



CHAPTER XIII

Ancient Irish Medicine

ONE of the most interesting chapters in the history of the Irish people of the olden times is that which tells the story of their care for the ailing and gathers up the medical traditions of ancient Ireland which fortunately have been preserved for us though not in such detail as we would like to have them. These are very precious because they set forth a definite organization of care for those who are ill, that is for all in need of healing, quite apart from their social status, that is to be found nowhere else. They comprise certain features of care for fellow human beings when ill that we must come down to much later ages of history to find duplicated by other people. The Irish while easily prone to anger and quarreling without much provocation, were tender hearted and they believed in affording proper care to fellow mortals in suffering and provided the means for it.

Before the coming of Christianity there were no public hospitals in our sense of that term, to be found among the nations, even among those that are rightly considered to have been the leaders of civilization and human progress as it can be traced. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Greece and even Rome, made no provision for the ailing poor as such. No