

A DERBY APOTHECARY'S BILL.

By SAMUEL TAYLOR.

AMONG the many interesting papers which have been found at Radbourne Hall during the last year or two and which have been investigated by the editors of this journal, is one which, small though it is and prosaic in its contents, sheds some historical light upon the late 17th century. A single sheet of paper measuring 15½ ins. by 6 ins. and folded in six, it might easily have been destroyed or lost, and it is a matter for congratulation that it lay in its little parcel safely for 250 years and is still in excellent preservation, in spite of the fact that the date proves it to have been transferred from the Old Hall to the cupboard in which it was found in the present one.

It is quite obviously an account rendered for goods supplied by William Franceys the Derby apothecary, and it belongs to the time when the Apothecary was the retailer of drugs and chemicals rather than a man who practised the art of medicine. The Apothecaries Society was founded in the year 1617, but it was not until 1703-4 that its members were recognised as medico-pharmaceutical practitioners, and even then the progress of such recognition was graded through the 18th century.

	March ye 16 1696
Madame Pole	
Spir Vitriall & Sulphur	... 0 0 8
Dryd Red Rose Leaves	... 0 1 4
April 20	
fine Bole oz. xviii	... 0 3 0
Resin 2 b.	... 0 1 6
Red Leade b. iiij	... 0 1 0
Wh Leade & Red Leade	... 0 0 5
Spir Castor & hartshorn	... 0 2 0
May 12	
Yellow wax b. 1 oz. xj	... 0 7 7
Venis Turpentine oz. xvj	... 0 3 0
Sonders oz. vj	... 0 2 0
Saffron	... 0 1 0
Gum	... 0 0 6
Mosche 4 grn. 12d. Cardamoms 6d.	... 0 1 6

A DERBY APOTHECARY'S BILL

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19	Japon Earth	...	0	0	6
	Verdigris oz. 4	...	0	1	4
	Mosche 4 gr.	...	0	1	0
	Leather 6d. fr Back Plaster 12d.	...	0	1	6
	Cubebs, Gallangall & Millefleurs	...	0	0	5
	Cardamoms 9d., Carr Seeds 8d.	...	0	1	5
	fine biskit b. j	...	0	2	0
June	9 Scordium & Cardus	...	0	0	8
	hartshorn b. i	...	0	3	0
	Spirit hartshorn	...	0	1	0
	Car Comfits & wh oyntment	...	0	1	8
	precipitate	...	0	1	0
	Bassillicon	...	0	0	6
	Mastick	...	0	1	0
	Red Leade 6 b.	...	0	1	6
26	Oyle Spicke	...	0	1	0
	Spir Vitriall	...	0	1	0
	Gum Dragon	...	0	0	6
	a blystering plaster	...	0	0	6
July	6 Mana & Crem tarter	...	0	1	0
	Storax & benjamin	...	0	1	8
	Iriss & Lavender	...	0	0	10
	The herbs & biskit	...	0	1	3
	A skin of Leather	...	0	0	7
Aug.	6 wh Leade 2d., wh oyntment 3d.	...	0	0	5
	Camphor	...	0	0	6
12	Black Soape	...	0	2	8
20	Venis Turpentine	...	0	3	0
	Mosche gr. 4	...	0	1	0
	Sonders oz. ij, red Leade 2½d.	...	0	0	10½
	Red Leade 4 b.	...	0	1	0
	fine Bole oz. i8	...	0	3	0
	wh Leade 2d., Oyle Exiter 9d.	...	0	0	11
	Diachylon wth Gums oz. xij	...	0	4	0
21	Aloes Gallangall & Zedoria	...	0	1	3
	Rhubarb & flor of brimstone	...	0	1	3
Sept.	4 Japon Earth 6d., flyes 2d.	...	0	0	8
	Mosche gr. iiij	...	0	1	0
	Camphor	...	0	0	9
21	Saltpeter i b.	...	0	2	0
29	Liccorish	...	0	0	9

£3 17 4½

October ye 12 1697

Received these ye full Contents of this bill & alle due moneys
V Wm. frranceys.

The still room of the large country house in the 17th century was a very busy place, and the preparation of medicines was an important occupation there. Most houses kept a record of remedies and their uses, and many of these written books are in existence. It is unfortunate that we have not the one used at Radbourne to read so that we might get a first hand account of the uses of the substances mentioned in the bill. There are others, however, in which we may find some guidance and perhaps the most notable English work is the "Arcana Fairfaxiana" which was printed in facsimile by George Weddell of Newcastle some seventy years or so ago.

The first thing which strikes one on reading the list of substances is how very few have passed from the shelves of pharmacy — four or five at the most: Millefleurs, Scordium, Caraway Comfits, Biskit and Zedoria. A few others are stored away as curiosities — Spirit of Castor, Venice Turpentine and Galangal. The great majority remain and are still articles of commerce, if not of medicine. It will serve best if we look at the list in order and comment where necessary.

There is no obvious reason why *sulphuric acid* and *sulphur* should be classed together. Probably it was just as it happened.

Red Rose leaves were very much used but generally they were gathered fresh from the garden.

Bole, or as it was called later Armenian Bole, is an oxide of iron and is used as a red colouring matter. More than 2 lb. was used during the period of this bill. Perhaps some was made into a kind of red-raddle for colouring red tiles or for polishing. Very large quantities have been made in Derby in the past.

Whereas *White Lead* would enter into some medicinal preparations such as ointments or salves, *Red Lead* affords ground for conjecture. Such a large quantity was bought during the period that it may have been used as a paint.

Spirit of Castor would be the alcohol-soluble portion of Castoreum from the beaver — *Castor faber* — and was probably used as it is to-day, as a basis in perfumery.

Many pharmacists will still remember the old shop bottle labelled SPIRIT CORNU CERVI. It is now replaced by Solution of Ammonia with which it can be identified. *Spirit of Hartshorn* is still asked for as an ingredient of old family recipes for embrocations.

Venice Turpentine is still an article of commerce and is quoted in drug lists. It was largely used in veterinary practice and should be the oleo-resin secreted by *Larix Europæa*. Its place of origin is the Tyrol but a greater part of that used was artificially made from resin and turpentine.

Sonders is the heartwood of a tree — *Pterocarpus Santalinus* — which contains a red colouring matter soluble in alcohol. It provides the colour in Red Lavender which many will know.

It is unfortunate that the quantity of *Saffron* which was bought for a shilling is not stated. The shilling would now buy two or three grains.

Japon Earth will be *Terra Japonica*, Cutch or Black Catechu, a tannin extracted from *Acacia Catechu* and occurring in almost black masses. It would probably be used for tanning, being valued for the rich brown colour imparted to leather. Its medicinal use was as an astringent.

Gallengall was once considered to be a species of iris. It is still obtainable and the plant yielding it is *Alpinia Officinarum*, which is of Chinese origin.

Fine Biskit need cause no great surprise. Its preparation occurs in the still-room books of the period. Two recipes are given to provide a contrast and to add spice to the venom of those who think the people of to-day degenerate:—

- (1) Taken from "Woolley, H. The Queen-like Closet 1675 . . . To make very fine Biskit. Take half a pound of searced sugar, the yolk of six eggs, a little searced spice, and seeds, and a little ambergreece of musk, your eggs must be very hard, then put all these into a mortar and beat them into a paste with a little Gum Dragon steeped in Rose Water all night, then mould it up with fine sugar and make it into pretty Fancies and dry them in a warm oven."

- (2) Taken from "Arcana Fairfaxiana" and written in the hand of the Rev. Henry Fairfax about 1650. "Take ye whites of ten eggs and ye yolkes of eight, a pound of sugar and a pound of flour ye finest yu can gett being very finely searced through a cypress.¹ Put ye eggs into a wooden basin and beat them one full houre and looke there be no stringes in them, and when yu think they be well, put in ye sugar by a good spoonful or two at once and so will yu have put in all ye sugar still keeping it continually beating, and when yu have ye sugar another houre put in ye Flower as yu did ye sugar by a spoonful or two at once and beate them as before a whole houre. Then put in a little Musk blend with a little sugar and 2 or 3 spoonfuls of Rose water, then put in ye seeds as many as yu like and when yu have beaten it 3 full houres and ye Plates ready rubbed with a little fresh Butter then yu may make them to what fashion yu please and set them in ye oven letting them stand till they be well baked." More than six hours beating at 2/- a pound!

Scordium was the Water-Germander — *Teucrium scordium* — chiefly used in fomentation.

Cardus. One of the many thistles and probably *Cardus fullorum* or *Cardus benedictus*, each of which was used medicinally.

Caraway Comfits. Although these have been used in comparatively recent times, the following is taken from "The Queen-like Closet of 1675:—

To make an excellent cake with Caraway Comfits, take five pounds of manchet Paste mingled very stiff and light without Salt, cover it, and let it be rising half an hour, when your Oven is almost hot, take two pounds and a halfe of butter, very good, and melt it and take five Eggs, yolks and whites beaten, and half a pound of Sugar, mingle them together with your Paste and let it be as lithe as possible you can work it, and when your oven is hot and swept, strew into your cake one pound of Caraway Comfits, then butter

¹ "Cypress Lynyne Clothe" is a light transparent material resembling cobweb-lawn or crepe. The fabric was originally from or through Cyprus.

a baking pan, and bake it in that; let it stand one hour and quarter; when you draw it, lay a course linnen Clothe and a woollen one over it, so let it lie until it be cold, then put it into an Oven the next day, for a little time, and it will eat as though it were made of almonds, you must put in your sugar after your Butter."

Basilicon. The present day equivalent is Resin Ointment. It is not so likely to be Basilicum or Sweet Basil used as a flavouring.

Oil of Spike is a coarse kind of lavender oil.

Manna was sometimes spelt with one n. It is a saccharine secretion from a species of Ash.

Storax and *Benjamin* were probably used in making perfume sachets; numerous recipes for these exist. At the present time they are ingredients in Friar's Balsam. By a coincidence there has lately come to notice a Pharmacy jar in Italian Deruta majolica, bearing both the date 1562 and the arms of Pole of Radbourne. The label on the jar is BENGIVI, which is Benjamin or Benzoin.

On August 12th the item is *Black Soap*. This occurs commonly with the method of preparation. It is a potash soap made from wood ashes in which the carbonised wood remains.

On August 20th one of the items, *Oil of Exiter* — or Exeter — seems very interesting since Exeter House was just across the way in Full Street. Formulæ for its preparation occur frequently, and there is perhaps no connection of a neighbourly kind. Two formulæ are given — one showing the complex type of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the other the simplified one of the 19th century. The earlier one is taken from "The Arcana Fairfaxiana", where it is written in the Italian hand and therefore about the year 1600. "To make Oile of Exiter — take a pound of flowers of Pagles (Pagils or common cowslip) in May and stip yem in as much oyle olif as they may easily be laid in. Then take Calamint (Nepeta) herb John, Juice of Sage, umbergreece, egremony, southerwood (a species of Artemisia), pennyriall, lavender spicke, pellitory of spain, rosemary, camomill, leaves of

sorrell, flowers of lillies of each a handfull, gather them in the month of June, beate them in a mortar as small as can be, then take ye flowers and wringe them out of ye oile, with veary cleane hands, and put them in white wine a night and a daie. Then take ye herbs with ye wine and boile them together with ye oile, over a soft fire, so long till the wine and water be wasted."

A 19th-century formulary publishes the recipe in the *London Pharmacopœia* of 1677:—

	Oleum Excestrense	
Green oil of elder		16 lb.
Euphorbium		
Mustard		
Castor		
Pyrethrum	of each	1 oz.

and adds the note "the original formula had 31 ingredients, which were to be infused in the wine and oil, but it is now seldom made — the green oil of elder is usually substituted for it."

Diachylon with Gums was a plaster in common use. It combined Diachylon or Litharge plaster with Ammoniacum and Bees-wax. It is on record that on October 7th, 1800, Messrs. Schieffelin of New York sold 2 lbs. of Diachylon with Gums at 4/- per lb.

Zedoría of August 21st proved to be the most difficult word to read. There are several kinds of Zedoary, the one most usually sold was *Zedoría rotunda*, which comes from Bengal. It is of the type of Turmeric and was used as a kind of ginger, but it is said to be less effective. Both the Gallangall and the *Zedoría* were used as correctives to the Aloes.

The *Flyes* of September 4th would be Cantharides beetles for making a blister. The rest of the bill is obvious, but one cannot avoid regretting that in so many instances the quantity of goods bought is not given.

The receipt for payment, which was written on the back, and folded before the ink was dry, is of interest in its form of words and the use of the V for *vide licet* so often used and so difficult to translate.

The original bill is placed in a locked case, with a

photograph of it on the outside. It is in the care of the Pharmaceutical Society where it will be seen by many pharmacists who will be most apt to appreciate its historical significance.

My thanks are due to Major J. W. Chandos-Pole, squire of Radbourne, for his great kindness in surrendering the document to pharmacy, and to Miss Agnes Lothian, the librarian of the Pharmaceutical Society who has helped me to determine the more difficult words.