

following is from a book of Epigrams, by S. Sheppard, published at London in 1651 :—

"*Virgula divina* :—

"Some sorcerers do boast they have a rod,
Gathered with vowes and sacrifice,
And (borne about) will strangely nod
To hidden treasure where it lies ;
Mankind is, sure, that rod divine,
For to the wealthiest ever they incline."

The divining rod, *virgula divina*, or *baculus divinatorius*, was a forked branch of hazel, cut in the form of a Y, and was supposed to reveal not only the latent spring, but mines of gold or silver, lead or coal, and any other concealed treasure. It was employed in the following fashion :—The person carrying it walked very slowly over the supposed localities of the springs or mines, until the effluvia exhaling from the metals, or the vapour from the water impregnating the wood, made it dip or incline—which was the indication of the diviner's success.*

The following extract from the *Gentleman's Magazine*† will amuse the reader :—

"So early as Agricola the divining rod was in much request, and has obtained great credit for its discovery where to dig for metals and springs of water ; for some years past its reputation has been on the decline, but lately it has been revived with great success by an ingenious gentleman, who, from numerous experiments, hath good reason to believe its effects to be more than imagination. He says that hazel and willow rods, he has by experience found, will actually answer with all persons in a good state of health, if they are used with moderation and at some distance of time, and after meals, when the operator is in good spirits. The hazel, willow, and elm are all attracted by springs of water : some persons have the virtue intermit- tently ; the rod, in their hands, will attract one half-hour, and repel the next. The rod is attracted by all metals, coals, amber and limestone, but with different degrees of strength. The best rods are those from the hazel, or nut tree, as they are pliant and tough, and cut in the winter months. If a shoot that terminates equally forked is not to be met with, two single ones, of same length and size, may be tied together with a thread, and will answer as well as the other."]

The art of discovering springs is, at the present time, a simple application of the principles of geology and hydraulics. Nevertheless, to practise it successfully, a special ability is indispensable ; a kind of *coup d'œil*, like that which distinguishes a

* [Brande, "Popular Antiquities," ed. 1855, iii. 332–336.]

† [The *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1751, xxi. 507.]