposed there were inhabitants, and returned to his ship in alarm.

He was three months on the voyage, and on his return he saw two islands to the starboard, but would not land, time being precious, as he was short of provisions. He says that the tides are slack, and do not flow as they do here. The King of England is much pleased with this intelligence.

The King has promised that in the spring our countryman shall have ten ships, armed to his order, and at his request has conceded him all the prisoners, except such as are confined for high treason, to man the fleet. The King has also given him money wherewith to amuse himself till then, and he is now at Bristol with his wife, who is also a Venetian, and with his son. His name is Zucan Cabot, and he is styled the "Great Admiral". Vast honour is paid him, he dresses in silk, and these English run after him like mad people, so that he can enlist as many of them as he pleases, and a number of our own rogues besides.

Additional evidence is furnished by the fact that the name "America" was given to the new continent in Bristol long before European writers referred to it thus. In olden times the historians of Bristol compiled what were known as "Kalendars", from which much has been learned of ancient Bristol customs. In one of these Kalendars we read that "This year (1497) on St. John the Baptist's Day (June 24th) the land of America was found by the merchants of Bristowe, in a ship of Bristowe called the *Matthew*, the which said ship departed from the port of Bristowe the 2nd of May, and came home again the 6th August following." It was not until some years later that the story became current that the continent had been named after Amerigo Vespucci.

Visitors to England should not miss the opportunity of visiting Bristol, with its historical associations, for it was here that Columbus and Cabot met, that the Wesley brothers held their first meetings, that Defoe met Selkirk (the original of Robinson Crusoe), that the last Empress of France was educated, and that William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, lived and died. Even now Penn's armour hangs in St. Mary Redcliffe Church, where he lies. It was called by Queen Elizabeth "the fairest parish church in England."

SOME PAGAN CONCEPTIONS OF DISEASE

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IN the absence of modern knowledge of the material or physical nature of disease, of the rational conception of cause and effect, and of the uniform operation of natural laws, disease in pagan times was commonly ascribed to all manner of supernatural agencies. The early conception of the cosmos differed fundamentally from ours; for whereas we think in terms of an unbroken chain of phenomena—causal and caused, producing and produced, antecedent and consequent—early thinkers referred whatever they were not able to understand to the direct interference of a supernatural agent, in nine cases out of ten malevolent. The disease-producing agent might be an evil spirit or demon, or some magic influence, such as an enchantment or the “evil eye”. Most serious of all, it might be the wrath of one of the greater gods offended by some act of omission or commission. It might be some neglect, for disease was never far away from the man who was careless about the honours due to the members of the pantheon.

It is possible that in these days of positive natural knowledge, which came in with the Revival of Learning in the sixteenth century, we do not realize how completely the visible and material was supposed to be interpermeated by the invisible and immaterial. Many a pagan visualised in a far more vivid sense than we have ever done the reality of another world, a world not so much in the future as co-existing in the present, and peopled by beings extremely like ourselves.

Thus there were gods of every rank, from the major deities who ruled the heavens, the earth and the sea, down through the demi-gods and heroes to a whole assemblage of minor deities and demons inhabiting such restricted localities as caves, grottoes, streams, lakes, meadows and groves. The true meaning of “demon” does not include evil. Everything that was visible had an invisible counterpart. As a system, this is referred to as “Animism”. It was fully developed, for instance, in ancient Egypt. When things turned out well, the gods were thanked; when ill, they were propitiated or appeased. The gods and goddesses were themselves replicas of human beings. Herakleitus remarked—“Men are mortal

gods, and gods are immortal men",—and this really summed up their relationship. The whole human family was duplicated in the other world. Gods had wives, children, friends and enemies, just as had the inhabitants of earth. They had love-affairs, jealousies, adulteries and incest. Morality no more governed their lives than it did their less exalted sub-lunary relatives; they had their weaknesses and infirmities like the weakest of men. Ethical purity was by no means a necessary attribute of divine society. There was a god of thieves and pickpockets in the Roman pantheon. Pagan religions had really no connection with morals. Aesthetic purity was no necessary attribute even of a goddess, for in Rome there was a goddess of drains, Cloacina, personified as the stench that arose from the Cloaca Maxima. "She was invoked for protection from diseases due to drains, and euphemistically addressed as 'Sweet Cloacina,'" says Dr. Jayne in his illuminating work on *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*. This, of course, is quite comparable with the former custom in our own country of having to refer to the little malevolent fairies or "brownies" as the "Good Folk". Greeks alluded to the gods of the underworld as "The gracious gods". The attribute of moral rectitude was in pre-Christian communities no distinguishing feature of divine existence.

Now disease might arise from a variety of conditions and circumstances, over which neither the patient nor the community had any control. For it might be through the open attack of a demon, or through possession by an evil spirit, or through the curse of "the evil eye", or the machinations of a sorcerer, or the malevolence of a practitioner of "black magic", or the influence of a mundane enemy acting through a wizard or witch; or finally, it might be due to the offended deity himself. A purely natural, visible source of disease was not sought for, although Pliny tells us that the Druids did recognize the existence of poisons. In ancient Hindustan, disease was always regarded as a punishment by the gods for sin, although even this might be the caprice of a malevolent deity. In Egypt, epidemics were always regarded as due to an enraged divinity. "Ishta", a Babylonian goddess, was, according to Dr. Jayne, an exacting divinity, and visited her wrath upon those who disobeyed her mandates, smiting them and inflicting disease in punishment.

In Egypt, "Seth and his partisans were definite and active spirits creating evil, spreading disease, madness and all forms of malignity; their eyes shed tears that, dropping upon the ground, made plants poisonous; their sweat, saliva and blood were deadly and, falling upon the earth, germinated into scorpions, venomous

reptiles and strange, deadly plants. There were spirits for each mischief." Thus the idea of a god as necessarily and always a beneficent being was quite foreign to pre-Christian religions.

The idea that human disease was the result of human transgression, and that it expressed a divine punishment, has lingered on into our own time. We have this view well expressed by the Rev. John Wesley in the preface to a little book he wrote on domestic medicine. This was published in 1747, and by 1792 had reached its twenty-fourth edition. He then wrote as follows:

But since man rebelled against the Sovereign of heaven and earth, entirely is the scene changed! The incorruptible frame has put on corruption, and the immortal has put on mortality. The seeds of weakness and pain, of sickness and death, are now lodged in our inmost substance; whence a thousand disorders continually spring even without the aid of external violence. . . . The heavens, the earth and all things contained therein conspire to punish the rebels against their Creator. The sun and moon shed unwholesome influences from above; the earth exhales poisonous damp from beneath; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea are in a state of hostility; the air itself that surrounds us on every side is replete with the shafts of death; yea, the food we eat daily saps the foundation of that life which cannot be sustained without it. So has the Lord of all secured the execution of his decree—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Thus is well put for popular comprehension the view that disease is due to the Deity offended, a view which has by no means died out even to-day. "That is a judgment on you", was quite a common remark in Scotland in not very long byegone days. This religious view of the origin of disease has perhaps lingered longest in connection with the venereal diseases, which many people still believe are a divine punishment for sexual sin. It avails nothing to point out that in certain cases syphilis is conveyed to a perfectly innocent woman and to an unborn babe. The upholders of the religious view merely quote the verse about visiting the sins of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation. "Did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?" the Jews asked of Christ in quite the same spirit.

Seeing that, according to the pagan conception, all human beings were surrounded by a crowd of malevolent demons, it should not have been a matter of great difficulty for some of these unseen ones in an unguarded moment to gain an entrance into the patient's body. The demon could enter by the eyes, ears, nose and mouth, and, once inside the body, it began to attack the vital organs.

These "demons" of ancient mythology are obviously the infections of a later day. The Egyptians, at any rate, held that the disease (demon) could penetrate even the clothing. Inside the body they drank the blood, sucked the bone-marrow, gnawed the bones or consumed the intestines, heart, lungs or liver. The Egyptians believed in a god of inflammation. Death would ensue unless the intruder was driven out before irreparable damage had been done.

In ancient Egypt, certain seasons and certain days were particularly unlucky, for on these the demons had enhanced powers for mischief. Persons on these days were particularly liable to die of certain maladies, so that there was an injunction in Egypt, "Go not forth from thy house from any side of it; whosoever is born on this day will die of the disease". The Egyptians thought that the diseases of animals were caused by the similar attacks of evil spirits, and were to be cured by the same methods as in the case of men. Resemblances between these early guesses and the facts of to-day are so patent as to need only mentioning. It is, however, pretty clear that the Greeks did not recognize "contagion" in the modern sense.

The earliest physician was a priest. He was a priest because disease was essentially something emanating from the realm of the unseen, so that no one was so well qualified to deal with it as the man whose profession consisted in being in communication with that other world. "Accordingly," says Dr. Jayne, "the sacerdotal methods of healing consisted in magico-religious rites, ceremonies and formulas which brought forth the mysteries, miraculous powers of deities and other supernatural beings, and which centred about the idea of exorcism, of expelling the unseen malicious spirits which caused disease."

In Egypt, the procedure was quite formal. The magician-priest approached the patient, and having made an examination, proceeded to his diagnosis. Dr. Jayne's account is so concise that it had better be given in his own words:—"Then came the treatment which consisted of incantations, prayers, sacrifice, and possibly the giving of some remedy with the aid of all the devices and accessions of magic oral and manual—commands, conjurations, threatenings, coaxings, aspersions, spells and fumigations—the incantations and gestures being repeated four times." It was considered very desirable that the magician should know the name of the demon being exorcised. The demon was, if possible, called upon by name to leave the patient, and in many cases was commanded in the name of some particular deity with superior powers to come forth and depart.

Sometimes the priest would assume as a disguise the appearance of the god himself and, imitating him in voice and gesture, call on the demon to depart. This ruse was not considered as an impiety or an offence against the god. Physiological specialization amongst the Egyptians was extreme, for they distinguished no fewer than thirty-six parts of the body, each of which was in charge of a different god. Thus we read in the *Leyden Papyrus*—"There is no limb of his without a god, and, so invoking these, they heal the diseases of the limbs." In Egypt, disease seems to have been dealt with both by the priestly magicians and by the lay physicians. Undoubtedly the former enjoyed the greater prestige because they used incantations and understood divination, whereas the physicians were allowed much less scope in methods of treatment. The physicians had to cure more mechanically or "by the book."

The place of the Dream as a therapeutic experience was very important in pagan times. Diodorus remarks: "In Egypt dreams are regarded with religious reverence." Sleeping in the precincts of the temple to obtain information about the disease and guidance as to its cure was widely practised throughout the ancient Orient and in Greece and Italy. It was believed that the gods communicated therapeutic and other information by means of dreams, and in particular revealed the future thereby; hence the term "oneiro-mancy". Incubation, as the curative temple-sleep was called, inasmuch as it permitted of involuntary divination, had an important place in the religious systems of Mesopotamia. It is believed to have been practised as far afield as in the Celtic communities of Western Europe.

The remedies, whether revealed in the dreams or not, were supposed to assist the influence of the magic formulas for exorcism and healing. It was not the other way round. Remedies from the vegetable world in use in Egypt were castor oil, aloes, mint, myrrh, turpentine, oil of cedar-wood, opium, hyoscyamus and coriander—all of which are still used in one way or another in modern practice. From amongst the minerals, the Egyptians used preparations of lead, copper, and sodium chloride. Their animal preparations included goose oil and other fats, as well as notorious loathsome remedies. The mystery surrounding the giving of horrible drugs vanishes when we understand that they were deliberately administered in the hope that they would so disgust the demon that he would at once quit the body of the sick man. From the point of view of modern rational therapeutics, their use of such disgusting substances is inexplicable,

but it becomes less difficult to understand when we remember that these things were given not directly to cure the body of the sick man, but to expel the unseen though potent demon from his interior.

Mental afflictions in pagan days were always believed to be due to devil-possession. We cannot but recall the case of Christ commanding the devils to leave the man of Gadara and to go into the herd of swine (*St Mark*, V, 1). We recollect, too, the healing of the dumb man possessed with a devil (*St Matt.* IX, 32) and the existence yet in our language of the word "demoniac". Thus these beliefs lingered on into the Christian Era.

The following formula for drinking a remedy may be taken as a typical Egyptian incantation:—"Welcome, remedy, welcome, which destroyest the trouble in this my heart and in these my limbs. The magic of Horus is victorious in the remedy." Drugs were, of course, given both internally and externally. Evidently it was thought that the more ingredients a prescription contained, the more potent it was, for some prescriptions were very long. Nor has this notion become obsolete. We are, however, assured that remedies without magic were valueless, and that the words of the incantation were often written down and then washed off in the medicine which was finally drunk. This practice has lingered to our own days in some country districts. "Healing had developed with magic," says Jayne; "it was inseparably connected with it, and all evidence indicates that it was never emancipated from it."

But the Egyptians, to take them merely as a convenient type of pagan antiquity, by no means neglected surgery; for it seems certain that they performed such operations as circumcision, castration, lithotomy and venesection. Many anthropologists believe that the meaning of the trephine holes seen in so many ancient skulls, found even so far away as in Peru, is that thereby was provided a ready means of escape for the devil in possession. It is certain that bits of bone containing the trephine-hole have been worn as amulets in widely separated parts of the world.

A therapeutic belief amongst ancient pagan peoples, of which there is no modern representative, was that concerning the substitute victim. In Babylonia, for instance, the victim, which was a kid or sucking pig, was killed and laid alongside the invalid, while the exorcist transferred the demon to the carcass. The following is a suitable incantation:

The kid is the substitute for mankind.
He giveth the kid for his life.
He giveth the head of the kid for the head of the man.

He giveth the neck of the kid for the neck of the man.
He giveth the breast of the kid for the breast of the man.

This idea of the transference of disease to an animal has its counterpart in the more purely religious sphere in the ritual of the scapegoat (*Leviticus*, XVI). Here it was the sins rather than the diseases of the people that were transferred to the animal which bore them away into the wilderness, but the underlying notion of a substitute is exactly the same. The analogous transference of pain to inanimate objects is apparently not yet extinct. In a novel (*Howard's End*, by E. M. Foster) written in 1910, we are told—"It's the finest wych-elm in Hertfordshire. . . . There are pig's teeth stuck into the trunk about four feet from the ground. The country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark, it will cure the tooth-ache." In Greek mythology there was actually a demon of convalescence, Telesphoros, especially venerated at Pergamos.

The occult machinery for the prevention of disease was almost as elaborate as that for its cure. Efforts were made in all directions to forestall illnesses and postpone death, both disease and death being regarded in pagan times as preventable but highly regrettable incidents. The attitude of mind was somewhat analogous to that of the modern "Christian Scientist", who holds that if we were living as we ought, there would be no disease or death. Thus the dwellers in Mesopotamia sought to avert these misfortunes by the interpretation of omens and dreams (oneiromancy), by the study of the heavenly bodies (astrology), by inspecting the form and appearance of the liver of a sacrificed animal (hepatoscopy), and by many other forms of divination. "Charms and amulets," we hear, "talismans made of knots of cord, pierced shells, bronze or terra cotta statuettes, and bands of cloth inscribed with magic words were very commonly worn as being potent in warding off the evil eye and the enchantments of the Black Art." But that did not exhaust the means at one's disposal. "Words of power were engraved on cylinders of stone, haematite, agate, rock-crystal, onyx, lapis lazuli or jasper, and were worn on the head, neck, limbs, hands or feet." Against the demon *Labartu* who lived in the mountains and in marshes, and was greatly feared as the tormentor of children, a stone engraved with the following inscription was hung round their necks—"By the great gods may'st thou be exorcised: with the bird of heaven may'st thou fly away." If necessary, more active measures still could be taken against the demons of disease. Shouting, singing, and what corresponded to the beating

of drums seem to have been resorted to as the most direct methods of all. Such practices at once remind us of the howling, singing, and beating of drums by the "medicine men" of contemporary savage tribes, and of the use of crackers on the part of the Chinese to frighten away devils. We cannot fail to remember that the original object of ringing church bells was to drive away evil spirits. Quite in keeping with this is the Chinese custom of making the approach to a house zigzag, with the idea that the demons shall experience a difficulty in reaching it. After some time, the demon was supposed to have entered an inanimate object, or the body of an animal, or even that of the magician himself. We have here more than a hint of the vicarious suffering which is so prominent a feature of many religious systems.

We need not now stop to determine what was the actual nature of these oft-recurring pestilences which scourged the nations of antiquity, because, for one thing, "the plague" or "the pestilence" may have meant more than one kind of epidemic disease. Of a certainty, all the following at one time or another were "plagues":—typhus fever, typhoid fever, bubonic plague proper, cholera, influenza, small-pox and malaria. Sir William Osler thought that the *pesta magna* of which Marcus Aurelius died was small-pox.

From all we can gather, the great civilizations of antiquity were never very long free from serious epidemics; and all of them regarded these scourges as punishments from some of the gods on a nation-wide scale. The very word "plague" has in its derivation no medical significance at all; it is derived from the Latin "plaga", a stroke—a stroke of Divine vengeance being always understood. The Egyptians, in fact, had a goddess of Pestilence called Sekhmet, a very violent person, known as the Lady of Pestilence. She was the counterpart or, as some say, the consort of Ptah. She was supposed to discriminate by protecting the good and punishing the wicked, for she was essentially, at least theoretically, a therapeutic divinity. But like some of her sex in more recent times, she was not endowed with a strong sense of proportion, for it appears that in destroying the wicked she became so fond of human blood that Re, the great sun-god, became alarmed for the future of the race and had to restrain her. Accordingly she was given to drink a mixture of blood and mandrake, which she swallowed with such avidity that she became intoxicated and forgot to slay! Not what we should consider nowadays a very nice young lady, goddess though she was.

The state of matters in Babylonia was very similar. Here again a lady was the source of the trouble. Namtar, the Queen of the Underworld, and Ura, another goddess, were "deities of pestilence." Passing on to Greece, we find the people of that salubrious land quite as anxious about recurring pestilences as were the dwellers by the Nile or the Euphrates. No sooner was the Trojan War under way, than a plague broke out in the Greek camp. So severe was this that Kalchas, "the best of augurs", was entreated to try to discover what it was that had so annoyed Apollo. There was no notion of looking for the origin in any terrestrial source. The unseen and supernatural was at once appealed to.

When we come to Rome, matters have actually gone from bad to worse; the mystery about the origin of these plagues is deeper than ever. But it was not merely the hidden sources of plagues that worried the Romans; their trouble was the purely practical one, that owing to the plagues there were the losses of their citizens. The Senate and the public officials felt bound to take the matter up and do their utmost to stay the plague. The Senate, therefore, at such a time would direct the attention of the people to the gods and to prayer, and would order them to go to the temples and implore the gods for a remission of such expressions of their displeasure. During a great plague in 433 B. C., Apollo Medicus was invoked, and a temple vowed to him for the sake of the public health. But epidemic followed epidemic, and the Government were at their wits' end. On one occasion some aged person remarked that a pestilence had formerly been relieved by a nail being driven into something or other by a dictator. The Senate therefore decreed that a dictator should drive a nail on the Ides of September into the right side of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Anything would have been done at this time to restore the sanity of the people now frantic with terror at the continued recurrence of these mysterious scourges. There is positive evidence that some of the epidemics in Italy were malaria. In 176 B. C., a quartan ague became general. The Sibylline books were consulted, and a solemn festival decided upon by an assembly of the people in the Forum. Different gods were interested in different diseases. Mars, for instance, was supposed to protect especially from summer pestilence. He was entreated thus—"Neither let plague nor ruin fall on us any more; be sated, O fierce Mars." Neptune, the god of the sea and of streams, was also, Livy tells us, regarded as an averter of pestilence. Minerva was the special tutelary deity of physicians, and was known as Minerva Medica.

And so the story closes. Disease was not in the pagan mind so much a natural phenomenon as a supernatural interference with the otherwise excellent order of things. It has been stated that even Hippocrates never looked inside a human body; his skill came, then, not from knowledge of what living Nature normally was, but from what he had observed of its disturbances at the bed-side. As there was virtually no science of life in the normal, so there could be none of life in the abnormal. Where the pagan failed to understand, he appealed for light and guidance to that other world which he regarded as the source of all that was best and worst in this.