THE HISTORY OF INFLUENZA

**by**

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The earliest visit ofit, as recorded by medical science, was to Malta in 1510. In 1577 the young Influenza grew into a terrible epidemic, which traveled from Asia to Europe to disappear in America, *killing the old people, the weak, and the invalids.* At Madrid the mortality was enormous; and in Rome alone 9,000 persons died of it. In 1590 the influenza appeared in Germany, thence passed in 1593 into France and Italy. In 1658-1663 it visited Italy only; in 1669, Holland; in 1675, Germany and England and in 1601, Germany and Hungary. In 1729 all Europe suffered most terribly from the "innocent" visitor. In London alone 908 men died from it the first week; upwards of 60,000 persons suffering from it, and 30 percent dying from catarrh or influenza at Vienna. In 1732 and 1733, a new epidemic of the *grippe* appeared in Asia and America. It was almost as universal in the years 1737 and1743 when London lost by death from it, during one week, over 1,000 men. In 1762, it raged in British army in Germany. In 1775 an almost countless number of cattle and domestic animals were killed by it. In 1782, 40,000 persons were taken ill on one day, at St. Petersburg. In 1830, the influenza made a successful journey round the world--the only time--as the first pioneer of cholera. It returned again from 1833 to 1837. In the year 1847 it killed more men in London than the cholera itself had done. It assumed an epidemic character once more in France, in 1858.

We learn from the St. Petersburg "Novoye Vremya" that Dr. Hirsh shows from 1510 to 1850 over 300 great epidemics of grippe or influenza, both general and local, severe and weak. According to the above data given, therefore, the influenza having been this year very weak at St. Petersburg, can hardly be called "Russian." That which is known of its characteristics shows it, on the contrary, as of a most impartially cosmopolitan nature. The extraordinary rapidity with which it acts, secured for it in Vienna the name of *Blitz Catarrh.* It has nothing in common with the ordinary grippe, so easily caught in cold and damp weather; and it seems to produce no special disease that could be localized, but only to act most fatally on the nervous system and especially in the lungs. Most of the deaths from influenza occur in consequence of lung-paralysis.

All this is very significant. A disease which is epidemic, yet not contagious; which acts everywhere, in clean as in unclean places, in sanitary as well as in unsanitary localities, hence needing very evidently no centers of contagion to start from; an epidemic which spreads at once like an air current, embracing whole countries and parts of the world; striking at the same time the mariner in the midst of the ocean,, and the royal scion in his palace; the starving wretch of the world's White Chapels, sunk in and soaked through with filth, and the aristocrat in his high mountain sanitarium (like Davos in Engadine\*), where no lack of sanitary arrangements can be taken to task for it--such a disease can bear no comparison with epidemics of the ordinary common type, e.g., such as the cholera. Nor can it be regarded as caused by parasites or microscopical microbes of one or the other kind. To prove the fallacy of this idea in her case, the dear old influenza attacked most savagely Pasteur, the "microbe-killer" himself, and his host of assistants. Does it not seem therefore, as if the causes that produced influenza were rather cosmical than bacterial; and that they ought to be searched for rather in those abnormal changes in our atmosphere that have well-nigh thrown into confusion and shuffled seasons all over the globe for the last few years--than in anything else?

It is not asserted for the first time now that all such mysterious epidemics as the present influenza are due to an abnormal exuberance of ozone in the air. Several physicians and chemists of note have so far agreed with the occultists, as to admit that the tasteless, colorless and inodorous gas known as oxygen--"the life-supporter" of all that lives and breathes--does get at times into family difficulties with its colleagues and brothers, when it tries to get over their heads in volume and weight, and becomes heavier than is its wont. In short--oxygen becomes ozone. That would account probably for the preliminary symptoms of influenza. Descending and spreading on earth with an extraordinary rapidity, oxygen would of course produce a still greater combustion; hence the terrible heat in the patient's body, and the paralysis of rather weak lungs. What says Science with respect to ozone: "it is the exuberance of the latter under the powerful stimulus of electricity in the air, that produces on nervous people that unaccountable feeling of fear and depression which they so often experience before a storm." Again: "the quantity of ozone in the atmosphere varies with the meteorological condition *under laws so far unknown to science."* A certain amount of ozone is necessary, they wisely say, for breathing purposes, and the circulation of the blood. On the other hand, "too much of ozone irritates the respiratory organs, and an excess of more than 1% of it in the air kills him who breathes it." This is proceeding along occult lines. "The real ozone is the Elixir of Life," says "The Secret Doctrine", Vol. I, p.144, 2nd footnote.\*\* Let the reader compare the above with what he will find stated in the same work about oxygen viewed from the hermetic and occult standpoint (Vide Vo. II, pp. 113 and 114) and he may comprehend the better what some Theosophists think of the present influenza.

*\*\*He who would allotropise sluggish oxygen into OZONE to a measure of alchemical activity, reducing it to its pure essence (for which there are means), would discover thereby a substitute foran "Elixir of Life" and prepare it for practical use.*

It thus followed that the mystically inclined correspondent who wrote in *Novoye Vremlya* (4931, Nov. 19th, old style, 1889) giving sound advice on the subject of the influenza, then just appeared--knew what he was talking about. Summarizing the idea, he stated as follows:

. . . . . . it becomes thus evident that the real cause of the simultaneous spread of the epidemic over all the Empire under the most varied meteorological conditions and climatic changes--are to be sought elsewhere than in the unsatisfactory hygienical and sanitary conditions. . . . .The search for the causes which generated the disease and caused it to spread is not incumbent upon the physicians alone, but *would be the right duty of meteorologists, astronomers, physicians, and naturalists in general,* separated officially substantially from medical men.

This raised a professional storm. The modest suggestion was tabooed and derided; and once more an Asiatic country--China, this time--was sacrificed as a scapegoat to the sin of FOHAT and his too active progeny. When royalty and the rulers of this sublunary sphere have been sufficiently decimated by influenza and other kindred and unknown evils, perhaps the turn of the Didymi of science may come. This will be only a just punishment for their despising the "occult" sciences, and sacrificing truth to personal prejudices.

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Blavatsky, H.P. *Collected Writings of H.P. Blavatsky Vol. XII, 1889-1890 -* Theosophical Publishing House, 1980*,* pp. 106-111