

## Editorial Notes

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### THERAPEUTICS OF GARLIC

*To the Editor of The Medical Press and Circular.*

SIR,—The following quotation from Fuller's "Worthies of England" on the medicinal virtues of garlic may interest some of your readers. The worthy doctor has been describing ambergris, and opens his account of garlic thus: "Here is a great and sudden fall, indeed, from the sweetest of gums to the most stinking of roots. Yet is not the distance so great if the worth of garlic be such as some have avouched it. Not to speak of the murmuring Israelites, who prized it before manna itself, some avow it sovereign for man and beasts in most maladies. Indeed, the scent thereof is somewhat valient and offensive; but wise men will be contented to hold their noses, on condition that they may thereby hold or recover their health. Indeed, a large book is written *de usu alii*, which, if it hold proportion with truth, one would wonder any man should be sick and die who hath garlic growing in his garden. Sure I am our palate people are much pleased therewith, as giving a delicious *haut-gout* to most meats they eat, as tasted and smelt in their sauce, though not seen therein. The best garlic is about Stratton in this county (Cornwall)."

Fuller formed his opinion on the virtues of the plant principally from the elaborate account of its medicinal value by Gerarde, who described it as the "husbandman's treacle" which cutteth all tough tumours, openeth all obstructions, is an enemy to all cold poisons and to the bitings of venomous beasts. And he quotes Galen as writing: "Garlic taketh away the roughness of the throat, helpeth an old cough, provoketh urine, breaketh wind, and is a remedy for the dropsey. It killeth and expelleth worms, helpeth a cold stomach, and is a preservative against contagious and pestilent airs." And yet the list given is incomplete, for all the diseases then known are included in it. Woodville (1793) gives a case of a boy, six or seven years old, who for a considerable time suffered from a urinary calculus, which, under treatment by a decoction of garlic, quite recovered. It was remarked that whilst taking the decoction "his urine become extremely turbid, and constantly deposited a copious claylike sediment for several weeks, when it resumed its natural appearance." Sydenham applied garlic poultices to the soles of the feet, as a revulsant, in cases of confluent smallpox.