

## Some Curious Remedies.

By Mrs. WESTAWAY.

It is sometimes stated that during the nineteenth century the progress in Surgery was phenomenal, but Medicine was at a standstill. Nurses have a better idea than the general public of the standard reached by medical men of the present day, and it is not without interest to compare that knowledge with the condition of medical treatment during the eighteenth century. Medical training was then not so definitely recognised as necessary, nor was medical attendance so easily available, and the natural consequence was that medical treatment rested largely in the hands of the housewife. Those were the days prior to the cycle, the neurotic novel, and bridge, when the interests of the housewife centred chiefly in the homestead, and the preparation of food and medicaments gave an interest to life when other interests were lacking. Each housewife of pretensions owned a still, and the present-day still-room devoted to the interests of tea and cakes is the relic of a former important branch of domestic economy. The cookery books of the eighteenth century were largely devoted to directions for making remedies and medicaments, and the study of those books is interesting and amusing.

"The Compleat Housewife" (1728), by E. S., has the largest and most comprehensive assortment of recipes of "medicines and various other things of sovereign and approved efficacy in most distempers, pains, aches, wounds, sores, &c., never before made public, fit either for private families or such public-spirited gentlewomen as would be beneficent to their poorer neighbours." The preface states that the remedies have been so efficacious that they have cured when all other means have failed, and that a few of them which have been communicated to a friend have procured a very handsome livelihood. As an incentive to gentlewomen to apply these remedies to their poorer neighbours, the preface holds out the "hope of a reward (though not by way of merit) in the world to come."

It is difficult at the present time to know to what use some of the preparations are put. Dr. Steven's Water and Aqua Mirabilis are composed of various herbs and spices, but no directions are given as to how or when they should be taken. Several of them are for the "greatest illnesses," but whether that refers to any special diseases or to all mortal ones it is impossible to say. Lady Hewet's Water is said to be the best of all cordials in the greatest illness; two or three spoonfuls are enough to revive when near death. Lady Allen's Water is not recommended in such strong terms.

Flowers and herbs play a very important part in the preparation of nearly all the cordials. No fewer than fourteen varieties of flowers and fifteen kinds of spices enter into the composition of the "great

Palsey Water." It is true that the number of its virtues exceed the number of its ingredients, so it is not surprising to find that they include the power of strengthening the memory and sweetening the breath.

Lily of the Valley Water is another cordial which is supposed to strengthen the memory, and it has the additional merit of comforting the heart and reducing inflammation of the eyes.

It is not only that the ingredients are varied; they are used in what appears to be enormous quantities when the preparations are for private and parochial rather than universal use. The great Palsey Water already mentioned has "as many lavender flowers stript from their stalks as will fill a gallon glass." The preparation of Walnut Water requires a peck of walnuts, twelve quarts of various flowers, 5 oz. of sundry spices, a gallon of brandy, and two gallons of the strongest ale."

Several of the cordials bear the names of ladies, a few bear the names of doctors, but only two in this collection are named after non-professional men.

These two men are Charles II. and Mr. Denzil Onslow, and each gives the name to a surfeit water. It is easy to guess the source of their interest in such water.

Certain remedies had to be worn or carried about the person. Thus, for cramp, garters are recommended which are made of linen in a double fold and filled with chopped rosemary. The cure for an Ague runs: "Take small Packthread, as much as will go five times about the Neck, Wrists, and Ankles; dip them in Oil of Amber twice a day for nine days together, keep them on a Fortnight after the Ague is gone." Children cutting their teeth were supposed to cut them easily if they wore a special necklace. The beads were to be made of the roots of henbane, orpin, and vervain arranged alternately, and the necklace was to be soaked in red wine containing red coral and single piony root finely powdered.

It appears that the moon was considered a potent factor in the efficacy of most remedies. A Stone Water and various drinks to prevent fits have to be taken at the changes of the moon, and a clyster for the worms is best "three days before the new or full moon." The treatment of a man or beast bitten by a mad dog might prove that delays are dangerous, for it is to be given "by pouring into the party bitten five or six spoonfuls three days before the full or new moon next happening after the party has been bitten." An ointment which causes the hair to grow, and which is made of the ashes of burnt bees, has to be rubbed on to the head which has been shaved the day before the full moon.

Most of the remedies are produced by distillation, but there are others which are compounded at lower temperatures. One has to be set in sand to keep it

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