

**Cautions against the use of violent medicines in fevers: and instances of the virtue of petasite root ... / [John Hill].**

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# CAUTIONS

Against the Use of

VIOLENT MEDICINES

IN

FEVERS:

AND

INSTANCES,

Of the VIRTUE of

PETASITE ROOT,

So far as have yet come to the Author's Knowledge.

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BY J. HILL, M. D.

MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL ACADEMY.

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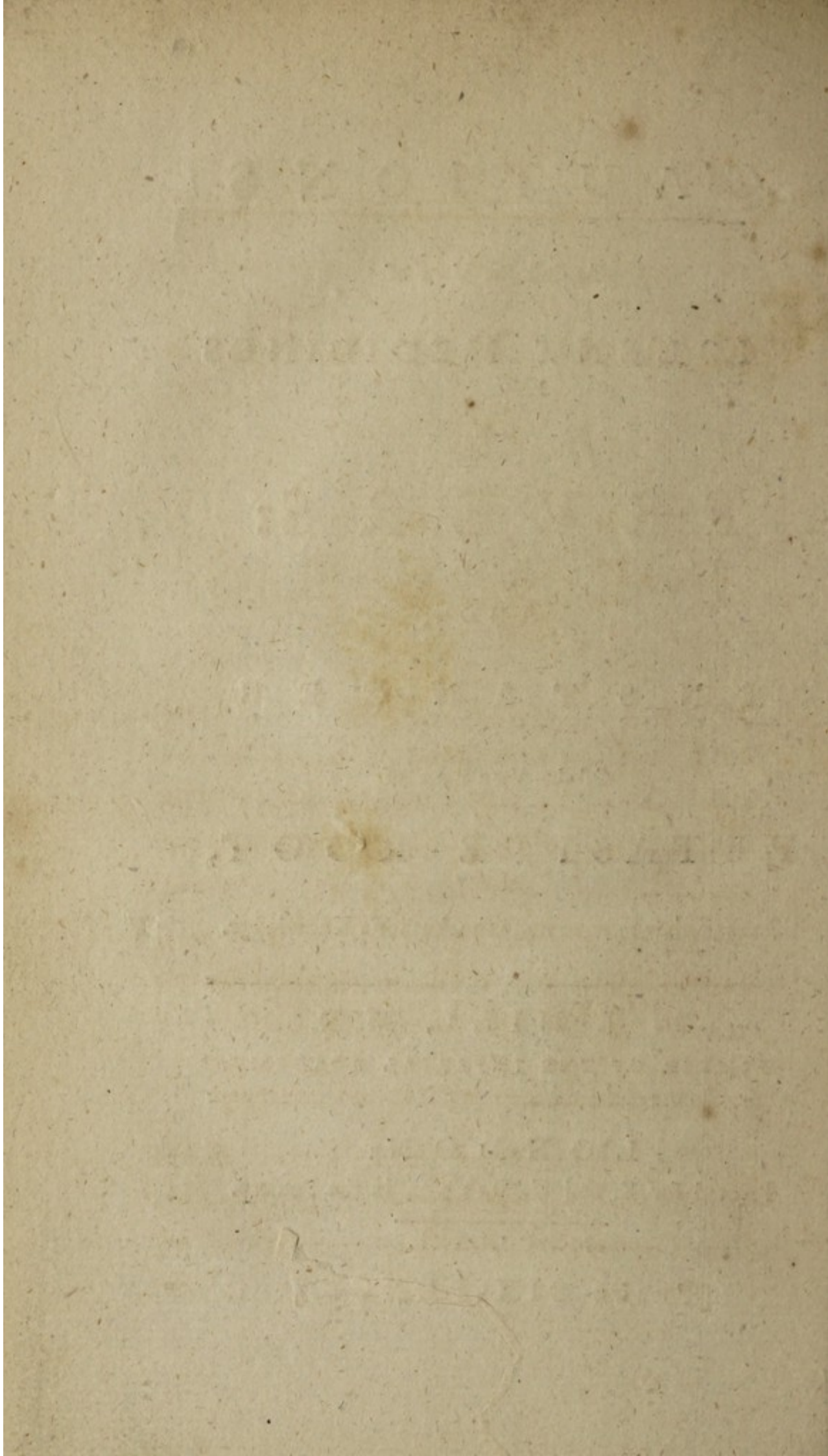
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# C A U T I O N S

I N

# F E V E R S.

'TIS ingenious, and amusing to write theories of fevers; but to be useful, we should try to cure them: The volumes which have been published on their nature, and their causes, may entertain the learned leisure of the studious; but he alone who shall remark their symptoms, and see the events of medicines; will tread the path of safety.

The bedside is the proper school of the physician; and a sedate experience his only true preceptor. The uncertain state of my

own health has denied me the advantages of this attendance: but whether it be from some success; or from whatever cause, many who are sick, apply to me at home.

From what I have experienced among these, it has appeared to me, that fevers may be often cured, in the first or second day, without either difficulty, or danger; which would have perplexed the doctor, and perhaps destroyed the patient in the end, if suffered to have run their lengthened course: and that in these early attacks of the disease, there is nothing of that hazard, which would attend the combating of them in their more advanced stages; tho' they may also be cured in those, by the same means.

In all these cases, I have found the Root of a common English Herb, the PETA-SITE, safe, pleasant, and effectual. I owe it to the Public, to declare what I have  
 4 seen;

seen ; and I trust they will receive it with their accustomed candour.

They will, from these informations, become their own physicians ; for there needs little more advising, than where to find the Root ; (which, like Nature's other best gifts, is one of the most common ; ) and to make it into tea ; or grate it into powder. Whoever takes it, may be assured, that no harm possibly can attend its use ; for its only effects are ease, a gentle perspiration, and sweet sleep : and he must be a poor physician, or indeed a poor rational creature, who does not see that, altho' these effects may be productive of great good ; 'tis perfectly impossible they should do ill, in the beginning of a fever. A physician, if fear, or distrust, should call in his assistance afterwards, will thank the good care that has so far prepared the way for him.

This perfect incapacity of ill ought to be the first care of the physician, who puts

into the hands of the Public, a medicine, which they are to manage for themselves; and the unadvised friend of the sick, before he ventures to give any thing in the beginning of a fever, ought to be perfectly assured, that it cannot too far irritate or disturb the unsettled frame of the patient's body; or, from the state or condition of any thing it finds there, bring on violent vomitings, or purgings.

There are fevers, in which the unloading of the stomach, and bowels, may be a first needful requisite: but 'tis not so in all; and even where this is wanted, still it should be done by the gentlest and most certain means; not by the rough, or casual: tho' the body's being open should be ever so requisite, the methods that give that benefit, should not be harsh, or violent.

These assistances to Nature may always be obtained by things we can exactly regulate; and they may so be obtained just  
when

when they are wanted ; and just in the degree. Glysters are for this service the proper, and the only proper method.

The Root here to be recommended neither promotes stools, nor prevents them: and this I may affirm with perfect safety, that I have seen fevers, which appeared under the most alarming form, removed by it in a few hours: and I wish truth did not require of me to add, that I have seen such as had no threatening appearances in their natural approach, raised to the extreme of terror, and of danger, by the violent effect of medicines of uncertain operation, prescribed in their beginnings.

This is the great CAUTION I meant to give to the sick, and to their friends: I hope it will be regarded ; and then whatsoever be the farther good of the succeeding pages, one great purpose will at least be answered to mankind. I think nothing



ought to be given at random in a fever that can either purge or vomit violently; because there are some fevers where this may be very hurtful; and 'tis too late to learn after the mischief, that a smaller dose might have been given with safety.

Reason declares, no medicine ought ever to be put into the public hands, which requires the advice of a physician to say, whether in any case, it be, or be not, proper to be given. This uncertainty has no place in the use of the simple, and innocent Root, here recommended; for it is incapable of raising any commotion in the body, or interrupting any of its natural, and healthful operations; and some advantage must, and nothing but advantage can attend its use.

The means by which its general utility came to my knowledge were these :

About two years ago, I published a small  
pamphlet

pamphlet on the Virtues of some British Herbs, and the certain means of knowing the right kinds; by figures, and short, but regular descriptions. Among the first of these, was the Herb Petasites, which our common people call *Fever Root*, *Pestilence-Wort*, or *Butterbur*, and the more learned, PETASITE; the great virtues recorded of the Root of this Plant, from the earliest, down to the latest times, led me to consider it at large: and the particular commands of quarantine, and a general alarm of the Plague being in some parts of Europe, and threatening to approach us at that time, led me to recommend it to notice; as the one medicine, on which there seemed a hope of rational dependance,

At the same time that I prescribed its Root thus publicly, I took it myself, to be assured of its safety; and gave it to others: first in the malignant fevers, which came within my practise, and afterwards  
in

in others, of all kinds. I have now been in a constant use of it from that time; and I flatter myself, that many, very many, lives may be saved, by making its virtues generally known. This, I apprehend, will be best done by a detail of its effects in those cases in which I have given it.

## I.

A hearty ruddy-complexioned labouring man, after working violently for a wager, and drinking a considerable part of his winnings, applied to me, burning with heat, thirsty, and with a violent pain in his head: a fever was palpably begun. 'Twas night, and in the country, and they could get none to bleed him. He was put to bed: a dram of Petasite Root was made into tea, with three pints of boiling water: he drank two half-pint basins, began to sweat, fell into a sleep of an hour, but waked disturbed: he drank then above half a pint, warm; and repeated the same about five in the morning. After this he slept  
found

found till nine, sweating moderately all the while. He was allowed only a bit of toast: he took the remainder of the tea; and before night was well. He then made one fresh dose for his last draught at night, and went the next day to his work in the morning.

## II.

A gentleman falling into a violent passion with his servant, after exhausting all his strength in the indulgence of it, fell into a fever: his pulse grew quick, and strong; his face inflamed; his tongue dry; and his flesh burning hot. He went to bed, took at five doses a quart of the tea made from little more than a dram of the Petasite Root, and grew composed; he sweated moderately, slept sound, and, by the help of a basin or two more of the same tea, was well the day following.

## III.

A respectable tradesman, after a venison-  
feast,

feast, with a good deal of claret, came home flushed; was put to bed, had a disturbed night, and was found very feverish in the morning. He was denied all solid food; kept with the room moderately darkened; and took plentifully of a tea of Butterburr Root: he sweated a little, and grew something quieter: but at night the fever increased upon him.

He now took six grains of the Root, dried before the fire, and grated; kept to his tea, in great abundance; slept several hours; and was better in the morning. Having all this time no stool, a glyster was given, of water-gruel, coarse sugar, oil, and a little salt. It produced its effect; and was repeated in the evening with the same success. He continued the powder of the Root every six hours; but, his stomach not relishing the tea of the Petasite also; he had Baum tea in abundance; and with these helps, at the end of three days, grew well.

## A GENERAL DIRECTION.

From what has been related, of the three preceding cases, the Reader will see the causes, and the proper treatment, of the more common kinds of fever: and those who would assist their neighbours, in the country, or would any where be assured that their friends are properly treated, may lay down to themselves these few general rules.

1. That no other medicine is needful than this Petasite Root.

2. That bed is the only proper place for a person attacked by a fever; and that he there should be kept perfectly at quiet.

3. That Baum tea in abundance, or some such innocent, weak liquor, must be drank, in order to keep up a moderate, not a violent sweat.

4. That

4. That there must be a stool once in four and twenty hours; and if Nature does not give it, the proper method is to obtain it by a glyster.

Three quarters of a pint of thin water-gruel, a spoonful of salt, two spoonfuls of oil, and about an ounce of coarse sugar, make the best glyster that can be given. The trouble of it is nothing, in comparison of the good it does: and this may be justly asserted; if the use of glysters were more general, all acute diseases would be much less dangerous.

5. That no solid food be eaten, and that if the person be florid, and full of blood, he should be blooded.

#### IV.

A young gentleman, fond of tennis, and of a long time accustomed to it, grew enamoured of a young woman, to a degree that made him neglect all other pleasures:  
after

after a fortnight, he became low, and dispirited, fancied himself ill; and wast old by his friends, 'twas from the want of his usual exercise. Young tempers are violent; he resumed his former sport next day; played many hours; and in a violent, melting heat, drank near a quart of porter.

He fell ill at once: a violent fever came on, with symptoms of internal inflammation; he was burning hot; his pulse quick, and strong; his tongue parch'd; and his head in pain. He was blooded, put to bed, and took seven grains of grated Petasite Root; his stomach was so much amiss, he vomited it up again; he took a basin or two of Baum-tea, and was covered warm with cloaths; but he continued burning without sweating: in about two hours after, he took eight grains more of Petasite, with three grains of the Root of Purple Avens, and a little Crabs-Claws from the apothecary's: this remained upon his stomach; and in ten minutes he began to sweat. 'Twas now evening; as there



had been no stool, he had a glyster; he took two more doses in the course of the night of the powder, prepared as the last; and as often as he waked, drank warm Baum-tea. He continued sweating, he grew easy, and toward morning, slept comfortably. He pursued the same method for four days, and grew well.

In the time of these four cases, several others came before me; which afforded no circumstance essentially different from those, and therefore 'twere tedious to relate them: but in some others of a like kind, which came afterwards under my direction, I constantly repeated the addition of the Avens Root, and the Crabs Claws, to the Petasite; and finding more occasion for the Root than agreed with the trouble of frequent mixing, I directed a quantity of the Root, of the best kind, and from the right soil, to be dried, and powdered; with an addition of these two equally innocent ingredients. This I have from  
that

that time given constantly with baum tea to dilute : and when the Petasite powder is named in the succeeding pages, the Reader will be pleased to observe, this mixt powder is meant.

## V.

A robust young man, who had attended some trials at the Old Bailey, came home ill; complained of the heat, and intolerable stench of the place; and in a few hours, grew feverish. His flesh became so hot, that it seemed to burn the fingers of a female relation, who had hold of one of his hands; his pulse was quick, and unequal; and making water, it was thick, like puddle. I did not see this patient: ill health confined me to my chamber: but there was no mistaking a disease attended with such symptoms. I had not yet had an opportunity of giving Petasite in a putrid fever: I therefore directed all things with the utmost care.

The patient took every six hours, fifteen

B

grains

grains of the compound Petasite Powder just described; he drank plentifully of baum tea, rendered a little sharp, with spirit of Vitriol. Every morning he had a glyster, such as described before, only omitting the salt: he was kept as still and quiet as possible; and the free air carefully let into the room, without reaching the bed with violence.

The second and the third day passed with a little seeming amendment; on the fourth, the heat of his flesh encreased about the breast; but his feet grew cold. Some scraped horse-radish Root, between two linens, was put to the soles of his feet; this brought on a little warmth again: he passed two more days in the same course, without any fresh ill symptom: but on the sixth, his breath grew very uneasy: the respiration however was equal, tho' laboured. He grew easier of this next day; but fell into a sort of stupidity; scarce regarded any thing, or any body; his  
limbs

limbs seemed feeble, and his eyes looked dull. Upon this being represented to me, I directed twenty grains of the Petasite Powder to be given every four hours, a little white wine to be added to his baum tea, and that he should invariably persist in the use of these things. He gradually grew better: he had a great struggle four nights afterwards; and after that, discharged a quantity of turbid urine, and from that time recovered.

## VI.

A woman who had heard of this case, came to me with the account of one who had for many days lain, as she said, in the same way, and was now convulsed; the feet were cold, the belly swelled, and on the breast were several blueish spots. I told the messenger, the case seemed without hope: and indeed the person was dead before her return.

I name this, because if the cases were

parallel, as I believe they were, the Petafite Powder probably prevented, in the former, all those fatal symptoms, which forbid in the latter, even the most distant hope.

## VII.

A middle-aged man came home hot from the play: he had sat in the pit when the house was very full, on a damp evening; where the heat and temper of the air, and united effluvia of many people together, had overpowered two or three weak persons so far, that they fainted: one even in the boxes. This person finding himself very hot, got into a hackney coach, drew up the windows, and came home; still in a violent sweat.

He had felt a shivering on going from the playhouse to the coach; and a second in passing from the coach to his own door: he went to bed, drank white wine whey, and was covered close, and warm.

But

But now he burnt without sweating : his breath was hot, like fire ; his mouth and throat parched ; and he made signs for drink every moment.

He passed a miserable night : in the morning I heard of him ; when he was growing worse every hour. He had a glyster : the air of the room was refreshed, without immediately chilling him ; and half the load of covering taken off the bed : he took fifteen grains of the Petasite Powder ; to which, on this occasion, were added, three grains of Comfrey Root, and half a grain of wild lettuce juice, which was afterwards also continued. He had a basin of baum tea, with a few drops of Spirit of Vitriol, to give it a grateful acidity ; a moist heat soon diffused itself over his whole body ; his feet began to sweat, and afterwards he sweated throughout, to the great satisfaction of his friends ; and to the astonishment of a worthy clergyman, whom their fears of immediate death had brought to at-

tend him ; this gentleman observing, 'twas strange that keeping a man cooler, should put him in a sweat.

He grew easier, breathed better, and found his mouth less parched : he continued the Powder once in eight hours, and drank very abundantly of the baum tea, which the small addition of acid rendered very agreeable to him. Every morning he had a glyster ; and tho' the disease continued many days, he grew perfectly well by the use of these means, constantly and carefully pursued, without any other assistance.

### VIII.

A gentleman of fifty-two, after being very earnest in a debate among a public company in the city, speaking very long and loud, with too much vehemence and passion ; found himself on his return, hot, burning, and uneasy, without any tendency to sweat : he was seized with an aversion

sion to the very name of food, and grew restless, anxious, weary, talked of insupportable fatigue, and was put to bed.

In the course of the night, which he passed without sleep; and with great disturbance of mind, and everlasting tossing and tumbling about, his tongue became burnt to yellowness; his skin seemed scorched; and notwithstanding all his heat, his face in many parts was ash coloured.

He began early in the morning to take the Petasite Powder; he was blooded; he had a glyster twice in the four and twenty hours; he eat nothing; drank a great deal of baum tea: and after a few days, recovered.

## IX.

A gentlewoman of a tender habit, going very early to a chapel, where there was a favourite preacher of a peculiar turn, found herself struck with a chillness on walking in. She had gone in a chair, and



the chapel was cold and empty; her passions were soon roused: for of these, perhaps, those which grow upon the stock of Enthusiasm are among the strongest.

Whether the weakness of her frame, or the eloquence of the preacher were the cause, she came home in tears: and she was sick at times; and disposed to vomit: her feet were cold; she had pain down her back, and repeated shiverings.

She took a quantity of tea of *Carduus Benedictus*, which made her vomit with great ease four times; and left her stomach much better: she was put to bed, and she took twelve grains of *Petasite Powder*, to which were added, three grains of the Root of *Masterwort*; an excellent addition, and also continued afterwards to all the Powders of this Root: she disliked baum tea, and had therefore a tea made from the leaves of *Agrimony*, which I have since found

found is equally effectual, and innocent; and much more pleasant.

She had a restless night with shiverings, twitchings, anxiety, and a great horror: she repeated the Powder once in eight hours; and after the third dose, fell into a regular and universal sweat; she grew easier, and dropped into a sweet sleep. This was about six in the morning; and she waked a little before nine, greatly refreshed.

Her room was kept cool: she was raised frequently in her bed; and sat up several minutes: at noon she eat a little panada, and thought herself getting well at once: but toward evening the burning heat returned so violent, that the hands of her female acquaintance seemed scorched with touching her. She was covered a little warmer; and taking her dose of the powder about ten o'clock, with a good basin of tea after it, she fell into a very sweet sleep,

sleep, which lasted till two in the morning. She then waked in tears; talked wildly of the preacher; the graces of his person, and the beauty of holiness: but after a basin of the Agrimony tea, and the repeated refreshing of the room by free air, she dosed till toward six in the morning; when, after another dose of the Powder, she fell into a very kindly sweat, and slept till ten.

This was a tedious case; but no bad symptom occurred: she continued the use of this medicine alone, and is now very well; and tho' full as pious, is less outrageously enthusiastic.

### X.

A poor woman had an obstinate ague: it had held her a long time; and after the various attempts of a quartern of brandy at one time; and a whole lemon, with pepper, at another; after Chamæmile Flowers, and Cobwebs; and in short, after every thing  
 expe-

experience or imagination have invented; beside a pound or two of bark, and the vain efforts of twenty different charms; she was falling into a jaundice, and had swelled ankles.

She took twenty grains of the Petasite Powder every morning and night, for the intervals between three of the fits; and the fourth was prevented by an ounce of good bark. She has since kept to the use of small doses of bark every day; and she is well, and will get strong again.

## XI.

A lady, after being kept very hot three hours in a crowded playhouse, by a mistake of the boxkeeper, went out into the air, when her chair was not ready. After waiting a few minutes, she returned back into the house; but was so chilled, that she declared she was struck with death.

She got home, and went immediately  
to

to bed: she burned in some parts, and froze in others; her face, neck, and breast, were like a hot coal, while her hands were cold, and her feet numbed. She was frightened out of her senses; she breathed quick, and irregular; and the maid said her breath scorched her face, when she came near her. Her tongue was white, her mouth parched up, and her very voice altered, and imperfect.

About twelve she took a dose of fifteen grains of Petasite Powder, the Root alone without any addition: she drank baum tea, and grew a little easier; a slight sweat was perceived about her breast, but her feet were still cold.

One of those vessels with hot water, contrived for warmth by Buzaglo, was put into the bed toward the feet: and after about an hour, a plentiful sweat came on. This was indulged, but moderated: great sweating is not intended in this course.

course. The air of the chamber was refreshed; the lady was raised in her bed at times: a little of the powder was sprinkled over every basin of the tea she drank; and by degrees, her spirits returned: she lost the terrors of dying; she slept composed; and the next morning was better to a miracle; but 'twas several days before she perfectly recovered.

In all that time, a glyster was given at nine every morning: at twelve she eat a little panada; and had no other food whatever: for 'tis to be observed, that very little nourishment is wanted in fevers: and it was contrived that one dose of the powder, a few grains more than the others, should be given at night. By this means she rested well; and by a great deal of diluting with baum tea, and a regular course of the glysters, she grew perfectly well.

Here the Petasite Root alone performed the cure; perhaps in most cases, the additions recommended, and generally used  
with

with it, are best; at least, so experience seems to say hitherto: but there are specifics which act in various diseases with safety, and with certainty; and more time must shew whether this innocent, and most effectual Root be one.

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#### THE CHOICE OF THE PETASITE ROOT.

**T**HERE are two kinds of Petasite, natives of our meadows: the one has its Flowers growing close to the Stalk; in the other they hang from it on small Footstalks \*. The first is the right kind for use.

They have been given indiscriminately by many heretofore, who supposed them the same plant; but since we have attended to their difference, we have found the first, which is the common sort, only, should be used. The other is less aromatic, and has more bitterness; and sometimes disagrees with the stomach: which the first never does.

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\* See Virtues of British Herbs, page 88. pl. 18.

This must be chosen where it grows on damp, but not wet ground, and only the oval head of the Root is to be used. This, in the finest Roots, is about the bigness of a walnut; and at bottom grows a thick, white fibre; which is to be thrown away.

The oval Root is of a pale brown, with two or three circles of small rising dots, of the bigness of pins-heads, upon it: these are the heads of vessels; and those vessels contain the medicinal virtue of the Plant: the Root is good for nothing, except where they are.

This Root is to be split; when there appears a course of vessels, half as thick as a straw, just within the bark, ouzing forth a resinous juice; of the most agreeable aromatic, and delicate taste.

The inside, or fleshy part of the Root, is to be thrown away; the outer coat, with these vessels, is to be hanged up in an airy place to dry; and as soon as fit for powdering,



powdering, it must be beaten very fine; alone, or with the several little additions here directed, and given, fifteen or twenty grains for a dose.

F I N I S.