ON THE MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANCIENT IRISH.

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SOME years ago I published in this Journal a paper on the "Probable use of Anæsthetics in Ireland at a Remote Period," and I now purpose to bring under consideration a Celtic Materia Medica of the thirteenth century and some other medical manuscripts in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy which I then referred to.

To render these extracts intelligible, a preliminary account of the leechcraft of the ancient Irish is necessary. The materials for this are somewhat scanty and difficult of access, being chiefly contained in Celtic MSS., translations from which were furnished to me by a well-known Celtic scribe, the late Mr. Long, of the Irish Academy, and in the manuscripts of his predecessors in the Academy, Dr. O'Donovan and Mr. O'Curry.

Besides these documents, those interested in the subject will find some valuable matter in Mr. Windale's papers in the Kilkenny Archæological Transactions, and still more in the late Sir William Wilde's learned dissertation in the first volume of the Irish Census Reports (1851), to which should be added a few fragments of Gaelic medical lore scattered through the Transactions of the Ulster, Kilkenny, and other antiquarian Societies.[a]

The condition of the learned professions is a fair index of the civilisation of any country, and, measured by this standard, our forefathers have left no cause for shame. Their ecclesiastical learning is chronicled in our earliest annals; their architectural skill has left enduring memorials in the ruined churches and abbeys thickly strewn over the land; their jurisprudence, as recorded in the Brehon Laws, was as elaborate as that of other European countries at the same period; and, finally, in the surviving fragments of their ancient medical manuscripts may be discovered the evidence of considerable erudition.

The admixture of superstitious observances with efficacious medical treatment, which is noticeable in most of these manuscripts, is but an illustration of the general connexion between primitive medicine and magic, of which Pliny says—"*Natam primum e medicine nemo dubiat.*" So nearly related were these two arts that by the Greeks the same word

[a] I regret that I have not had an opportunity of referring to a paper by Dr. Norman Moore, in St. Bartholomew's Hospital Reports, on the Irish Medical MSS. in the Library of the British Museum, to which Sir James Paget kindly called my attention.

was used to describe a remedial drug as well as a substance prepared with magic ceremonies for purposes of incantation. In Homer we find repeated examples of both uses of the word φάρμακον; and in like manner the North American Indian to this day uses the same word to express the ideas of physic and of magic—his "medicine-man" combining the functions of magician and soothsayer with those of physician.

Nearly all diseases were attributed by the Celtic Irish to what they termed "Meillt-eoireacht," or "fairy-strokes;" and a similar idea prevailed amongst other primitive races. The earliest records of medicine extant are the Hindu Vedas, some of which are asserted to have been written in the fourteenth century before the Christian era.[a] In several of these—as, for instance, the Charaka and Sushruta—we find proof that sickness was regarded by the Hindus as a supernatural visitation; and so strong was this belief—that disease was a punishment for guilt incurred by the patient in either his past or present state of existence—that Strabo tells us "that in the time of Alexander it was considered disgraceful for the Brahmans to be sick, and they put an end to themselves when they fell into that calamity."[b]

The Singhalese ascribe disease to supernatural agency of a more powerful as well as a more malignant character than the "fairy-strokes" of the Irish medical legends; and the "Yakadura," or devil-dancer, to whom they resort when sick, is a very different character from the harmless Irish "fairy-doctor," being considered, as described by Knox two hundred years ago,[c] and in our own time by Mr. Hardy,[d] "as a special servant of the evil principle to whom he is devoted, and by whose 'afflatus' he is supposed to be possessed."

Similar superstitions infected the practice of medicine in all other countries, notwithstanding their condemnation by successive ecclesiastical councils. To the present time remedies traceable to the earliest traditions connected with the infancy of medical science are in popular vogue. Thus, in those parts of Spain described in my work on "Change of Climate," I can speak from long personal observation of the existence of some of the medical superstitions recorded by Pliny. Hydrophobia is there still popularly treated by infusion of dog-rose, as he recommends (His. Nat., Lib. VIII., c. 41). To the same authority may be traced another instance of the doctrine of signatures in the wearing of purslane in cases of relaxed uvula; and, not to occupy time by mentioning many other similar instances, the faith of the Andalusian peasantry in the viper

[a] Asiatic Researches. Vol. VIII. P. 489.

[b] Strabo. Geography. Lib. XV.

[c] Knox. Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon to the East Indies. Folio. London. 1681.

[d] Hardy. Jubilee Memorials of the Wesleyan Mission, South Ceylon. 1814–1874. P. 53.

broth of our forefathers as a sovereign remedy for nearly all chronic complaints, is attested by the crowds who frequent the pleasant suburb of Chiclana, close to Cadiz, for the sole purpose of drinking an unsavoury snake broth, for which this place is famous.

The tarentella of Naples is another survival of these therapeutic superstitions; and though on my visit to Taranto I did not succeed in witnessing a case of *tarantismo* or its harmonic treatment, I had whilst there proof that neither are extinct.

We can hardly take up a French newspaper without finding evidence that similar methods of cure are practised amongst the French peasantry. And even in our boasted land of civilisation, the practice of rustic herb-doctors—of whom there are still not a few in England—is largely interspersed with observances evidently of Druidical origin.[a]

Much light has been thrown on the analogies between the early Celtic and Saxon systems of medicine by the volumes of "Saxon Leechdoms"[b] published some years ago. On comparing these with the Celtic MSS. we are about to refer to, it would seem that a more extensive acquaintance with classical medical literature prevailed in Ireland at a very remote date than existed in England.

Several of the ancient Scottish medical usages described by Mr. Dalyell[c] were identical with those that prevailed in Ireland. For instance, crystal "adder-stones," such as those contained in the museum of our Academy, were used in Scotland, as in Ireland, by patients suffering from whooping-cough, nightmare, and other complaints. The head of a frog put into a child's mouth, and held there until the unfortunate reptile was killed, was considered a remedy for the thrush. A shrewmouse hung up alive and left to wither away was esteemed efficacious in the treatment of paralysis, which was ascribed to this animal having crawled over the affected limb. The number 9 entered as largely into the Scotch as into the Irish medical superstition, and did time permit we might easily enlarge on the close resemblance between the medical customs of the two countries.

These observations on the analogies between the primitive medical usages of other races with those of this country may serve as an introduction to the consideration of our ancient Celtic medical manuscripts, in the earliest of which we find comparatively little trace of the popular superstitions recorded in the "Saxon Leechdoms;" but in more recent documents we find evidence that many of these had been imported into Ireland.

A large collection of ancient Irish manuscripts was discovered in the

[a] Pettigrew on Superstitions connected with the Practice of Medicine. P. 18.

[b] Leechdoms, Wort-cunning, and Starcraft of Early England. Published by direction of the Master of the Rolls.

[c] The Darker Superstitions of Scotland. By John Dalyell, Esq.

Convent of St. Gall, in Switzerland, by Dr. Keller of Zurich. These were brought under the notice of Irish antiquaries by the Rev. Dr. Reeves in *The Ulster Journal of Archæology*, and amongst them are Celtic versions of the works of Hippocrates and Galen, written in the eighth century.

The late Dr. Todd translated a specimen of one of the medical charms referred to in Dr. Keller's paper. He says, "The lines are purely Irish, and are probably as old as the tenth century." They commence:—"A preservation for the dead, the living, for the want of sinews, for the tongue-tied, for swelling in the head, of wounds from iron, of burning from fire, of the bite of a hound; it prevents the lassitude of old age, cures the decline, the rupture of the blood-vessels, takes away the virulence of the festering sore, the poignancy of grief, the fever of the blood—they cannot contend with it. He to whom it shall be applied shall be made whole. Extolled be the elixir of life bequeathed by Diancecht to his people, by which everything to which it is applied is made whole."

Dr. Todd observes, "Elixir of life (*glancid*) signifies a sovereign remedy, literally 'health healing.' Diancecht is a celebrated personage in Irish history, to whom the ancient Irish physicians attribute all their traditions. He was the physician of the Tuatha de Dananni, a colony of foreigners who landed in Mayo in the year of the world 2737. To these the Irish attributed the knowledge of all arts and sciences, and tradition has invested them with the character of magicians, probably from their superior civilisation. They came to a battle, in which they defeated the former inhabitants of the county, at a place called Moy-Tuiredh, near Lough Measg, where it is said that Diancecht, the physician, during the battle dug a pit or bath, which he filled with a decoction of herbs. Into this he plunged such of his people as were wounded in the battle, who were immediately restored to perfect health, and sent back to renew the fight."[a]

The social status of the medical attendant of an Irish sept is not easily defined. In the third volume of *The Ulster Journal of Archæology* an abstract is given of some documents showing the positions of the various members of a Celtic chieftain's household. The first of these papers is entitled "A Miscellaneous Collection, relating to Ireland, principally in the time of Elizabeth," and consists of letters addressed to Lord Burleigh, in 1594, by Dr. Hammer, who was chaplain to Lord Ormond. Amongst these rough notes—"Mores gentium," as the memoranda are headed—occur the following details as to the apportionment of the several parts of the oxen and sheep killed for an Irish chieftain's family. From this document we learn that of every cow killed the kidneys were assigned to the "physitian," and of every sheep the

[a] The Ulster Journal of Archæology. Vol. VIII. P. 303.

shoulders were given to the "astronomer." "The last name," continues the writer in the *Archæological Journal*, "might be supposed to be intended to conceal one of those foreign priests whom recusants maintained in their castles under the name of professors of medicine, as the celebrated and ill-fated Jesuit, Champion, was secreted by Lady Kildare."[a] This aspiring title was, however, merely a pompous one for the family "physitian," for astronomy, necromancy, and medicine were cultivated as kindred arts by the pagan Irish, and also by the English, as recently as the time of Chaucer, whose "Doctour of Physicke" was grounded in magic and astronomy, as well as in medicine and surgery. The presence of one qualified to cure the wounded was evidently constantly needful in a chieftain's house, and the hereditary doctors of Gaelic clans and great Anglo-Irish families generally had lands assigned to them for their support. Ballyally Castle, the curious siege of which is published by the Camden Society, belonged to the Neillans, who were physicians to the O'Briens. Desmond's medical *ollav* had a townland, and a town house in Youghal; and, by deed dated 1473, Lord Courcy granted Rotheric, son of Maelmora M'Beha, physcian, half a townland in Rinrone, in the highway called Glanquill, to hold free, "with medicinal dignity, liberty, and profits," throughout his lordships of Rinrone and Kinsale.[b] As recently as the seventeenth century we find that the fame of the native Irish physicians was not confined to their own country. Thus Van Helmont refers to them:—"Memini namque Magnates Hiberniæ, dare agrum domestico medenti non quidem qui ab Academiis institutus sed sanaret ægros. Habet nempe is librum, ab altavis sibi relictum remediis resertum. Adeoque libri hæres, semper agri illius hæres est. Codex iste, signa morborum depingit ac remedia vernacula, feliciusque sanatur infermi Hyberni, ac longe fortiores sunt, quam Itali, qui pagis singulis, suas habent Medicastrós, è cruore miserorum viventes. Dixi ergo mihi, Quis te vanis error; quod magni momenti futurum proximo sis meditatus, si tuas disputatiuncula, Academiæ irriserint, et pedibus calcaverint; et licet non in finem gloriolæ tuæ scripseris, vana tamen sunt omnia in manibus hominum."[c]

The medical knowledge of the native Irish was chiefly derived, as Van Helmont observes, from family manuscripts, which were handed down from father to son, their possession constituting the owner's sole title to practise physic.

A similar system exists in some parts of India, where the families who

[a] S. P. O. 1581.

[b] Cotton MS. Titus, B. XI., 230. Cited in Ulster Archæological Journal. Vol. III. P. 124.

[c] Johanis Baptistæ van Helmont. In Confessio Authoris. Opera Omnia. P. 13. Editio Francofurte. 1707.

claim the right of practising medicine do so in virtue of their exclusive possession of certain ancient manuscripts (or *Shástras*), which are so jealously guarded by their owners that they are hardly ever allowed to be sold, or even copied.[a]

In Scotland, also, the profession of the healing art was in some instances hereditary. Thus, we are told by Mr. Dalyell, "A pulmonary disease called 'Glachach,' is also called 'the Macdonalds' disease' by the Highlanders, because the gift of curing it by the touch, accompanied by a formula of words, is ascribed to certain families of that name."[b]

In the Celtic manuscripts in the library of the Royal Irish Academy we have abundant evidence of the character of the leechcraft of the native Irish. The late Mr. O'Curry, in his unpublished "Catalogue of the Numbers and Contents of Messrs. Hodges & Smith's Collection of Irish Manuscripts," described several of these documents. In the oldest of these, that entitled "*Medicina Antiqua*," the following entry occurs:—"The age of the Lord when this book was made was a thousand years and three hundred years and twice twenty years and twelve years more. This book was finished in the year that Shane Oge, the son of Cu-aithne, was killed, and it was written in the house of the son of Dermod O'Meaghere. May the Merciful God have mercy on us all." Immediately after these lines are the words, in a more modern hand: "I am Richard Mertogh."[c]

Mr. O'Curry says of this manuscript:—"It appears to me to be a commentary on the works of Galen, Hippocrates, and others, in the course of which the author quotes largely in Latin from the original works; compares the opinions put forth in them, contraverting or approving of them as the case may be. Folio 18 b., page 1, treats of the nature and location of pulmonary affections; the brain—the nerves that issue from it; the heart, &c. Folio 19 treats of the organs of nutrition, and first of the stomach—its functions, the mode of digestion, &c. Folio 20 treats of the organs of generation in man. Folio 21 treats of the womb and generative parts in woman. The next chapter commences:—I have brought together here practical rules from other writings, in the honour of God, in mercy to the Irish people, and for the instruction of my pupils, and out of friendship to my friends and my tribe, from Latin books into Irish—viz., on the authority of Galen, and from Hippocrates' Book Prognosticorum."[d]

So far the late Mr. O'Curry's manuscript; but, in a work which was published several years afterwards, the continuation of this passage was thus translated by the same learned scholar:—"These are things gentle,

[a] Dr. Wise. Commentary on the Hindu System of Medicine. P. 5.

[b] Dalyell (John G.) The Darker Superstitions of Scotland. P. 61.

[c] O'Curry (Eugene). MS. Catalogue. Royal Irish Academy's Library. $\frac{23}{H}$ 11.

[d] O'Curry's MS. Catalogue. Library Royal Irish Academy. Vol. II. P. 345.

sweet, profitable, of little evil, which have often been tested by us, and by our instructors. And I pray God for those to whom this will come, and I lay it as a load and as injunction on their souls, that they extract not poorly, and that they fail not for want of the practical rules; and particularly if they gain nothing by doing it regularly (or devoutly). I implore every doctor, at the beginning of the work (of curing), that he remember the Father of Health (God), that the work be finished prosperously; and let him not be in mortal sin; and let him beseech the patient not to be so either. And let him implore the Heavenly Father, who is the Physician and the Balsam-Giver (*Slanicidh*) above all for the diseased, to end his work prosperously, and to save him from shame and discredit at that time."[a]

"It may be observed," continues Mr. O'Curry, "that there are many silly and superstitious recipes given in the above *Practical Rules*, but whether they properly belong to the collector or to the original writers I know not. Fol. 88 treats of the menstrual discharge, and is the concluding article of a treatise on Midwifery. Same folio, page b, treats of the falling down of the womb, of abscesses and ulcers in the womb. Fol. 89 treats of irritation of the womb, of barrenness in women; the mode of ascertaining whether the cause of barrenness be with the man or with the woman; rules to be observed by women that they may bring forth male children; of women who wish not to conceive. Fol. 89 treats of childbirth; children born feet foremost; of the manner of preparing women for the birth of a dead child; of the after-birth; of flooding; of difficult labour. Folio 90 treats of the preparation of women for labour; of the formation of the embryo, the several stages of its maturity, and of the nursing of the infant when born."[b]

Amongst the unpublished papers of the late Dr. O'Donovan in the Academy is one entitled "Contents of a Fragment of an Irish Medical MS. of A.D. 1352, with Remarks on the Peripathetic Philosophy." Dr. O'Donovan's paper is now bound up with the original Celtic text, entitled "Medica Antiqua Ling. Hib. Codex Memb., 1352."

The Irish writer's description of the stomach is as follows:—"The stomach is cold and dry, long and round, made up of fibres and membranes. The reason of its being cold and dry is in order to fortify the *vis retentionis*, which is cold and dry: it is round, because Nature does not wish that there should be any cavity or receptacle for dirt or excrement in it which might be injurious to the body; it is long, in order that it might expand or contract according to the quantity of food in it contained; it is formed of fibres, in order to have the power of retaining food for digestion."

[a] O'Curry's Translation, furnished to the Irish Census Commissioners. 2nd Report. Part V. Vol. I. P. 31.

[b] O'Curry. MS. Catalogue of the Academy Manuscripts. Vol. II. P. 346.

The process of digestion is thus explained:—"At the completion of the first digestion the mass of chyle passes into the intestine called *duodenum*, which is a small straight intestine, and called duodenum because its length is twelve inches. From this the chyle passes to the intestine called *jejunum*, which is a small curved intestine found always empty in dead animals; and here a separation is made between the pure and gross parts of the chyle—the purer part passes through the small vessels that run from the intestines to the liver, and the unclean part passes into the intestine called *orbum* and *cæcum*, and from thence to the intestine called *ileum*, and from *ileum* to *colon*, and thence there are two passages to the intestine called *orbus*—one from the gall-bladder to convey bile to this intestine for increasing the expulsive force, and another from the spleen to convey melancholy to it, to strengthen the expulsive force also from its weight and *earthliness*. Colon is so called from 'colando,' to strain, for after the gross impure part is separated, or strained, from the pure it is ejected into this intestine; and from the intestine called Longaon it is expelled from the body."[a]

The acquaintance of the ancient Celtic medical writers with foreign and classic medical literature is proved by several of their manuscripts. Thus, one of these, the date of which was fixed by Mr. O'Curry as about the commencement of the fifteenth century, begins with a literal translation of some of the Hippocratic treatises, with the commentary of Galen. In the same work are dissertations on the practice of physic, in which Avicenna, Galen, Hippocrates, and other writers, are largely quoted. The Celtic author of this work attached no small importance to the state of the urine as a prognostic and diagnostic, though some of his views on the subject would considerably astonish a modern urinary pathologist.

Some ancient popular medical traditions are still current in the south and west of Ireland. These, however, are rapidly dying out, for within the last thirty years a complete revolution—social, moral, and intellectual—has taken place in the character of the Irish peasantry. This change is not merely the result of the general diffusion of education of a kind entirely beyond the requirements of those to whom it is supplied, but is also traceable to the effect of the first disastrous famine period and the consequent exodus of the small farmers and labouring classes. These have been replaced by a generation better educated, perhaps, but ignoring or despising all old traditions. It is desirable, therefore, to collect any fragments of our popular leechdoms before they become lost in the course of the next few years. With the view of inducing others better qualified to do the same, I may refer to one or two of these existing medical superstitions.

[a] See the late Dr. O'Donovan's MS. fragment of the contents of this treatise in (No. $\frac{24}{F}$ 19 of) the Manuscript Collection of the Royal Irish Academy Library.

Several years ago I visited a small farmer's cottage in the mountains near Capure, with the dispensary doctor, to see a case of difficult labour, and on examining the patient we found a piece of red worsted, in which a small pebble was secured, which had been fastened round her leg by the "handy-woman" in attendance. In Scotland a similar idea was acted on by rural midwives. Thus Pennant speaks of the "boird-stane" or "adder-stone," as it was called, which he says was employed "to give ease to women in childbirth, by being tied about the knee."[a] Mr. Dalyell quotes an old Scotch writer who records that "Margaret Stewart exhibited ane quhyt stane of crystall, guide for seik women in their travell."[b] The employment of crystal "adder-stones" in Ireland was extended to many diseases, such as the whooping-cough, as well as for the cure and prevention of cattle distempers. Vallancy, in his "Collecteana," speaks of the "water-stone which the Hibernian sorcerers used to throw into water to give it a medicinal virtue."[c] Cattle were supposed by the ancient Irish to be distempered by the spell of some enemy, and to cure such distempers they placed a crystal ball, called a "murrain-stone," in a running stream, over which they drove the infected beasts. The late Mr. Windell has described one of these stones, which had long been an heirloom in the family of the M'Carthy's of the Glen.[d] Another in the possession of the Marquis of Waterford is preserved at Curramore, and I know a gentleman whose tenants relied on this murrain-stone within the last twenty years.

In the parish of Killinagh, in the county of Cavan, a family of small farmers have long had the reputation of possessing a cure or preventive for hydrophobia. This is preserved as a heirloom in the family of the M'Goverans, of Corredrassagough, and is handed down in much the same way as was the leechcraft of the ancient Irish hereditary physicians. Some years ago a connexion of mine residing in that county gave me the particulars of a case in which a lad having been attacked by a rabid dog, whose bite had been followed by hydrophobia in some cattle, was sent by his father to this M'Goveran, who undertook his cure only on the condition that the boy should reside under his entire control in his cottage for a certain number of days, and that he should promise silence as to the mode of treatment pursued. These conditions were acted on, and the lad suffered no ill effects from the bite, and is now a member of the medical profession himself.

Saliva was regarded as efficacious against hostile spells and the diseases occasioned by them, and until recently few Irish peasants would conclude a bargain without first spitting on their hand to ensure good luck. In

[a] Pennant's Tour in Scotland. P. 298. London, 1772.
[b] Dalyell's Darker Superstitions of Scotland. P. 131. Glasgow, 1835.
[c] Vallancy's Collecteana de Rebus Hibernicis. Vol. III. P. 646.
[d] Windell's Transactions of Kilkenny Archæological Association. April, 1865.

Piers' "Account of Westmeath" we read that the power of curing burns was supposed to exist in the saliva of certain persons, who acquired the virtue by drawing a lizard found in Westmeath across their tongue in a direction contrary to the scales of the reptile.[a] The reputation of saliva as a remedial agent is very ancient and widespread. Pliny devotes a considerable space to its supposed properties as a preservative from contagion and an antidote for poison.[b]

The ancient Irish medical manuscript, some extracts from which I shall now refer to, occurs in the Betham collection, and is numbered 409. Its antiquity may be inferred from the fact of its being spoken of in another treatise to which the late Mr. O'Curry assigned the date of 1350. The following extracts are taken from Mr. Long's manuscript translation of the Irish work, a copy of which exists in the library of the Academy. I need hardly observe that Mr. Long was well known as a most competent Celtic scholar, and I have not attempted to alter his rendering of the Irish text. This translation contains two distinct treatises. The first is entitled "The Materia Medica." The other is entitled "The Second Book, an Appendix to the Materia Medica." The character of these works is essentially different. "The Materia Medica" consists in an alphabetically arranged treatise on the various articles of the materia medica, and contains evidence of some acquaintance with the works of the principal classic writers on the subject.

I now subjoin one example of each of the alphabetical division of the Irish Materia Medica, selecting the first example of each heading, or where that was too long, then the shortest. These may be taken as fair specimens of this work, the translation of which by Mr. Long forms a closely-written manuscript of 125 folio pages. I have also appended a few commentaries which appeared necessary to illustrate the text.

On some future occasion I may call attention to "The Second Book," of which I have transcribed the first part, together with some quotations taken at random, as examples of the popular medical superstitions that have prevailed more or less in Ireland from the extirpation of Celtic learning down to a recent period.

"*Materia Medica.*—Albedarig, Columbina, Basilicon—three names of the Columbine. It is hot and dry in the third degree, and one that has it about him or is rubbed with it will not be injured by venemous serpents or mad dogs. This herb boiled and applied to boils will break them. The juice of this herb or the herb itself broken small and put on a sore affected with cancer heals it; and it is good against darkness or obscuration of the sight. The juice of the roots of this herb and the blossom of the same herb boiled on wine excites the blood of the matrix. Boiled on butter, like oil, it relieves cough and spitting of blood. *Item.*—

[a] Vallancy's Collecteana de Rebus Hibernicis. Vol. I. P. 58.

[b] Pliny. Hist. Nat. Lib. VII., c. 2. Lib. XXVIII., c. 1.

It is good for cleansing sores when combined with powdered alum and made into a salve."

"*Acorns.*—Make a powder of them, and put it into sores and it drys them; and the fresh leaves of the same tree boiled prevents the falling sickness. And it is said that it has the property of provoking the urine."

"*The Cucumber.*—The roots made into an ointment ripens hard boils. The powdered roots dried in the sun and applied to sores cleanses them from excrescent flesh. The best time for collecting it is on the eighteenth day of August, and its virtue remains for one year."

Commentary.—The Irish writer evidently means to describe the therapeutic properties of the "cucumis sativus," or εικυος, of which Paulus Ægineta says:—"The seed is detergent and incisive. . . . The root is detergent, discutient, and emollient, but the juice is desiccative" (Paulus Ægineta's Works, Book 7th, sect. 3rd, p. 385). Dioscorides also mentions that the leaves of the cucumis sativus were made into a cataplasm and applied to the bites of dogs.

"*Dens Leonis, i.e., Fearuhan Mor*, or Crowfoot.—It is very beneficial in *Leannta ruadh* (*i. e.*, Red Humours). The roots of this herb and *Liathlus beag* (Mugworth), and *Gorman* (Pansies), the roots of *Lus-na-frange* (Common Tansey), and a small quantity of Fumitory, broken, put in strong ale along with honey, purifies the blood and expells *Leannta-dubha* (Black Humours). *Item.*—The same herb, and the yolk of an egg, and the juice of ribwort, and barley meal, cures an anthrax. The same herb, and the stems of Dock, boiled in a lye of Ash, and rubbed to the Sailchnis (or Filthy Skin), cures it."

Commentary.—Neither the Ranunculus Acris or Ranunculus Flammula are now employed in medicine. Like all the Ranunculaceæ, the Crowfoot is a very acrid and poisonous plant, possessing powerful rubeficiant and even vesicant properties, and perhaps on these depended the virtues ascribed to its external use in cutaneous diseases, as described above. In the "Saxon Leechdoms" (Vol. I., p. 101), we find that the Ranunculus Scleratus, was employed to eat away and destroy warts.

"*Fugo Demonium, i. e.*, the *Bithnuadh.*—If boiled in wine or in water it purifies the blood, and opens obstructions of the liver and lungs. The powder of this herb put into bloody wounds dries them quickly. The reason this herb is called 'Fugo Demonium' is because it puts to flight the demons from the person who has it about him, and the person who has it in his hand will have the gift of eloquence."

"*Galbanum, i. e.*, the gum of a tree.—Three drachms given in a soft egg, or in a tisan of barley, relieves asthma. Put the same gum on red hot embers, and let its smoke into the nostrils and it cures lethargy; and to let its smoke into the mouth and it relieves suffocation."

Commentary.—This account of Galbanum is taken from Dioscorides, who also speaks of its internal administration in cases of asthma, chronic

coughs, &c.; and mentions its employment by way of fumigation in cases of epilepsy, hysteria, and amenorrhœa. (Lib. III., cap. 87.)

"*Hœderulæ Major, i. e.*, the *Fliugh*, or Chickweed, and there is a softening, opening quality in it, and it prevents the pain of swelling.—Take this herb, boiled in water, and let it be put on the part where the pain is, and it cures it. . . . . Dry this herb very well, and let ashes be made of it, and let a lye be made of these, and it prevents greyness."

"*Lapis Magnetis, i. e.*, the Loadstone.—It is the property of this stone to stop every issue of blood, and the power of attracting all iron is in it. According to Alexander, it is found on the shore of Thracian Sea, and every ship that sails through this sea that stone draws to itself, so that all who are therein are drowned. The powder of this stone, along with the juice of juniper, cures dropsy."

Commentary.—The diuretic power here ascribed to the magnetic oxide of iron is mentioned by Galen, who also recomends it in cases of dropsy. The magnetic oxide of iron entered into the composition of several of the fanciful nostrums prescribed by Paracelcus to draw foreign bodies, beyond the reach of surgical treatment, from the internal parts of the body.

"*Mandragora, i. e.*, the root of an herb, and its degree is not given by the authors.—There are two species of it—a male kind and a female kind; and it is said that it is under the gallows it is found, and that from the drops that fall down from them on the earth are created a human form; and it is the root that resembles man. Its rind retains its virtues one year. To put it under the head of the patient and it excites sleep. To give the roots of this herb in wine to drink, and it reduces inflammation. And this herb has many other virtues."

"*Os de Cor Cervi? i.e.*, the bone which is found in the heart of the deer; and of the blood of the heart it originates.—A similar bone is found in the heart of the goat, and it is sold as this bone; but the bone of the deer's heart is reddish, and the bone of the goat's heart soft and white. It retains its virtue thirty years. To dry it first in the sun and the power of relieving the heart is in it, and it cleanses the blood. To boil a chip of this bone and it relieves syncope. To drink the powder of this bone on wine and it cures a flux of blood. And Aurelius says that there are many other virtues in this bone."

Commentary.—"The bone of a hart's heart" is spoken of in the "Medicina de Quadrupedis of Sextus Placitus," translated in the first volume of "Saxon Leechdoms:"—"17. For a woman's conception a bone is found in a hart's heart, sometimes in its belly; if thou hangest that bone on a woman's arm, and tiest it sharply, rathely she conceiveth" (p. 339).

"*Plumbum, i. e.*, Lead.—There is a reducing power in it. A thin plate of lead put on the inflamed members relieves them. It lessens the

purulent matter of sores. To stop the pain of a burn of fire or water put a leaden plate outside on it and it relieves it."

"*Quercus*, *i. e.*, the Oak, and there is a drying checking quality in its bark, leaves, and acorns.—Break the leaves of this tree small and put them in wounds, it stops the flux of blood and heals them. Boil its bark in water and drink the water, and let the patient sit on the bark, and it stops flux from the bowels and of the uterus. There is in the acorns of the oak the quality of exciting the urine and curing every flux; and there is greater virtue in its shells than in its leaves or fruit, and in the cups of the acorn than in the shells."

"*Rosmarinus*, Rosemary, and its degree has not been got from the authors. Its blossom and leaves are good for the cure. Boil the blossom in wine and it cures the chin-cough and cardialia. Boil the same blossom in wine, and let its smell and vapour rise under the nose, and it relieves headache greatly. A plaster of the same herb put on the navel relieves strangury and dysentery. Boiled in rape water and it is proper for paralytic persons."

Commentary.—Dioscorides describes three species of rosemary to which he attributes diuretic and emmenagogue properties (Dioscorides, Lib. III., cap. 89). Paulus Ægineta also describes three species of Λιβανωτις or rosemary. The diseases in which he recommends it differ from those in which the Irish physician prescribed it, being jaundice and dimness of sight (Lib. VII., sec. 3). Pliny, too, speaks of rosemary (Hist. Nat., Lib. XIX., cap. 62).

"*Saffron*, *i.e.*, the *Tulchan* (*Crocus Sativus*), and it is the roots of this herb that are fit for the cure. *Item.*—To boil its roots in vinegar and honey and it relieves *galar-na-nalt*, the gout."

"*Somnus*, Sleep, and these are the things that excite it—viz., red poppy, and opium, henbane, mandragora, and ros lachán (lesser duck meat), and cold water."

"*Turbit.*—It is hot and dry in the third degree; and it is the root of a tree, and it sharpens every cure; and it discharges white humours."

"*Vernix*, *i.e.*, the Gum of a Tree; it is cold and dry in the second degree. There are three sorts of it—yellow, and white, and red—and the white is the best. Put vernix, and frankincence, and the white of eggs on the mouth of the stomach, and it stops all vomiting. And it retains its virtue one hundred years."

Commentary.—The last article of the Irish Materia Medica is the Juniper Resin, or Sandaracha, which is no longer employed in medicine. Serapion describes it as "a gum of a yellow colour," and Avicenna speaks of sandaracha under the name ef "vernix" as being "hot and dry in the second degree." This gum was employed by the ancients as an astringent in cases of hæmoptysis and other hæmorrhages.