

MEDICAL RECIPES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

By JOHN HEWITT.

AMONG the manuscripts of the Cathedral library at Lichfield is a folio volume of Recipes belonging to Sir John Floyer, physician to King Charles the Second, who resided and practised in Lichfield. He was born at Hints, near that city, where the family has flourished to the present day. He published several works of a professional character, the chief of which was an essay "On the Use and Abuse of hot, cold, and temperate Baths in England." Near a rocky glen in the vicinity of Lichfield he constructed a cold bath, to which he gave the name of Saint Chad's Bath. This property afterwards came into the possession of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and was formed by him into that "Botanic Garden" which in his time had considerable celebrity. The bath buildings and the garden still remain, in a state of ruin indeed, but very picturesque.

Sir John Floyer died in 1733, and bequeathed his library to Queen's College, Oxford.

The volume of Recipes and Prescriptions is entirely in manuscript, and appears to have been written at different periods of life. We give a few samples of the contents :—

"Dimness of Sight."

"For dimness of y^e Eyes eat 12 leaves of Rue in a morning with bread and butter, and it will very much avail."

"Bleeding stopd."

"Take red nettles, stamp y^m and straine them alone, then take y^e juice and rubb all over y^e forehead and temples, so lett it dry upon y^e face 7 or 8 hours, after you may wash it of, but if y^u bleede againe, renew it."

For the plague, we have "the Medicine y^t y^e Ld. Major of London had sent him from Q. Elisa : " The ingredients

are sage, rue, elder leaves, red bramble leaves, white wine and ginger. "So drink of it evening and morning 9 dayes together: the first spoonfull will by Gods grace preserve safe for 24 dayes, and after y^e ninth spoonfull for one whole yeare."

Another "safe medicine" is as follows :—"Take a locke of y^r Owne hair, cutt it as small as may bee, and so take it in beere or wine."

The next is not so appetising : "For a dull hearing. Take a grey snaile, prick him, and putt y^e water w^{ch} comes from him into y^e eare and stop it with black wool, it will cure."

"To cure the biting or stinging of a Snake as it hath been often tryed."

"Take y^e leaves of a Burr-dock, stamp and straine y^m and so drink a good quantity, halfe a pint at y^e least, y^e simple juice itselſe is best."

Here is another antidote to the plague :—"Take a Cock chicken and pull off y^e feathers from y^e Tayle till y^e rump bee bare, yⁿ hold y^e bare of y^e same upon y^e sore, and y^e chicken will gape and labor for life, and in y^e end will dye, then take another and do y^e like, and so another still as they dye, till one lives, for then y^e venome is drawne out. The last chicken will live and y^e patient will mend very speedily."

"A most pretious Water of Wallnuts"

Cures many ailments. Among the rest : "One drop in y^e Eyes healeth all infirmityes, it healeth palsy, it causeth sleep in y^e night. If it be used moderately with wine, it preserveth life so long as nature will permitt."

"For Sciatica."

The principal ingredient is "the marrow of a Horse (kill'd by chance, not dying of any disease) mixed with some rose water. * * * Chafe it in with a warme hand for a quarter of an houre, then putt on a Scarlett cloth, Broad enough to cover y^e part affected and go into a warme Bed. It cured my Aunt Lakes, who went yearly to the Bath for y^e Sciatica, but never went after she knew and used this medicine."

"A blow on y^e Eye."

"My Father Fl. (Floyer) going into Salisbury received so violent a blow from y^e Coachman's whip upon his Eye that nothing of y^e Eye could bee seene, but was like a piece of marrow of different colours. An excellent oculist, Dr. Turbeville, living there, thus cur'd him, above his owne expectation, my Father being then neere 60 yeares of age. He sent for young pigeons, and letting y^m blood under y^e wing, as fast as he could, putt y^e warme blood into his Eye for halfe an houre together, after which he lay'd on a warme cloth and bound up his Eye for that night. In y^e morning he brought with him y^e seeds of Oculus Christi and putt y^m into y^e corner of his Eye, after which with a decoction of Balme and Betony he wash't it often in a day w^h a sponge; and this in a short time restored y^e Sight perfect."

"For the asthma" we have :—"R. the inner part of Ash keyes, parsly roots, powder of jett. After all, the powder of a Sea horse."

"For a Cold."

"Virginia Tobacco (y^e stronger y^e better) dried and powdered to Snuff, and so taken at going to bed, is most excellent for a cold."

"Dr. Watson of Sutton, when my wife was confined and in great danger, directed her to take purple sewing silke, and cutt it very small with sizars, as much as could ly upon a 6^d, and having turned the white of an Egg out, mix the silke and yelke, filling y^e Shell up with the best Alecant wine in y^e roome of y^e white, so stirr it up well and sup it of. Excellent. My wife has given it to others very successfully."

"Convulsions."

"R. the furr of a living Bear's belly, boil it in Aqua Vitæ, take it out, squeeze it and wrap it upon y^e soales of y^e Feet."

"Another."

"The kneebone of an Hare taken out alive and worne about the necke is excellent against Convulsion fitts."

"Calculus."

"Dr. Meazler told mee (19 Feb. 167⁹/₁) that an ingenious Gentleman near y^e Mines in Derbshire assured him that

Sparr, pounded small and drunk in White wine or Ale, is an excellent remedy in this disease."¹

"Head-ache."

"The juice of Ground-ivy snuft up into y^e nose out of a spoone taketh away y^e greatest paine thereof that is. This medicine is worth gold, says E. T."

For Consumption is recommended an infusion in which the following ingredients take part :—Malaga-sacke, liverwort, Dandaleon-root scrap't and y^e pith tooke out, and a piece of Elecampane slic't. "My sister Legge sent this to my Lady Archbold 25 Jan. 167²/₃ with this comendation, that it hath done great wonders and such cures of Consumption as never were knowne before, and that it cost y^e Countess of Denbigh 40^{li}."

A portion of the volume is devoted to the maladies of various quadrupeds and birds. The ailments of each class are thrown into groups, and a certain small number of medicines (ranging from 12 to 3) are assigned for the cure of all in each group. The horse, as the noblest animal, requires the largest medicine-chest. The heading is "All Diseases of Horses cured by 12 Medicines." Omitting the various ailments which it is destined to terminate, we give "The Second Medicine."

"Ffirst lett the horse blood in the neck vene till it run pure, bleed him well, then stanch the vene. Then take of Assafetida as much as a hazle-nutt, dissolve it in a saucer of stronge wine vinegar : Dip flax hurds therein, stop the same hard into the horses eares, stitch the tops of y^e eares with a needle and thread to keepe the medicine in. Then take the white cankerous Moss that grows upon an old Oake an handfull or more ; a roote or two of elecampane, boil it in a pottle of new milke to the halfe, give it the horse lookwarne in the morning fasting." * * * Finally, little cakes are prepared of Colts-foot, turpentine, and some other ingredients.

¹ Of calcareous medicines, Charles Stothard, in his Memoirs, gives us an amusing anecdote. Writing from Bunbury in Cheshire, he says, "The effigy of Sir Hugh Calveley, a great soldier under the Black Prince, is my subject, and in tolerable preservation, considering the hazards it has already run of being

pounded and given in powders to cattle ; for alabaster, I understand, is a sovereign remedy for the rot in sheep, and other disorders of that nature. The knight's feet, sword, fingers, and part of his crest, have already been used for the above purpose."—Memoirs, p. 108.

"Then take a chafeing dish of coales, lay one or two (of the cakes) on the coales, make the horse's head fast, let him take the smoake up his nostrills through a Funnell. Though at first hee be coy to take it, yet when hee hath once ffelt the smell hee will of his owne accord thrust his nose to it."

"The ffourth Medicine."

"Take the earth Lome of a mud wall which hath no lime in it, but onely earth and straw or litter, boile it in strong wine vinegar till it become very thick" (&c., &c.).

Other horse medicines are the following :

"For the Eyes."

"Fourty Millepedes bruised and given in y^e juice of Celandine is excellent good for diseases in y^e Eyes, of all sorts."

"For a kell or Filme"

"Mr. Birch of Stafford directed Franck, Coachman, to take a green oake-stick, thick as his legg or more, bore a hole 4 or 5 inches deep, fill it with ordinary salt, then putt y stick into an oven that is heating, and when y^e stick is burnt to a cole, take it out and you will find a cylinder of salt very hard ; take of y^e powder of it, and blow it into y^e Eye. It perfectly cur'd one of y^e Coach-horses in fewe dayes, after y^e use of severall medicines in vaine."

"The Emperor of All medicines concerning horses" is too long to transcribe.

"Ffor a sore Eye."

"Take the ffyne powder of Ginger and ffyne sugar and blow it into the Eye with a quil."

"All diseases in Oxen, Cows, Bulls, and Calves cured by 7 medicines."

* * * in Sheep with six medicines.

* * * in Swine with three medicines.

* * * in Doggs with three medicines.

"Madness in a Dog or anything."

"Pega, tega, sega, docemena Mega. These words written, and y^e paper rowl'd up and given to a Dog or any thing that is mad, cure him. W. Whitby told me he had it from Mr.

Brisco of Farrall, who was bitt by a mad dog and in a very ill frantick condition, his Friends much troubled resolved to send him to sea and use all meanes for his recovery, an Italian Mountebank by chance came where he was, and understanding y^e matter, gave him y^t verse as 'tis directed and it cured him. Mr. Wh. says he has cured many of his dogs with it. Very strange.

Conies and hares are subject to two infirmityes onely, cured by the following medicine. * * * All Poultry, as Cocks, hens, Turkeyes, peacocks, pheasants, partridges, quails, doves, are cured with ffoure medicines.

All Singing Birds, as nightingale, linnett, Solitary sparrow,² goldfinch, miskine,³ spink,⁴ Cannary bird, Cordiall⁵ larke, Callandar,⁶ blackbird, Robbin, throstle, are cured with three medicines.

Lastly come the Hawks, seemingly a pampered race, for their maladies require six medicaments.

We might greatly have augmented these extracts, but enough is given to indicate the state of medical science under the Merry Monarch. Nothing less than a perusal of the volume itself would be required to learn fully what our ancestors had to undergo when in the doctor's hands. Many of the ingredients are of so—eccentric a nature that Macbeth's cauldron is quite appetising in comparison :

“Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blindworm's sting.”

No doubt Shakespeare was well acquainted with the pharmacopœia of the Court Doctors of his day.

Sir John appears to have devoted particular attention to the ever-prevalent English malady of consumption. Amongst the foregoing nostrums will be found one compounded of Malaga, with various herbs scraped and sliced, “that hath done great wonders,” enhanced by the fact “that it cost y^e

² Probably the Reed-sparrow, *Emberiza Schœniclus* of the ornithologists.

³ *Qy.* the Siskin. *Fringilla spinus* of Linnaeus. *Carduelis spinus* of Yarrell.

⁴ “Spinke, the Chaffinch :” Minsheu. This name, still current in Lancashire, is derived from the call-note of the bird.

⁵ The sky-lark. *Corydalis* : *Κορυδαλός*.

⁶ The Calandra lark. “Calandra seu

Alauda maxima” of Aldrovandus, ii. 846. “Grosse alouette ou Calandre” of Buffon, v. 49. Well figured and described in Gould, vol. iii., and in the “Birds of Europe,” by Sharpe and Dresser, pt. 5, July, 1871. The home of this bird, however, is the south of Europe, being most rarely found in England.

Countess of Denbigh 40th." It appears, however, that Floyer had even greater reliance on the sovereign virtues of cold water, administered externally. He spared no pains to inculcate on sufferers from rheumatism, nervous disorders, and other maladies, the virtue of cold bathing, and maintained that the prevalence of consumption in this country dated only from the time when baptism by immersion had been discontinued. This remarkable feature in his medical practice brought Floyer into special favour with the Baptists, and their annalist, Crosby, cites repeatedly his "Enquiry into the right use of Baths," and his "Essay to restore the Dipping of Infants," in support of their dogma in regard to the proper administration of the rite. It must not be forgotten that Sir John had faith in the time-honoured practice of having recourse to the Royal Touch; by his advice, it is believed, Dr. Johnson, when an infant, was conveyed to London to benefit by the healing powers of Queen Anne. The identical golden angel suspended by a riband on the occasion by the Queen's hand is now preserved in the British Museum, and has been figured in this Journal, vol. x. p. 198. The belief in such inherent virtue was, however, general amongst the faculty, both in this country and in France. A learned prelate, in a careful examination of such miraculous gifts, quotes the testimony of the Sergeant-Surgeon to Queen Anne, affirming that the facts "cannot be denied without resisting evidence far from contemptible."⁷

⁷ Some singular recipes are contained in a small volume kindly brought by Sir Jervoise C. Jervoise, Bart., in illustration of the above subject. It is entitled "*La Physique occulte, ou traité de la Baguette Divinatoire*," by M. de Vallemont, printed

at Amsterdam in 1693. In the course of the work the author speaks of the wonderful cures effected by Robert Flud, a "savant Anglois," by a process of transplantation which de Vallemont evidently favoured.