

most hourly tested until the close of the season, and my confidence in its uniformity of effect thereby continually confirmed.

One or two cases of ordinary Cholera Morbus came under my notice in the latter part of the season, in which it was equally prompt in relieving the vomiting. Several sporadic cases of Cholera Infantum occurred after the close of the fever season, in which it was used with no less conspicuous benefit. Since the above experience, I have often used this infusion with the most marked benefit in that irritable stomach which often attends Cholera Infantum, as well as gastric and gastro-enteritic fevers.

In addition to the above, I am happy in being able to state, on the authority and observation of my colleague, Dr. Dugas, Professor of Anatomy, that it has proved a convenient, prompt, safe and uniform remedy in Pertussis. His prescription is to give the patient one pint of a pretty strong infusion each day, in divided doses, until the disease disappears; and that, in families having 12 or 20 cases, he very rarely has occasion to make another prescription—the disease generally disappearing within four or five days.

The power of Prussic Acid in actually curing this disease, immediately on arriving at the full dose for the patient, was abundantly demonstrated in my practice in 1822. But the difficulties attending the use of Off. Prussic Acid are such, owing to the various strength, age, &c. that it cannot ever become a remedy in general practice, except near a competent and correct Chemist.

But we here have great cause of gratitude to an ever-bountiful Providence, for strewing around us a simple, safe and cheap remedy, accessible to all.

I need say nothing of the efficacy of this medicine in the cure of those cases of Hæmaturia which depend on irritations in the urinary passages, as it has been long known to the profession.—*Southern Med. and Surg. Jour.*

CASE OF POISONING WITH DATURA STRAMONIUM,

SHOWING THE UNCERTAINTY OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE IN MEDICO-LEGAL INVESTIGATIONS.

BY CHARLES HOOKER, M.D.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

AN Irish family was taken suddenly ill, after eating a dinner of corned beef and boiled greens. The family consisted of five persons, Mr. T. his wife, and three children, the eldest about eight, the youngest about five years of age. I saw them about an hour after dinner, when the symptoms were immediately recognized as the effects of the *Datura*. The countenances had a wild idiotic expression—the pupils widely dilated—the sensorial functions perverted—and the muscular system subject to an irregular agitation somewhat resembling that of chorea. The appearance of the family was extremely ludicrous. The children were laughing, crying, singing, dancing, and playing all imaginable antic pranks. They had no correct estimation of distances, or the size of

objects—were reaching their hands to catch hold of objects across the room, and again running against persons and things which they appeared to view as distant. The nail heads in the floor were pieces of money, which they eagerly tried to pick up. A boy, apparently fancying himself undressed, caught a hat belonging to a student, thrust his foot into it, pulled with both hands on the brim, and began to fret that he could not “get on his trowsers.” The parents frequently called on the children to behave themselves; but, their own actions being equally eccentric, they afforded a ridiculous exhibition of family government.

Sulphate of zinc with ipecac brought from the stomachs a large quantity of the *Datura* plant with other green vegetables; and under the use of Camphor, Carb. Ammonia, and a warm aromatic infusion, the narcotic symptoms soon subsided.

The cause of these symptoms was no sooner known, than suspicions were fixed on a Mrs. A., a woman of indolent, intemperate habits, who lived in the same house. The Irish family moved into the house about a week previous—a circumstance which gave some offence to Mrs. A. Until this morning she had avoided speaking to her new neighbors, and she had never mentioned them except in harsh and threatening language. She had frequently wished the family dead—hoped they would all die if they remained in the house—and intimated a willingness to “poison them if she could get a chance.” This morning her tone suddenly changed—she came into Mrs. T.’s room, addressed her in terms of extreme kindness, engaged in free conversation, and at length remarked that she observed Mr. T. had provided a fine piece of corned beef for dinner, advised Mrs. T. to boil a mess of greens with the beef, and herself went out to gather the greens.

Mrs. T. and the eldest two children, who picked over and washed the greens, declared that Mrs. A. gathered the whole of them. She gathered the greens in a field where the *Datura* was abundant. It appeared evident, moreover, that she could not have gathered the plant ignorantly, since, only a few days previous, she had pointed out “the poison stramonium” to some neighbors, earnestly cautioning them against the use of it. Another circumstance tending to increase suspicion was that she left the house immediately after the family sickened, and was not found until after considerable search and inquiry.

Circumstances seemed strong against Mrs. A., and measures were taken towards a criminal prosecution. The youngest Irish child was scarcely five years old, and had been considered as incapable of giving any information on the subject. Fortunately for Mrs. A. it occurred to me that this child would at least be free from any design to give the matter a false coloring; and, on being questioned in regard to the greens, with the usual candid simplicity of a child, she immediately led us into the back yard, where the *Datura* grew in profusion, and showed where and how she gathered greens for dinner. The mother, who before had concealed this fact, probably from feelings of hatred and malice towards Mrs. A., now confessed that a small basketful of the *Datura*, gathered by the little girl, was mixed with the mess for dinner. Still the very sudden conciliatory conduct of Mrs. A. towards the Irish family seemed

unaccountable. Probably, however, this circumstance might be explained by the fact that, with her accustomed indolence, she had made no provision for dinner; and, seeing a piece of beef carried into the other part of the house, she adopted this plan, as a matter of policy, in expectation of an invitation to dine with the family.

New Haven, Ct. August 19, 1836.

ANOMALOUS CASE OF AMAUROSIS.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR—The following particulars of a case of *amaurosis*, the truth of which may be relied upon, have lately come to my knowledge; and from their novelty, I am induced to send them to you. If you think they are of sufficient interest to merit a place in your valuable Journal, they are at your service.

Jane H—, of this place, now in her 12th year, some time in May, 1835 (the day not recollected), arose in the morning with a disagreeable sensation in her right eye, which exhibited a somewhat inflamed and watery appearance. She was directed, by her mother, to wash it in cold water, and secure it from the light with a bandage. During the forenoon, she had occasion to remove the bandage, and found, to her surprise, that the vision of the eye was totally extinct. A physician was called in, who ordered her an emetic, to be followed by a cathartic. These not proving efficacious, leeches were applied to the temples, and a blister to the nape of the neck. These means improved the general health, which had not been very good, subdued the inflammation, and restored the eye to its natural appearance, but had no effect whatever upon its vision. The eye was secluded from the air and light for a time, but finding they did not affect it, the shade was removed. The eye appeared and felt, in all respects, as well as the other, but so great was its blindness that darkness and light were undistinguishable. This state continued until some time in February following, when she had her ears bored. On the morning after, as she awoke, she was as much surprised as she had been on losing her sight, to find it perfectly restored. The eye remained well for about two months, when a “kind of tingling sensation” was felt in it, and soon after followed by a second loss of vision, though with no apparent change in its appearance. In this instance the sight of the other eye was considerably affected. In a few weeks sight was again spontaneously restored, but not so suddenly, nor, at first, so perfectly as before; objects for a time, as she said, presented a “glossy appearance.” She has since had no return of the affection.

I ought, perhaps, to have mentioned, that the patient, for several months previous to her first restoration to sight, was affected with a severe, and, as her mother expressed it, “peculiar cough,” such an one as she had never heard before.

To what was this blindness owing? Did perforating the ears have any effect in restoring the vision?

Lowell, Aug. 18, 1836.