

facient, a practice which is termed "urtication," and found of advantage in restoring excitement in paralytic limbs, or in other cases of torpor or lethargy.

The ancients seem to have despised this plant, from its being common, and though supposed to be possessed of great virtues in medicine, neither the Greeks nor Latins have said much about it; nor have the Arabians, who abound in the imaginary virtues of plants, thought the real ones of this herb worth their consideration.

It has, however, been more honoured lately, and notwithstanding its being now the most vile and abject plant among us, as well as the least regarded by the ancients, Johannes Francus, an author of considerable fame, has published a treatise solely upon it: in this he has treated at large on its history and virtues. He describes its stings in a very judicious manner, according to the present doctrine of the microscope, and gives the history of certain worms of singular kinds which feed upon it; and adds its use in our own foods as an wholesome and agreeable pot-herb; in our drink as a substitute for hops, being as well capable of preserving it as those, and in its great service to the farmer in fattening hens.

John Melchior Dreschler, in the year 1717, sustained also a thesis on the virtues and uses of this plant, which has been since printed, ornamented with several cuts. In these two authors we find the whole account of the several uses this common plant has been put to, and may be put to in our manufactures, our domestic and medicinal uses; and, if what they say be true, we must wonder to see so much value overlooked in a herb, only because it is common.

An ingenious manufacturer at Leipzig has contrived to make ropes and cloth of nettle. The species he uses for this purpose is the *urtica urens maxima*, or great stinging nettle; and the process of preparing it as follows: having gathered a quantity of the stalks still green, though half withered, he dried them over his stove; and when the moisture was entirely exhausted, bruised them so as to be able to separate the wood from the bark. By this operation he procured a kind of green hards, which was rubbed and prepared like flax. This new matter being spun, he obtained a greenish-brown thread, very uniform and clear, somewhat resembling worsted. The manufacturer afterwards boiled this thread, when it yielded a greenish juice, and became more white, uniform, and strong; so that by continuing the preparation, he had reason to hope that an excellent thread might be made, and consequently a strong and lasting cloth; and that it might be employed with advantage, not only by rope-makers, but even by weavers, in making fine stuffs.

This practice of dressing the stalks of nettles like flax or hemp, for making ropes, nets, cloth, paper, &c. is not uncommon in some parts of Russia and Siberia.

The stings of nettles are very curious microscopic objects: they consist of an exceedingly fine pointed tapering hollow substance, with a perforation at the point, and a bag at the base. When the sting is pressed upon, it readily punctures the skin, and the same pressure forces up from the bag an acrimonious fluid, which instantly enters into the wound, and excites a burning inflammation. The nettle is said to be poisonous to frogs: for if the plant be thrown into a vessel where these animals are confined, they soon begin to swell, and in a few days perish.

NETTLE, the common name of a well-known perennial weed, which may be easily destroyed by cutting the roots, before the plant has perfected its seed.

NETTLE, in *Botany*, &c. See URTICA.

The roots of the common nettle, or *urtica dioica*, have been much recommended in medicine as powerful diuretics; and great virtues have been ascribed to them in calculous complaints, scurvy, gout, jaundice, &c.; and also as styptics; in hæmorrhages of all kinds, particularly in spittings of blood, and overflowings of the menses. Authors add to this, that they are specifics, by way of antidote, against the poison of henbane and hemlock; but this we are not so well assured of. The accounts that have been given of its medicinal virtues have now little credit; and the nettle is considered merely as a simple oleraceous plant, and, when young, is found to be a good substitute for greens, or other pot-herbs. The young shoots of the plant are eaten in the spring, as good against scorbutic complaints.

The sharp hairs upon the fresh leaves of nettles readily enter the skin, and thus produce considerable irritation and inflammation, and therefore have been employed as a rube-