

Talismans

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THE facts that a precious stone will retain magnetism perfectly for a long time, and that it will store much power in a small compass, make it a convenient object when a talisman is required for any purpose. For a talisman is not, as is often supposed, a mere relic of medieval superstition. It may be a definite and very effective agent in daily life. It is some small object, strongly charged with magnetism for a particular purpose by some one who knows how to do it, and when properly made it continues to radiate this magnetism with unimpaired strength for many years.

The purposes to which such things can be applied are almost infinite in number. For example, many a student at the beginning of his career is much troubled by impure thought. Naturally, he sets himself to struggle against it, and maintains a constant watch against its advances; but, nevertheless, thought-forms of objectionable nature are numerous and insidious, and sometimes one of them will contrive to obtain a lodgement in his mind and cause him much trouble before he can finally shake it off. He may, perhaps, have been in the habit of yielding himself to such thought in the past without realising the evil of it; and if that is so, his thought has acquired a momentum in that direction which is not easy to overcome. A talisman strongly charged with the powerful magnetism of thoughts of purity is a great and invaluable help to him in his efforts.

The rationale of its action is not difficult to understand. Impure thoughts express themselves as a certain definite set of vibrations in the astral and lower mental bodies, and they can find entrance into a man's vehicles only when those are either comparatively at rest or, pulsating so feebly that

the impact from without can readily overpower the existing undulation and take its place. The talisman is heavily charged with an exactly contrary vibration, and the two cannot co-exist. One of them must overpower the other, and bring it into harmony with itself.

The impure thought-form has, probably, been made by some casual person, not usually with any definite intent; it is simply a suggestion or reminiscence of lower passions. It is not, therefore, a thing of great power in itself; but it is likely to produce an effect quite out of proportion to its intrinsic weight, because of the readiness with which the average person accepts it and responds to it. The talisman, on the other hand, has been intentionally charged for a definite purpose by some one who knows how to think; and this is a matter in which definite training makes so much difference that the lightest thought of a man who has learnt how to think is far more powerful than a whole day's desultory musings on the part of an ordinary man. So, when the two streams of thought come into contact, there is not the slightest doubt as to which will vanquish the other, if they are left to themselves.

If we can suppose that the wearer of the talisman forgot his good resolutions, and actually wished for a time for the impure thought, no doubt he could attract talisman; but he would time of great from the in-harmony of oscillations. Now, in who is really trying to because he is taken impure thought creeps in upon him before he is very quickly, he reaches for the moment he resist. The value of gives him time to disharmony between its the wandering thought cannot but attract the man's attention, and thus while he wears it he cannot be taken unawares, so that if he falls, he falls deliberately.

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it in spite of the be conscious all the discomfort, arising the two sets of most cases, the man do better falls only off his guard. The insidiously and has seized aware of it; and then, the condition in which does not even wish to the talisman is that it recollect himself. The undulations and those of

Again, some people suffer much from apparently causeless fear. Often they are quite unable to give any reason for their feelings, but at certain times, and especially when alone at night, they are liable to be attacked by extreme nervousness, which may gradually increase to positive terror. There may be various explanations for this. Perhaps the commonest is the presence of some hostile astral entity who is persecuting the victim—sometimes in the hope of obtaining through him some sensations which he desires, sometimes in the endeavor to gain control over him and obsess him, sometimes for sheer mischief and impish love of demonstrating his power over a human being. Here again is a case in which

the mediaeval remedy has a distinct practical value. Naturally the talisman against impurity would not avail in this case, for quite a different set of oscillations is required. What is wanted in this case is a centre strongly charged with vibrations expressive of courage and self-reliance—or, if the wearer is of the devotional type, with thoughts of the protective power of his special deity.

For a talisman has a double action. Not only does it operate directly by means of the undulation which it radiates, as we have just described in the case of impurity, but also the knowledge of its presence usually awakens the faith and courage of the wearer. In the case of a talisman against fear, which we are now considering, the two lines of action are clearly marked. Courage expresses itself in the mental and astral bodies by the strength and steadiness of their striations, and by the calm steadfast shining of the colors indicating the various higher qualities. When fear overpowers a person all these colors are dimmed and overwhelmed by a livid grey mist, and the striations are lost in a quivering mass of palpitating jelly; the man has, for the time, quite lost the power of guiding and controlling his vehicles. The pulsations of strength and courage steadily radiating from the talisman are quite unaffected by the feelings of the wearer; so that the first tremblings of fear find a distinct difficulty in their way, when they begin to manifest themselves.

If unopposed, they would rapidly increase, each as it were magnifying and strengthening the other until their power becomes irresistible. The talisman prevents them from reaching this condition of irresistible velocity. It deals with them at the commencement while they are still weak. The resistance which it opposes to them is precisely the same in kind as that which a gyroscope opposes to any effort to turn it aside from its line. It is so determinedly set in motion in one direction that it will sooner fly to pieces than allow itself to be turned into any other. Now, suddenly to bring such a power as this into conflict with unreasoning panic would probably result in the complete shattering of the astral body concerned; but, if the gyroscopic force of the talisman is working first, its determined persistence along its own line checks the first beginnings of fear, and so makes it impossible for the person ever to reach the later stages of panic terror.

That is its direct operation; but it works also indirectly, upon the mind of the wearer. When he feels the first beginnings of fear stirring within him, he probably recollects the talisman and clutches at it, and then arises within him the feeling:

“Why should I fear so long as I have me this strong centre of magnetism?”

So instead of yielding to the oscillations and allowing them to intensify themselves until they become unmanageable, he calls up the reserve strength of his own will and asserts himself as master of his vehicles, which is in truth all that is necessary.

There is a third possibility in connection with a talisman, which is in some cases even more powerful than the other two. The object, whatever it may be, has been strongly magnetised by some individual, by the hypothesis a person of power and development, and therefore also probably highly sensitive. That being so, the talisman is a link with its creator, and through it his attention may be attracted. Under ordinary conditions its connection with its maker would be of the slightest, but when the wearer is in desperate circumstances he sometimes actually calls upon the maker, much in the way in which the mediaeval devotee when in difficulties invoked the assistance of his patron saint; and that call will unquestionably reach the maker of the talisman and evoke a response from him. If he is still living on the physical plane he may or may not be conscious in his physical brain of the appeal; but in any case the ego will be conscious, and will respond by re-inforcing the vibration of the talisman by a strong wave of his own more powerful thought, bearing with it strength and comfort.

Quite possibly many ignorant men would scoff at such an idea as a relic of mediaeval superstition, yet it is an actual scientific fact which has been demonstrated on hundreds of occasions. So far as its direct action goes, a talisman will work only in the direction in which it is constructed to work; but its indirect action on the faith of the possessor may sometimes take very unexpected forms. I remember once making a talisman for a certain noble lady, in order to protect her against spasms of extreme nervousness and even positive fear which occasionally swept over her when alone at night. She told me afterwards that this talisman had been of the greatest assistance to her in an emergency which I certainly did not contemplate when I made it.

It appears that on a certain occasion she was driving an exceptionally spirited horse (I believe that her husband made it a sort of boast that he never used horses which anybody else could drive) in a dog-cart, through a forest. The horse took fright at something or other, got the bit between its teeth, dashed madly off the road, and started at a wild gallop among the tree-trunks. The groom on the back seat was so certain that they were all destined to immediate death that he threw himself off as best he could, and was sorely injured by the fall; but the lady declared that her thought at once flew to the talisman which she was then wearing, and (she said) she knew absolutely that she could not be killed while, as she expressed it, under its protection. This utter certainty kept her perfectly cool and collected, and she steered that dog-cart through the thickest part of the forest with consummate skill. She declares that, on the whole, she was certainly in the air more often than on the ground as the wheels bounded over roots and crashed through the bushes. But nevertheless, she held on bravely until the horse became tired, and she was able to regain control of it.

She thanked me enthusiastically for saving her life by means of the talisman, but the truth is that it was not the direct action of the talisman in any way, but the strength of her faith in it, which enabled her to gain so

splendid a victory. That was undoubtedly the main factor; there may have been a certain amount of direct action also, because the steadying effect of the strong undulation of the talisman would catch any dawning feeling of fear and still it, though I had prepared it to deal rather with first symptoms, gradually arising, than with so sudden an emergency as that.

There are various articles which are to a large extent natural talismans. All precious stones may be said to belong to this category, since each has a distinct influence, which can be utilised in two ways. The influence as it stands will attract to it elemental essence of a certain kind, and all such thoughts and desires as naturally express themselves through that essence; and, secondly, the fact that it has these natural peculiarities makes it a fit vehicle for magnetism which is intended to work along the same line as those thoughts or emotions. Let us suppose, for example, that it is desired to drive away impure thought. Impure thought means usually a complex set of pulsations, but set on the whole in a certain definite key. In order to resist them a stone should be chosen whose vibrations are inharmonic with that key, so that they may offer to the impure vibrations the greatest possible resistance. If it is intended to make a talisman against those impure thoughts, the stone which naturally offers resistance to them is the vehicle which can most easily be loaded with the opposing influence.

The undulations sent forth by the stone are on the physical plane, while those of the emotions are on the astral plane—that is to say, an octave (or rather several octaves) higher; but a stone the particles of which swing naturally on the physical plane in a key which is identical at this level with the key of purity on higher levels will itself, even without magnetisation, operate as a check upon impure thought or feelings by virtue of its overtones; and furthermore it can be readily charged at astral or mental levels with the vibrations of pure thought or feeling which are set in the same key.

There are instances of decided magnetism of this kind in the vegetable kingdom also. A good example of this is the Rudrāksha berry, of which necklaces are so frequently made in India. The oscillations connected with it, especially in its small and undeveloped state, render it specially suitable for magnetisation where sustained holy thought or meditation is required, and where all disturbing influences are to be kept away. The beads made from the Tulsi plant are another example, although the influence which they give is of a somewhat different character.

An interesting set of natural talismans are those objects which produce strong scents. Incense produces a powerful effect along these lines, the gums of which it is composed being specially chosen because the undulations which they give forth are favorable to spiritual and devotional thought, and distinctly inharmonic with almost every other variety. It is possible to compound an incense which will have precisely the opposite effect, and this was sometimes done by the medieval witches, and is done today in Luciferian ceremonies. But quite apart from anything intentionally and

determinately evil, it is generally desirable to avoid coarse and heavy scents, such as that of musk or of sachet-powder, as many of them are closely in tune with sensual feelings of various kinds.

An object not intentionally charged for that purpose may sometimes have the force of a talisman. A present received from some loved one, if it be of a nature that can be worn or carried about by the recipient, will constantly serve to him as a reminder of the donor, and often will so far give the sense of the donor's person as to prevent him from doing things that he would not do if that donor were looking on. I have myself heard of more than one case in which a man, wearing a ring or a chain given to him by his mother, was saved from committing some questionable act, or indulging in some improper pleasure, because just as he was about to yield to the temptation his glance fell upon the object, and that brought to him so strongly the thought of his mother and of what she would feel if she could see him, that he at once abandoned his project. A letter carried about in the pocket has been known to serve the same purpose—the man feeling:

“How can I do this thing with her very letter in my pocket—how can I take that into surroundings where I should be ashamed that she should see me?”

I remember one case in which such a struggle ended up in the man tearing up the letter and throwing it away in order that he might be able to indulge himself; but usually the opposite result is produced.

Thus it will be seen that the objects which we carry about with us in our pockets may have a decided influence upon us. A man's watch, for example, which he has always with him, becomes strongly charged with his magnetism, and if after wearing it for some years he gives it or lends it to another, that other person, if he be at all sensitive, will be constantly reminded of his friend, and conscious of a feeling as though he were present. I remember that a prominent member of the Theosophical Society, long since dead, used to be fond of making presents of watches to those disciples in whom he was specially interested, charging them strongly before he gave them with whatever quality he thought that the recipient most needed. As his young friends naturally wore those watches, he succeeded in several cases in effecting in them considerable changes of character.

One very unpleasant thing (from one point of view) which we all have to carry about with us is money. It will naturally occur to the humorist to say at this point that he could do with a good deal of that kind of unpleasantness. I quite understand that point of view, and I recognise that in our present civilisation it is desirable to possess a certain amount of filthy lucre, and it is even necessary to carry at least a little of it about with one, so as to be prepared for unexpected emergencies. Nevertheless the fact remains that while money in the abstract is no doubt a good thing to have if one knows how to use it wisely, money in the concrete form of

coins and notes is frequently charged with the worst possible magnetism. New notes and new coins are harmless enough, but after they have been in circulation for a little time they acquire not only all sorts of physical dirt, but also many varieties of other vibrations, nearly all of them exceedingly unpleasant.

The reason for this is not difficult to understand, for the magnetism surrounding the coin is produced by the thoughts and feelings of those who have handled it or carried it. First, and as a general principle, without taking any special feelings into consideration, any coin which has been handled and carried by a large number of people must inevitably be charged with a great mixture of different kinds of magnetism. It is therefore, from the point of view of undulations, a centre of discord around which all kinds of warring influences are boiling up in the wildest confusion. The influence of such a thing as this is disturbing and irritating, and it has, though to a much stronger degree, exactly the same effect upon the astral and mental bodies as has the continued bombardment of radium emanations upon the physical body. Several scientific people have discovered by painful experience that to carry a minute fragment of radium in one's waistcoat pocket presently produces a peculiarly obstinate sore upon the skin underneath it. Just like that, but larger in proportion, is the effect produced on higher vehicles by the presence of a much-used coin. Copper and bronze coins are in this respect the worst of all—except perhaps old and dirty banknotes. Gold and silver also absorb the influences which surround them, but their qualities make them somewhat less absorptive to the very worst characteristics. From all this it emerges that it is better not perpetually to carry about one more money than is actually necessary. I have known students who partially met the difficulty by carrying copper or bronze coins only in a purse so strongly magnetised as to be practically impervious to the unpleasant pulsations.

I know there are many people who will say that all these influences are external and unimportant, and that it is ridiculous to take trouble over matters so insignificant. I fully admit that the interior considerations of thought and feeling are of greater weight; yet I would point out, first, that these despised external conditions often greatly modify the internal, and, secondly, that most of us are not yet so far along the Path, nor do we find the treading of it so easy, that we can afford to neglect the study of even the smaller helps and hindrances. The Christ is alleged once to have spoken strongly to the Scribes and Pharisees about their preference of external detail over internal reality; but remember that He is said to have concluded His scriptures by remarking: "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."