

SOME STRANGE REMEDIES.

BY MISS GRIFFIN.

I was reading the other day about some curious remedies and my thoughts went back to the days of my youth. When I was quite small I remember an old woman talking about a girl who had consumption; she was discussing the case with a neighbour and said that if they would only get a small frog from the fields, put it on the girl's tongue and let it hop down her throat, it would eat up all the consumption and the girl would get well. I thought a great deal about this and wondered what would be the feelings of the girl, what it would be like to have a live frog in one's mouth; then the awful sensation of it hopping down one's throat. Next I wondered what kind of feelings it would cause in the stomach and if the girl would be sick and return the frog. Lastly, I thought of the frog and pictured it swimming wildly round and round in the digestive fluids and thought of its feelings as it tried vainly to escape. Would it be digested or would it pass from the stomach alive? The probable adventures of that frog occupied my mind for days.

Reading the article the other day I tried to think of all the curious remedies I had ever heard of—here is one copied from an old book—“To cleanse a foul sore, kill a great toad and let it hang in the sun to dry, and when it is as hard as a stick let it be beaten to powder, bones and all, as fine as may be. Cast that powder upon the sore and let it lie three or four days, then wipe out the dead flesh and the sore will heal quickly and well.” Now-a-days it would probably do nothing of the kind, blood poisoning would be more likely the result.

Here is a remedy for a fish bone, pin, or anything in the throat. “Take a thimbleful and a half of gunpowder and put it in a spoon, wet it with a little beer or butter, stir it and put it down the throat with a little beer after it.”

Here is a fine cure for abdominal pains. A recipe through mercy to cure all pain in one night. “Take an ant-hill that has thyme upon it, place the thyme side on the stomach as you lie abed at night, and drink well of ale. So shall you be cured of your pain.” It does not say if the ants are to be removed before placing the ‘hill’ on the abdomen, apparently they were not, and the bites may have been used as a counter-irritant. Personally I should prefer the stomach ache.

Next comes a cure for gout—it is not quite so drastic. “Take half a pint of strong ale, yeast, and as much fresh soot from the chimney, mix well together with the whites of six eggs. Then cut out of coarse brown paper two soles of the same breadth and length as the feet of the patient. Bind them gently with a broad wooden binder to the feet when the patient goes to bed, and by the blessing of God he will be cured before morning.” The recipe leaves us in doubt as to what we are to do with the mixture of soot and ale. Also I should like to know what a broad wooden binder is.

Old English Cock Ale is recommended as “a most wholesome drink for preserving the health, expelling all infections, and preventing agues, fevers,

surfeits, colds, dropsies, and scurvies. It was to be taken daily in the way we take salts. You made it as follows: "Take a gallon of ale and a large cock, the older the better. Parboil the cock and stamp him in a stone mortar till his bones are broken. Now put him in a quart of sack in a canvas bag with raisins, mace, and cloves and put the ale and bag together in a large vessel. Bottle it after a week or nine days and leave it to ripen."

For sore eyes a poultice of rotting apples was applied and was supposed to be an infallible cure.

There are many cures for warts—one is to rub the wart nine times with an apple cut into nine pieces which are then buried, and the belief is that as the pieces of apple rot away so the wart will disappear.

Another way is to steal a piece of beef and rub the wart with it, bury it and the wart will gradually disappear. The beef *must* be stolen for the remedy to take effect.

A Derbyshire remedy for rheumatism is to shred horse radish into a jug and pour hot ale over it, let it stand 24 hours and then take a wine glassful three times a day.

Another cure for rheumatism is to wear sewing cotton round the waist. The great point in this remedy is that it must be black cotton and must be wound three times round the body, neither more nor less.

If a child has whooping cough it should spend so many hours a day playing near a sheep-fold and by the end of a week the whoop will be almost if not quite gone.

Another cure for whooping cough is to take the child near a gas works and keep it there for half an hour a day letting it inhale the fumes.

For sore throats slices of fat bacon are hung round the neck, kept in place by a flannel bandage, and not removed till all the soreness has gone.

Garlic is another remedy for throat troubles, the cloves of garlic are threaded on a string like a necklace and tied round the neck. This is often done in India. Garlic is also said to be a protection from vampires.

An ulcerated leg used to be treated by a poultice of cowdung, this also savours of India.

For a sty in the eye the tail of a tom cat was a certain cure if the tip of the tail was rubbed on the sty.

In my youth, in villages, I have often seen mothers squirt their breast milk into babies' eyes when they were sore, it was a common remedy.

Here in India there are many strange remedies—I saw one poor patient being made to drink a concoction of earth, ashes, water and cow's urine to expel the afterbirth.

Cow's urine is used for many things.

Turmeric made into a paste with ghi is used for all kinds of sores. Neem leaves pounded are also largely used.

With remedies such as are enumerated here, there would be no excuse to 'enjoy ill health.' I should think the patients had one fixed and firm idea—to get well as fast as possible—and to remain well.