

CHAPTER VII.

[76] ON THE MEDICINE OF THE SAVAGES.

IT is true that great poverty stifles the spirit, and overwhelms it with its importunate and despotic sway, so that it can seldom turn to itself, or revel in agreeable meditations, nor even dream of something better to prevent or lighten it, being always absorbed in and possessed by the greatest needs. We see this in our poor Savages, who live only from hand to mouth, and hence are always subject to the fear of hunger, first and strongest of all wants; they have no opportunity of developing their minds in the pursuit of [77] knowledge; not even of providing arts and trades for the relief and amelioration of life, nor to satisfy other wants however pressing. Now for this reason they not only lack all literature and fine arts, but also (unfortunately) medicine, whether for the preservation of their health, or for the cure of their diseases, except the little that I shall describe.

They keep themselves well (principally in Summer) by the use of hot rooms and sweat boxes, and by the bath. They also use massage, afterwards rubbing the whole body with seal oil, causing them to emit an odor which is very disagreeable to those not accustomed to it. Nevertheless, when this oiling process is over, they can stand heat and cold better, and their [78] hair is not caught in the branches, but is slippery, so that rain and tempest do not injure the head, but glide over it to the feet; also that the mosquitoes