

Forgotten Friends, or Good Remedies Out of Fashion Reintroduced to Pharmacy.

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Encouraged by the success of my article "Old Friends in New Faces," I have been led to prepare the following article, which might almost be called a sequel to it.

The chief *raison d'être* of this compilation is, that while monographs, essays and books on "New Drugs" and "New Remedies" may fairly be said to be crowding the shelves of our professional book-sellers, no author has taken the trouble to pick out the old remedies of our forefathers from the cobwebs and dust of oblivion into which they have fallen, and present them with accurate credentials of their known virtues, faults and failings to the present generation of pharmacists, asking them, before ignoring their existence, to submit them to a fair test in the bright light of modern physiological and chemical research.

This I have endeavoured to do in the following pages, and although my work has been neither easy nor expeditious, it has been at all times a labour of love, for I must confess to a very strong partiality for old remedies, and have devoted no small proportion of my professional leisure to the investigation of their properties, as will be evidenced by my notes on many of the drugs included in my collection of "Forgotten Friends."

Another object of this little thesis is to endeavour to revive among physicians and pharmacists the almost extinct interest in the therapeutic properties of the indigenous plants of our country; for surely, it seems to me, there is little sense or economy in importing barks and roots from African forests and Brazilian jungles while we have herbs in our English meadows, and trees in our Scottish woods, with similar and equally efficient properties!

ABSINTHIUM.—This good old English herb is rarely used in Great Britain, but it is high in favour on the Continent. Its botanical name is *Artemisia absinthium*, and it belongs to the *Compositæ*. The dried herb is given in doses of 20 to 60 grains as an anthelmintic; the volatile oil, in doses of 5 to 6 minims, a carminative; and the infusion (1 in 20, half-an-hour) is a valuable and pleasant aromatic bitter. Wormwood is the chief constituent of the French beverage absinthe, which plays sad havoc with the mind and body of the Parisian debaucher. It is, to the British palate, a most disagreeable beverage. The well-known vermouth, by far the most popular liquor in Southern France and Italy, and now largely imported into England, is simply a strong sweetened tincture of wormwood. The plant is official in the Pharmacopœias of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States.

ACETOSELLA.—The wood sorrel, or *Oxalis acetosella*, of the order *Oxalidaceæ*, grows luxuriously all over the British Isles, and finds its way into most of the potions and ptisans of the wise women of the country parts. It is used as a refrigerant in fevers and as an alterative in chronic skin diseases, but is probably of chief use as a cooling antiscorbutic. The fresh-gathered plant should be taken freely, either as a salad or boiled in buttermilk.

ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM. This plant, of the daisy order, entered largely into the prescriptions of the old world gynecologists. The fresh infusion ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to the pint) was recommended in ounce doses for the leucorrhœa of the young, and also in amenorrhœa and dysmenorrhœa. It was given by some of the last century writers for hæmorrhoidal and uterine hæmorrhage and has been suggested as a stimulating tonic in atonic dyspepsia, and as an antispasmodic instead of valerian.

AGARICUS ALBUS.—This fungus, found growing on the larch, was in bye-gone days used as a purgative, as it produces copious watery stools in large doses. Modern investigators have eliminated an active principle called agaricine, which has been introduced by my friend, Dr. Murrell, who is an earnest believer in old remedies, as a substitute for belladonna in the night sweats of phthisis. In small doses (2 to 5 grs.) the dried and powdered fungus is of great value in diarrhœa and dysentery, and has an influence superior to ergot or tannin on the hæmoptysis of the consumptive.

ALLIUM. Garlic is a remedy, the disappearance of which from the modern British pharmacy passes all understanding. The bulb of the *Allium sativa* (natural order, *Liliacæ*) is one of the most valuable stimulants and antispasmodics in the whole of the materia medica. It should be given either as an one in five tincture of the bulbs in doses of from 60 to 120 minims, or as the freshly expressed juice in 10 to 30 minim doses. It will be found a powerful expectorant, closely resembling ipecacuanha in its action, and is chiefly indicated in the bronchitis of the renal sufferer, as it is also a valuable diuretic, acting in the same nature as squill. Old writers declare it is a certain anthelmintic for the *ascaris lumbricoides*, or round worm, and it was at one time the carminative, *par excellence*, of the country apothecary. Garlic is still deservedly retained in the French, German, United States and most foreign pharmacopœias.

ALTHEA.—Across the English Channel marsh-mallow still holds the galenic rank it once held in England. It is the emollient and demulcent expectorant, *sans rivale*, of our French colleagues, and in the form of a concentrated decoction (1 oz. to the pint) is used as a fomentation where we use chamomile and poppies, and also as a poultice in inflamed mammae and acute joint affections.

APIUM PETROSELINUM.—Long before

pharmacists ever heard of the steoptenoapiol, common parsley was a well-appreciated member of materia medica. It is chiefly used as an antipyretic, but was known to be a useful diuretic. The search-light of modern science has shown the herb and its steopteno to be of great value in some forms of amenorrhœa, and dysmenorrhœa.

ANGELICA. This common member of the *Umbellifere* was formerly in high repute as an aromatic stimulant and stomachic. The most active parts of the plant, from a therapeutic aspect, are the root and fruit, and it is best given in ounce doses of the fresh infusion of the fruit (1 in 20, one hour). The candied root is an agreeable carminative, similar to prepared ginger.

ARISTOLOCHIA.—Birthwort has so entirely disappeared from our modern medicine that the author has found considerable difficulty in securing a specimen for experimenting with. It belongs to the same order as serpentina, and grows all over this country and Southern Europe. It is a useful, stimulating vegetable tonic, like the last named drug, but unlike it possesses marked emmenagogue properties. On this account it has been used, prior to the introduction of ergot, in conjunction with savin as an emmenagogue, and also to procure criminal abortion.

ASARUM EUROPEUM.—*Asarabacca* is another member of the *Aristolochiaceæ*, which grows on our English meadows, and has fallen from its high estate among therapeutic agents. The dried and powdered root was used in the days of Sydenham as an emetic, expectorant and errhine. In doses of from 10 to 30 grains I have found it a prompt and valuable emetic, while a tincture prepared by macerating two ounces of the root in proof spirit for seven days, and filtering seems to possess all the expectorant virtues of Tinctura Scilla, L. P. As an errhine, old works recommend it for aborting "cold in the head," but I cannot recommend it for this affection.

ASPALATHUS.—The root of this plant was at one time highly esteemed for its diuretic properties, and largely prescribed in dropsy (whether cardiac or renal) and in gout. As history is constantly repeating itself, a crystalline body called althein, obtainable from either this plant or marsh-mallow, has lately been introduced as a remedy for these affections.

BALSAMUM GILEADENSE.—The balsamic exudation from the bark of the *Balsamodendron gileadense* was, in the last century, in high favor as a diuretic and specific for gonorrhœa. It is more pleasant than balsam of copaiba, but, as it is now rare and difficult to obtain, it is more expensive and not sufficiently more useful to warrant its re-introduction. I could never understand why Poe asked his raven if there was still Balm in Gilead, unless he was suffering from gonorrhœa, and had heard of the drug as a specific, when surely some intelligent pharmacist would have introduced to his palate the