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## THE COMPOSITION OF CERTAIN SECRET REMEDIES.

## KIDNEY-MEDICINES.

The next group of nostrums which we have taken for analysis consists of those which are put forward for the cure of kidney-troubles. Several of these are in the form of pills, while others are liquids. The two principal drugs employed are oil of juniper and potassium-nitrate, separately or together; in some cases aperients are added. Altogether extravagant claims are made for some of the articles, as is usual, of course, with proprietary medicines; we refer more fully to these in individual cases.

In analysing complex mixtures, such as some of these nostrums are, it is of course not possible to attain the same precision as when dealing with medicines which consist chiefly of inorganic salts, as in the case of nostrums for epilepsy, dealt with in an earlier article. A vegetable extract containing no definite active principle, such as, for instance, extract of taraxacum, cannot be identified by any direct test; if such an extract is mixed with another, with a powdered drug, an essential oil, or other preparation, its identification with perfect certainty may become almost impossible. The large variations, again, which may occur in the proportion of solid matter in a tincture or infusion, as well as the variations in the relative proportion of the different constituents of drugs, prevent the results of analysis being translated with certainty into the formula from which the mixture was compounded. These considerations apply to several of the articles in the present list; while the principal ingredient or ingredients in each case can be determined with little or no possibility of error, the subsidiary ingredients in some cases cannot be so determined; we have endeavoured to indicate in each case the possibility of such minor errors. Full use has been made of check methods, by compounding mixtures according to the formulæ obtained by analysis and comparing them with the originals.

*Doan's Backache Kidney Pills.*

Put up by Foster-McClellan Company, 8 Wells Street, Oxford Street, London, W. Price, 2s. 9d. per box, containing forty kidney-pills and four dinner-pills.

These pills are probably familiar by name to most people from the extensive way in which they are advertised in the newspapers. They are described on the wrapper of the package as a "Specific for kidney complaints and all diseases arising from disorder of the kidneys and bladder. Cure Back-ache, Weak Back, Rheumatism, Diabetes, Congestion of the Kidneys, Inflammation of the Bladder, Gravel, Bright's Disease, Scalding Urine, and all Urinary Troubles." A circular is enclosed with the box, in which a dissertation on "Diseases of the Kidneys and Bladder" is given, together with directions for taking the pills for various complaints. The following extracts are taken from the circular: "Doan's Backache Kidney Pills are composed of rare and valuable medicinal agents in a combination best adapted to the speedy relief and cure of Kidney Disease, urinary and bladder affections, and all diseases resulting therefrom. They are purely vegetable, containing no ingredients of a deleterious nature, and may be taken by the most delicate person, with every confidence of their giving quick and permanent relief, without any after ill effects." ". . . they are the only medicine known that quickly relieves and permanently cures." "This medicine has restored to health thousands of women. As a means of healing the kidneys, and as a tonic to the whole female constitution, it is unequalled." The last sentence of the next extract shows ingenuity and originality: "Chronic cases of long standing. These frequently come under our notice, and we hear that the patient, after trying every known remedy and failed (*sic*), has despaired of ever getting relief. Now in all stages of Kidney Disease this is where Doan's Backache Kidney Pills are the most needed, and, indeed, are the only remedy possible to give permanent relief. But it takes time. One cannot expect to be cured in a few weeks. . . . In some cases three or four boxes of Doan's Backache Kidney Pills are sufficient; but in these cases of long standing, 8, 10, and even 20 or 30, are required to effect a cure. But they will cure in the end if the patient perseveres. We are emphatic on this point, because in kidney disease patients are so easily discouraged. It is one of the symptoms of the disease."

The directions are to take from two to four of the dinner-pills at night before commencing to take the kidney-pills; then to begin with one kidney-pill after each meal and one at bedtime, increasing the dose to two or three, after a short time of taking them. For children under eight, the dose is given as half a pill after each meal and at bedtime.

The kidney-pills are ovoid in shape, and of a brown-grey colour externally, with sugar-coating beneath the thin coloured layer; after removing the coating, the average weight of the pills is about 2 gr. Analysis showed them to contain oil of juniper and (in spite of their "purely vegetable" nature) potassium-nitrate, together with a considerable proportion of a resinous substance, and of powdered fenugreek seeds and wheat and maize starches. Examination of the resin showed it to be derived from a coniferous source, and on comparison with various coniferous resins it agreed in characters with that of *Abies canadensis* (*Pinus canadensis*), known as hemlock-pitch. The proportions of the different ingredients were determined by analysis; the oil of juniper, in such small quantity, can only be approximately determined, and the amount found was con-