

## ANCIENT REMEDIES INVOLVING INSECTS

The "Natural History of Pliny" abounds with misinformation that was once accepted as fact and some of it refers to insects. For example, a person who carried about with him the beak of the woodpecker of Mars was never injured by bees, wasps and hornets. For the bite of a mad dog, one remedy consisted in attaching to the body of the patient a maggot taken from the carcass of a dead dog. When the hair was lost, it could be made to grow again by the application of a mixture of mouse dung and the heads of flies, applied fresh, the part first being rubbed with a fig leaf. Other remedies for baldness consisted of applications of the blood of flies, or of the ashes of burnt flies. In one case the ashes of burnt flies kneaded with woman's milk and cabbage was recommended.

For the bites of all spiders the best remedy was a cock's brains taken in oxycrate with a little pepper. Five ants swallowed in drink was also effective as well as spiders of any kind left to putrefy in oil.

Nits were destroyed by using dogs' fat or by eating serpents cooked like eels. Cantharides were supposed to be produced from small grubs found particularly in the spongy galls on the stems of the "dog-rose." In order to utilize them, they were put in a small earthen pot, which was covered over with a linen cloth, on which was placed a layer of full-blown roses. The pot was then suspended over vinegar boiled with salt, until the steam penetrated the cloth and stifled them. They they were put aside for later use.—H. B. W.



Weiss, Harry B. 1945. "Ancient Remedies Involving Insects." *Journal of the New York Entomological Society* 53, 246–246.

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