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A CASE OF POISONING BY STRAMONIUM.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

MESSRS. EDITORS,—The infrequency of poisoning by stramonium seed, in this city, renders the following case peculiarly interesting.

L. G., a boy of six years, was found standing at the back gate of his father's house, at about six o'clock on Saturday afternoon. He was known to have gone away from home immediately after dinner, and had not been seen by his family afterwards. He staggered into the house, drank a cup of tea in the kitchen, and was carried up stairs; having said, in reply to a question, "I don't care," but these were all the words spoken by him until after midnight. I saw him a few minutes before nine o'clock. He was sitting in a lady's lap, his right cheek against her breast. The whole surface was of a bright crimson; but the skin was not dry, and the redness disappeared on pressure, returning very rapidly. His teeth and lips were separated. The tongue was very dry, and its tip was curled up, but not touching the roof of his mouth. Both pupils were fully dilated, the iris being scarcely perceptible. The respiration strongly stertorous. The pulse was rapid and feeble. Both sounds of the heart were distinct. The abdomen was tympanitic.

The history, so far as could be made out, was, that he had eaten bread and butter, with tomato catsup, for breakfast; had been at school in the morning; had taken a dinner of bread and butter, with milk, and had gone away to play immediately after. With whom, or where he had been, could not be discovered. His usual companions had not seen him. He had vomited, just before I saw him, a parcel of seeds, supposed to be tomato seeds. On comparison, however, there was an evident difference. The tomato seed was about the same size, but balloon-shaped. These were, as described in the books, "small, kidney-shaped, flattened on the sides," and *white*, not of a dark brown, *as the ripe stramonium seeds are*. Convinced that they were stramonium, I gave him, by the mouth, about a scruple of ipecac, and as much more, in half a pint of warm water, as an enema. Soon after, my friend Dr. Gilchrist, of the U. S. Navy, saw him, and we remained with him until after the arrival of his family physician, Dr. Calvin Ellis.

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When removing him to the bed, I noticed that his limbs, though flexed, were rigid. Soon after, by irritating him, he was made to move, but the power of motion was mostly confined to the right side. Within a couple of hours his left side recovered its power. He did not vomit for two hours after taking the emetic, and then vomiting was much aided by putting the spoon down his throat. The enema came away in part, while vomiting. Before this time, his skin was losing its redness, and he was inclined to get up, but would fall asleep in the act of rising. As in one stupefied with opium, his waking was with a start, as though dreaming. He picked the bed-clothes, as one in the low stage of fever, and if the hand were held before his eyes, he felt for it at varying distances. When pinched or tickled, after ten o'clock, he became very angry, and muttered incoherently, turning upon his face and kicking backward, with alternate movements of the feet. There was no strabismus throughout.

Dr. Ellis, with whom I left him at 11, P.M., reports that he gave him a grain of tartrate of antimony in four doses, in the course of the following hour. After each dose, he vomited, but nothing came up, except these white flat seeds. There was no bile at any time. Before midnight there was a voluntary dejection. He was then moving about, apparently conscious, but he could give no account of himself. About that time Dr. Ellis gave him four grains of calomel, which was at once thrown up. The doctor left soon after, directing senna and salts, in the morning. This dose operated twice in the morning.

On Sunday, at 1, P.M., I saw him again. He was about house, and came to the door. The pupils were still somewhat dilated, and he could not distinguish figures from letters. Otherwise, he seemed well, except that he could not remember the names of all the boys with whom he had been on Saturday afternoon. I called upon several of them, however, and found that they had been playing horse on the Back Bay lands. He had eaten what some of them called hollyhock, and others thistle seeds, for grain. The other boys, so far as I could discover, had eaten none, but one of them took from his pocket a drachm or more of stramonium seed, which he declared to be the same, and which he had offered to his sister, who declined them.

Later in the day, the patient went with his father to the spot, and showed him the nearly ripe stramonium, of which a stalk was picked and brought to my office.

He must have vomited some two hundred and fifty or three hundred seeds. I think more than the latter number.

I was not previously aware that there was stramonium growing in this city, but I saw an abundance of it on vacant lots in the city of Philadelphia, some two years ago.

There are sufficient and good accounts of stramonium poisoning in Wood and Bache, and in Christison.

Boston, October, 1861.

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