The Superstition of the Mad-Stone.

The ancients ascribed peculiar virtues to the variety of stone called *ammoni cornu*; which was supposed to possess the property of extracting the virus from bites inflicted by mad dogs or venomous reptiles. Pliny alludes to it under the above name, and it has since received the appellation of *ammonite*, both terms referring to its resemblance in shape to the horns which surround the head of Jupiter Ammon. It has also in more modern times, been popularly known as the mad stone and the snake stone. Scientifically speaking, it is the fossil petrification of an extinct mollusk, closely resembling the nautilus, having a spiral, symmetrical, and chambered shell, varying in size from a small bean to that of a large cart-wheel. In the East Indies and China it has for ages enjoyed the reputation mentioned.

In the fourth volume of the *Medical Repository*, an old journal publishen in New York in the beginning of the present century, may be found a communication from a Virginia gentleman, entitled. "The Chinese Snake stone and its operation as an Antidote to Poison." This remarkable stone, it appears, was brought from Bombay in 1740, and a portion of it subsequently came into the hands Rev. Mr. Chaustein, of Frederic County, who employed it in cases of snake and dog bites. The writer describes how his little daughter having been bitten by a mad dog, he was induced to carry her to Mr. Chaustein in order to obtain for her the benefit of his remedy, having been told that the stone, which was in three pieces, would adhere to no wound except one afflicted by a serpent or a mad dog. He tried the experiment by placing a piece on two scratches on the child's body occassioned by a recent fall, but it immediately dropped off. On being applied, however, to the dog bite, it at once took hold like a leech, and continued to stick for eight hours; and the other two peices adhered successively an equal length of time before they fell off. They were then immersed in hot water, when in a short time, a number of small bubbles began to rise, and a scum like oil of a greenish-yellow color, soon covered the surface. The pieces were afterward dried in warm ashes. Mr. Chaustein exhibited a certificate which accompanied the stone from Bombay, and which attested its efficacy in extracting venom from the bites of all poisonous animals. Another piece was in the possession of Mr. Joseph Fredd, of Louden County Va. These wonderful stones doubtless still exist with virtues still unimpaired—a profitable inheritance for those whose privelige it is to bestow their inestimable boon upon credulous humanity.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

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THOMAS W. SAINE.
Hillsboro, Dec, 3d, 1874. n37;w4

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