ACONITINA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Aconitina has been lauded to the skies both by physicians and surgeons. We are told that when neuralgia has been of long standing, and the pain is very severe, we shall derive great benefit from the use of the aconitina. The great objection in public practice to the employment of this remedy is its vast expense, and in private practice the great care and watching which its exhibition requires.

In giving publicity to the following fact, it is neither my wish nor my intention to derogate the merits (supposing it to have any) of aconitina; indeed, a single failure can never constitute or warrant any such attempt. My object is to invite the attention of the profession to observe more closely the *effects* (when they are produced) of this remedy, and to afford an opportunity for the suggestion of the probable cause of failure in this instance, for which I shall feel very thankful. The subject is also highly interesting to patients, as the price of aconitina varies from 4s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per grain.

In April last a respectable gentleman, aged thirty years, of spare habit, consulted me for a most excruciating pain in the instep, extending up the back and front of the right leg, and of long standing; there was very little swelling, and the general health was good. After minute examination and inquiry, I considered this to be a very fair case for the trial of the merits (so called) of the aconitina; at the same time enjoining perfect rest, and an alterative course. The form of the aconitina was as follows:—

R *Aconitina*, gr. 1½; of *sp. wine*, sufficient to dissolve it; of *lard*, 3ij. Mix, and make an ointment. A quantity, of the size of a pea, to be rubbed on the part during a paroxysm. The application to be discontinued when numbness or tingling comes on. I frequently *saw* this well rubbed in. In vain I inquired for *numbness* and *tingling*. In vain my *daily* assurance to my patient of the forthcoming efficacy of the (so-called) potent aconitina. *Ab origine ad exodium, nil boni!* My patient roared aloud for “mandragora and all the drowsy syrups of the east,” and in the absence of paroxysm was even profane enough to laugh at the goddess—*aconitina*. Alas! I have here no idiosyncrasy, nor either moral or physical peculiarity to call in to the aid of the frail and fickle aconitina.

Supposing it possible that other such exodia, or interludes, may have been enacted elsewhere, I shall feel much obliged by their recital. I myself procured the aconitina from Mr. Bell's in Oxford-street, and have every reason for believing that it was the very best that London could produce. I

No. 986.

have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

EDWARD HICKMAN, M.R.C.S.
10, Southampton-row, Russell-square,
July 12, 1842.

SPRUCE-BEER AND SACCHARINE ALIMENT

IN CERTAIN DETERIORATED CONDITIONS OF THE BLOOD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It has recently been brought before the notice of the committee of the Merchant Seamen's Hospital, that the sea-scurvy still continues to affect the health, to a very serious extent, of the crews of our trading vessels, although so comparatively banished from the royal navy, since the time when Captain Cook was presented with one of the most honourable badges ever worn by naval or military commander—the gold medal awarded him by the Royal Society, for his successful efforts in checking that loathsome and fearful disease; of whose desolating power we have but too melancholy a picture in Lord Anson's memorable voyage. May I be permitted to say, that in addition to the lime-juice and sugar allowed in her Majesty's naval service, there is a very simple and inexpensive article, which I am induced to consider an efficacious agent, where the depuration and improvement of impoverished blood are desirable,—I mean the common spruce-beer. A medical friend informs me, that in the United States of America the essence of spruce is even used as an ingredient in the preparation of malt liquors, as a preservative against the diseases incident to marshy and alluvial districts; and it has often been noticed that individuals of the lower classes of Ireland, who had engaged in the Newfoundland fisheries, covered with cutaneous eruptions, have returned home effectually cured by the habitual use of this wholesome but little-valued beverage.

IN THE LANCET of May 14, I have observed an article communicated by a gentleman residing at Stockport, on the efficacy of a fruit and saccharine diet, in the case of a child frightfully disfigured by extensive ulcerations. It may not be uninteresting or useless to state, that in one of Mr. Hone's publications there is a very sensible and short letter from the father of a family, mentioning that he had kept his children in uninterrupted health for years, by allowing them, instead of butter, jam made of the common bramble berry with the coarsest brown sugar, in the proportion of half a pound of the latter to one pound of the former. As the spruce-beer contains seven pounds of molasses to ten gallons of water, its purifying influence on the system, with such facts before us,

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