

## Medical Matters.

### AUSTRALIAN MEDICINAL PLANTS.



AUSTRALIA is rich in plants reputed to possess medicinal virtues, although, at present, only a few have been utilised, and these but to a limited extent. In New South Wales such plants are abundant, many kinds being found in the immediate vicinity of Sydney, especially in the Parramatta district. One of the most common is the Wild Penny-royal, a decoction of which is largely used as a tonic. A valuable oil may be extracted from it, which may be employed both as a medicine and as a means of imparting a pleasant odour and flavour to other ingredients. Two little plants of the Gentian family, plentiful enough in the spring, have proved highly efficacious in certain stages of dysentery. The common Native Raspberry, like other species of *Rubus*, possesses astringent properties, which may one day secure it a place in the colonial pharmacopœia; which already includes the Native Sarsaparilla, although, notwithstanding the latter abounds in the neighbourhood of Sydney, the bulk of the sarsaparilla used by colonial chemists is imported. The country people frequently prepare an agreeable and wholesome tonic from the native plant, which costs nothing save the labour of collecting it. It is also known by the name of Sweet Tea or Wild Liquorice. There is also a native laurel allied to the sassafras of the pharmacopœia, which possesses medicinal properties as yet but little understood. The Native Grape yields a rich crimson jelly, said, when used as a gargle, to be good for relaxed throat. The Native Veronica possesses properties in common with the European species, and the leaves are frequently used for making herb tea. Self-Heal is plentiful and indigenous, as in Europe; it is bitter and astringent, and occasionally used as a substitute for bark. The leaves, in England, are supposed to be efficacious in healing cuts, hence the name. The different species of Native Currant possess a powerful acid, capable of being used for flavouring sugar drops or employed as a substitute for lemon syrup. The Thorn Apple, Castor Oil plant, Pimpernel, American Nightshade, Fennel, Wart-wort, and other plants

differ very slightly, if at all, from those found in other countries. The castor oil plant not only yields the well-known oil, but the leaves have been successfully employed as a galactopœitic, for remedying the absence of milk in the maternal breast. The thorn apple is used as a cure for asthma, the seeds, when expressed and made into an ointment with lard, being good for irritable ulcers, burns, and scalds. The American nightshade is useful as a purgative; and the pimpernel is employed in mania and hydrophobia; the juice, when applied to the eye in certain stages of ophthalmia, having the property of cleansing it in a remarkable manner. The medicinal virtues of the various kinds of Eucalypti, or Gum Trees, have become universally recognised, but it is not so generally known that they are shared also by the different species of Tea Tree and Wattle. The flowers of the Native Pittosporum yield a jasmine-like scent by distillation; and the Boronia and other Rutaceous plants abound in volatile oils. The foregoing are only a few of the many Australian native plants known to possess medicinal properties, and their luxuriant abundance during the greater portion of the year, combined with the ease with which many species can be cultivated in suitable localities, must, at some future date, give them considerable industrial value.

### CÆSARIAN SECTION.

THIS term is applied to the operation of opening the abdomen and the uterus, in order thus to remove a living child in cases in which it is impossible, either through disease or deformity, to effect delivery in the natural manner. It is believed that the term originated in the legend that Julius Cæsar was born in this manner. But the operation has become not only more frequently employed, but also with much greater success, in suitable cases, during the last few years, than was formerly considered justifiable; the advances which have been made in abdominal surgery having led to an immense diminution in the mortality both amongst mothers and infants. This is now recognized also as the method which should be adopted in the case of those advanced in pregnancy beyond the seventh month—the child being, therefore, likely to live—who are at the point of death, either from accident or disease. By this operation, the life of the child is often saved in such cases.

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