



Remedies and Rituals: Folk Medicine in Norway and the New Land

Kathleen Stokker

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To cure a fever that begins with chills, write the following on a piece of bread and give it to the patient for eight days, one piece each day, and on the ninth day, burn the last piece: Colameris x, Colameri x, Colamer x, Colame x, Colam x, Cola x, Col x, Co x, and C x.

To prevent the huldrefolk from stealing your healthy child and leaving a child with rickets in its place, make three dolls from the child's clothing to put into the cradle. The huldrefolk will take one of them instead of your child.

These and many more fascinating folk-healing rituals were secretly administered by healers, “witches,” and religious caregivers who tended the medical and spiritual needs of rural Norwegians for hundreds of years. In *Remedies and Rituals*, Kathleen Stokker culls from hundreds of original documents and first-hand accounts to detail the ingredients, customs, and histories behind natural remedies, potions, whispered spells, and the infamous “black books” used for centuries by Norway’s folk healers.

Stokker also illuminates the surprising personalities of those who risked imprisonment and persecution to help fellow Norwegians throughout the nineteenth century, as well as the often reluctant healers in the U.S. who continued to treat immigrants living in rural communities beyond the reach of doctors. Dodging harsh criminal laws championed by formally trained doctors, these rebel practitioners drew on ancient written and oral sources to treat everything from burns, broken bones, and whooping cough to difficult labors and emotional stress.

Kathleen Stokker is a professor of Norwegian at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Recipient of Norway’s prestigious St. Olav Medal in 2006, she is the author of *Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land* (MHS Press).

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