

Aunt Elsie had not been feeling so well, so we deferred, at her own wish, transplanting her to her new quarters.

"I often wish that I understood all about making poultices and fomentations and things of that kind," I said, after our return from Ansell's, and Maggie suggested an afternoon in the school-room and object-lessons.

"But I must take notes all the same," I said, "for I shall never remember when I want to use the things."

"Well, perhaps not at first," said Maggie, "but still you should master the quantities and methods to such an extent that if the doctor orders a poultice to be made that you can do it without referring even to your beloved note-book."

Certainly I thoroughly enjoyed that afternoon, and here is the result of it entered into my dear note-book.

LINSEED POULTICES.

These are made of crushed linseed. What is called linseed meal is not suitable for poultices, as it is merely oil-cake from which the grinding has extracted all the valuable oil, whereas the crushed linseed contains all the oil which is natural to the seed.

A bowl preferably metal with a handle and spatula or knife are necessary, as well as a board on which to spread the poultice; a deal table or drawing-board answers the purpose.

The first thing to do is to scald out the bowl with boiling water and then to pour in some fresh boiling water—enough to make the poultice—and the linseed is then sprinkled on the water while you stir quickly in one direction with the spatula. The right consistency is seen when the whole is blended into a smooth, soft mass.

The thickness of a poultice must be in proportion to its size and purpose. Medical poultices should be light, hot, soft and about half an inch thick, while surgical poultices should be as thin as you can make them.

When you have stirred the mass for a few seconds turn it out, and if properly blended it should come out of the basin without sticking to the sides.

Lint, warmed linen or tow which has been well teased out should be laid on the board and the poultice turned out upon it. Spread it quickly and evenly, dipping the spatula in hot water every now and then. Do not cover the whole of the lint, etc., but leave a margin an inch or less, this is turned over the edges.

If the poultice is not to go next to the skin, a single layer of soft muslin or net may be spread over the surface. Always test the heat of a poultice with the back of your hand before placing it on the patient. It should be applied as hot as it can be borne with comfort. Place some cotton-wool, lint or waterproof over it and keep the poultice in place by a binder or towel.

If you have to carry a poultice from one room to another do so between two very hot plates.

Always remove a poultice before it gets cold. If you have to put on fresh poultices every few hours do not remove the old one until the new one is ready. When the last one is removed a layer of warmed cotton wool should be put on in its place.

COMPOUND MUSTARD AND LINSEED POULTICE.

Two tablespoonfuls of mustard are put in the bowl and mixed until quite smooth with boiling water as it is poured in, the linseed being then added as if for an ordinary linseed poultice. The directions in the British Pharmacopœia order equal parts of linseed meal and mustard.

These poultices should be spread on cloth or brown paper, and a layer of muslin placed over them.

A strong mustard poultice must not be left on too long. There is a great difference in the delicacy of the skin in people. You can turn down a corner and see that no blisters are produced.

BREAD POULTICE.

The boiling water should be put in a basin already well scalded out, and coarse bread-crumbs from a stale loaf added to it and well stirred. Next cover up the basin and put it by the fire for a few minutes. Drain the water off, add fresh boiling water and then pour it away, after which you can spread and apply the poultice.

FOMENTATIONS.

The directions for these I copied from Maggie's note-book, and she told me that she had got the directions, which are excellent, from a manual of nursing, and had copied them for her own use before she ever did any fomentations practically.

Fomentations have the same effect as poultices; they are lighter and more quickly prepared, but need to be changed every quarter of an hour. To prepare fomentations the following articles are required—

"A large metal bowl, a wringer, which is a small roller towel made of a yard and a half of waste, two sticks (hoop-sticks answer admirably), several fomentation flannels, each half a yard square (old pieces of blanket are better than new flannel) and a large metal saucepan of boiling water.

"In making a fomentation, the wringing sticks having been placed inside the wringer as far apart as they will lie, the flannel to be used for fomenting is spread between them.

"The central portion of the wringer, that enclosing the flannel, is then placed in the bowl (which has been previously heated) and boiling water is poured in until the bowl is three parts full. The fomentation is then partially wrung by twisting the sticks in contrary directions, so as to squeeze the flannel as dry as possible before it is taken out of the water. The wringer is next lifted out and the wringing is completed. When wrung the fomentation should be moist but not wet, or it will scald the patient. It should be shaken up, applied immediately, covered, first with a macintosh, then with two or three folds of flannel.

"Fomentations made with water in which poppy heads or camomile flowers, or both, have been boiled have a soothing effect, while fomentations sprinkled with a tablespoonful of common turpentine, or thirty or forty drops of spirits of turpentine are useful in severe cramp of the stomach and in cases of torpid liver for relieving pain and stimulating the inactive organ. The latter fomentation is called a turpentine stoup. Spongio piline answers rather better than flannel for medical fomentations; as being waterproof on one side, it maintains its high temperature for a longer period. It is wrung out in exactly the same way as flannel, but it is applied quite smooth. In some hospitals it is used, dry and warm, instead of macintosh and folds of flannel to cover fomentation flannels."

"I fancy I have heard of charcoal poultices," I said, when I had copied this from Maggie's book.

"Yes," said Maggie, "and if you like I can dictate to you how to make them."

"What are they used for?"

"They are used in many cases of offensive wounds or ulcers."

I headed my note

CHARCOAL POULTICES.

Take a teaspoonful of bread-crumbs and make a bread poultice with it. A quarter to half an ounce of finely powdered charcoal is gradually added and well mixed with it.

Sprinkle the surface of the poultice with finely powdered charcoal before applying it.

Another way—to add half an ounce of charcoal to four ounces of linseed meal and bread in equal parts.

"Are there any other things I could make a note of under this head?"

"Yes, you had better write down some hints as to the use and preparation of

INHALATIONS.

"These mean the breathing in the vapour which rises from boiling water.

"You can get proper inhalers of various kinds, one of the simplest being an earthenware vessel, which has a mouthpiece and a tube which comes out from the side, so that air may be admitted. This vessel should be half filled by the removal of the mouthpiece, and then pouring in hot water containing whatever solution the doctor has ordered for inhalation. Another way is to fit a sponge into the mouthpiece and to pour the necessary number of drops upon it. If, however, you do not possess an inhaler you can use a jug with a wide mouth.

"Sometimes the steam is used alone, at others it is made stimulant, sedative or antiseptic by the addition of certain solutions to the water.

"Cover over the mouth of the jug with a towel and leave an aperture just large enough to admit the mouth and nostrils. Let the patient sit with his head bent over the jug and gradually bring the mouth near to the opening from whence the vapour is coming. He should breathe very quietly and quite naturally, and after seven or eight inspirations he should draw away his face for about half a minute and repeat the process. This he should go on doing for from fifteen to twenty minutes. Before going to bed is the best time for inhalations. If done in the daytime the person should avoid going out or into a cold room for some time afterwards."

"What is the real use of inhalations, Maggie?" I asked as I finished writing all she said.

"They are used for applying remedies to the air passages in laryngeal affections and in bronchitis and asthma, as well as sore throat and cough, to give relief from pain and difficulty in breathing."

In a few days Aunt Elsie was well enough to be removed, and certainly we girls had every reason to be pleased at her evident satisfaction with all we had done.

"I cannot help thinking that this room will help me to get better," said Aunt Elsie.

Jackson, the maid, had gone out of the room to fetch Aunt Elsie's dinner.

"I am so glad you like it, auntie dear," I said.

Certainly the room looked very much more cheerful than the one she had left, and sunshine was at that moment coming in through the window from which was a pretty view Aunt Elsie could enjoy on the days when she was able to be on the couch. Presently Jackson returned with the dinner, and I noticed that Maggie gave one of her sharp glances at the tray, on which was crowded a helping of meat and vegetables, a big jug of water, some pudding, a big butter-dish, a large salt-cellar, etc., and all arranged on what I noticed was a very tumbled cloth.

We left Aunt Elsie to have her dinner under Jackson's auspices, and as we left the room I asked Maggie frankly if she would tell me what was wrong.

"It seems like continual fault-finding," she answered.

"Not if you are giving me lessons and I am learning."

"Then I will tell you," she answered.

(To be continued.)