

How the Famous and Curious MADSTONE Effects Its Cure

**A Strange Stone,
Given to Virginia by
Early Colored Peo-
ple, is Much Vener-
ated in Time of
Trouble.**

By DON CHARLES

IS THERE some mysterious connection between the Dog Star, Sirius, and the strange properties of the Madstone, given to a Virginia family by a venerated colored man?

Science is unable to give a satisfactory answer as to the place of the stars in the affairs of human beings, and it is equally unable to tell just why it is that the odd looking stone, now in the possession of the Virginian gentleman, W. E. Tyler, of Loudoun County, succeeds in every instance, in saving persons from a horrible death from poisoning.

The little village of Aldie, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains but forty miles from Washington, is the place where the famous madstone is kept. There people come from many miles to receive its benefits. Deadly snake bites, the ugly gash made from the tearing fangs of wild cats, stings, and other accidents, are never feared if only the madstone can be secured.

Origin in Africa

The origin of this strange object reaches back to Africa. According to the Tyler family, now custodians of the healing stone, it was the gift of a colored man. Some say it was used for a time in the East Indies; others say that it was brought directly to America. There is no doubt of its qualities, as there is no doubt of the fact that some generous colored individual, many years ago, sent his precious possession to this country as a gift of friendship.

For many years the Tyler family have carefully cherished and preserved the gift. An early Tyler, who was a sea captain, was shown the stone when on one of his trips by way of the Indies and Africa. A member of the family remembers the oft-repeated story which has been brought down from the early days relating that on a stop at a tropical island, a trio of native colored men came to the ship. Large handsome fellows, they were. They asked to see the captain.

The trader received them. After talking over business matters relating to provisions and ornaments and other matters, the friends announced that they would like to show him one of their strange stones.

"The three squatted low on the beach and proceeded to demonstrate their claims as to the wonderful ability of the stones to save life. The eldest," according to Mr. Tyler, "took a kitten from his basket and placed it within reach of a deadly snake that was carried in another basket. Hardly had a minute elapsed when the alert reptile reared his head and struck his fangs deep into the body of the kitten. In ten minutes time the kitten was dead.

Saves Kitten's Life

"Then another kitten was taken from the basket and a snake was allowed to strike it. This time, however the visitor reached into his pocket and took out a strange appearing stone and applied it to the wound made by the serpent's fangs. In a few seconds the kitten revived, jumped up and ran away.

"The captain was invited to test the wonders of the stone by the same method, but he was afraid. Then one of the tall, handsome fellows, bared his arm to a poisonous snake and received a specially large and strong dose of the venom. Immediately an ugly swelling set in, but no time was lost in administering the stone to the wound and it worked so effectively that a cure was made."

It seems that the American sea captain could not then believe his own eyes and refused to believe what he had just observed. He tried to buy one of the strange stones. His offer was refused, but he was given a stone as a token of friendship and for the benefit of "his people," when he should reach home. Thus the



The home of W. E. Tyler in Aldie, Va., where the madstone has been for a number of generations. It is a much prized possession and is guarded very zealously. According to rumor, many efforts have been made to rob the owners of this wonder stone.

madstone came to America.

Stone Never Fails

The stone, it was explained to him, came from the heart of a white deer. Other colored people told that it was specially made by a secret tribal method. Whatever the origin, the stone was carefully preserved on the long homeward trip.

In America the stone was kept in a safe place. Friends and neighbors heard the tale of its mysterious powers. Then when a large copperhead snake sunk its fangs into the hand of a neighbor the stone was called for. The stone was applied and the neighbor recovered. After this, others came to be treated. There is no record of its ever failing to help.

"One lady came all the way from New Orleans," said Mr. Tyler, "asking to have her little daughter treated for a rabid dog bite. It took several days to complete the journey and the child's leg was in terrible condition. But after several applications of the stone, the swelling went down, the wound assumed a pinkish, healthy look, and in a few days the child was restored to perfect health."

There is, too, the account of an old colored man, called Jerry, who was bitten while in the woods. He consulted the village doctor, but the swelling continued. Then the stone was applied and the wound quickly healed.

Mr. Tyler says: "In my father's declining days I often applied the stone, and it seemed quite natural for me to continue to use it, to relieve suffering and distress, as the donor said."

Takes Poison From Body

A madstone seems to have the strange ability to take poison from the body. Just how, why, or in what way it accomplishes this, no one seems to know. Possibly the three colored wise men of an early day understood.

This souvenir is about one and one-fourth inches in length, of a light and dark brown color, resembling an almond in shape.

In time of difficulty, after the sting of a poisonous creature, the stone is first placed in a glass of water, while the wound is scratched with a sharp blade of a knife, then the madstone is applied directly to the wound. If there is poison there, the stone adheres. When all the

poison is drawn out that it can absorb, the stone falls off and must be boiled in milk to restore its ability to help. Sometimes the milk turns a grayish-green color. Afterwards it can be again applied, and as frequently as desired, or until it will no longer stick to the wound.

Saved from Rabies

The Tyler family has never known of an instance where it failed to relieve suffering.

The Aldie madstone was once used by a Washington woman who had been bitten by a large Maltese cat, 15 years ago. Fearing rabies, the woman made the trip into the Blue Ridge Mountains for the sake of the treatment of the madstone. There the charm worked, and today the woman is well. Scientists of the Department of Agriculture who examined the cat found traces of rabies. The madstone, however, drew out the poison and saved the woman's life.

Whether the stone is possessed of magical powers or not, no one knows. Colored people who have studied the origin of these stones claim that it is their ability to absorb substances, to suck out the moisture, that makes them so reliable. Science ignores the subject.

Have Scientific Basis

At the Army Medical Museum in Washington, in a report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, there is an article by Dr. H. C. White who says:

"Madstones immersed in water are found to absorb to an extent of 5 per cent. of their weight. Applied to fresh wounds, carefully adjusted, blood absorbs to a maximum of 2.3 per cent. of weight of the stone."

And further, and highly important, it is stated that, "Madstones boiled in milk or water are found to be toxic in case of venomous wounds."

Quack Madstones

Those who laugh and scoff at the stone that was the gift of early colored folk are thus confronted by the scientific statement.

Of course, there are quack madstones, just as there are quack medicines and quack doctors in the world. But real madstones, like the one at Aldie, do their work thoroughly and conscientiously. It appears to be a fact that many of the so-called mysterious charms hark back to common sense and common medicine. There

was a colored woman known to many friends of the writer, who dosed the children of the family with bluing water whenever the raspy, frightening sound of a croupy cough was heard—and the children never had croup. This fact was mentioned to an eminent doctor, who replied:

"It is not so laughable, indigo is a component part of croup medicine."

Belief in madstones was common hundreds of years ago in many parts of the East. Travelers tell of colored people who had these stones, sometimes called "tabersheer," or opal. Some have said that the stone is made of juice which becomes evaporated, leaving a mucilaginous rather than solid substance.

The great Oriental traveler, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, tells of finding a colored man who had a madstone and who used it to extract poisons. He said: "The test for a true madstone is to place it in the mouth—if good it will leap to the palate and adhere. It also boils water." The boiling water effect was probably caused by the bubbles arising.

Did St. Paul Use It?

Prof. Kunz says: "Madstones actually have property of adhering strongly to the tongue, and when dropped in water emit rapid streams of air bubbles. After absorbing matter they become opal-like. They possess absorption properties to greater degree than any other substance, and it is strange that they have not been used as a more widely used antidote for poison."

At Florence, Italy, in 1863, while excavating on the site of the old Church of the Templars, dedicated to St. Paul, there was found an earthen vase. On this vase in bas-relief, between two designs was a figure of St. Paul being bitten by a serpent, as described in Acts 28th chapter, verses 3 to 6. In Latin was read the inscription, "In the name of St. Paul and by this stone thou shalt draw out poison."

It might appear that there were colored folks in St. Paul's day who knew the secret of this strange stone.

Who knows the secret of a magnet which picks up only certain things? It is possible that the madstone, not mad as its name indicates, possesses a like virtue and hidden strength in eliminating poison.

THE END



The size of the madstone is here shown. It has proved of great value to many colored and white people when bitten by snakes, mad dogs and other poisonous creatures.