THE TREATMENT OF ANKYLOSTOMIASIS IN VENEZUELA.

BY

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Popular treatment of Tricocefalosis and Aquilostomosis, Suionimea, Hipatera, Chimbombero, Jipatera, Tuibombero, Tun Tun, Tungila, Tropical Anæmia, Uncinariasis—a great variety of synonyms.

This treatment, used in many countries of Tropical America (Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela, etc.), is very simple, practical, harmless, and truly astonishing in its results. In Costa Rica, it is believed that it will put an end to that terrible disease, if people continue to use it in cities, villages and farms. The treatment consists simply in taking for three consecutive days a spoonful of milk of the higueron (*Ficus laurifolia* family *Moreas*), in the morning, mid-day and night, mixed with water, plain or sugared, or with cow's milk. On the morning of the fourth day the patient must take 30 grammes (practically one oz.) of Glauber's salt (sulphate of soda), but if this is not handy, Epsom salts will do instead. When there is no one who can examine the fæces to ascertain if ankylostome parasites or eggs are still present, the treatment is repeated two or three times with intervals of one month, till the patient is quite cured. The dose for an adult is as follows:—

Milk of higueron, 30 grams.

Aqua pura or cow's milk; plain or sugared, q.s.
to be repeated t.d.s., at morning, mid-day and night.

For children, the dose of the purgative must be less according to age, in the following proportions:—

For children of 15 years	...	15	grams.
" " 10 "	...	10	"
" " 5 "	...	5	"

The dose of the milk of higueron for children must be half a spoonful each time.

This is the treatment now adopted entirely by the National Board of Health for the entire suppression of ankylostomiasis in Venezuela.

Dr. F. M. SANDWITH: I should like to ask whether higueron is a word used for any kind of fig, or whether it is a special kind of fig?

Dr. FELIX PAEZ: The latex of higueron is really useful against ankylostomiasis, but its action is more powerful against tricocephalosis. The tricocephalus is not so harmless, and it is believed that it can give rise to diarrhoea, a dysenteric condition, and general anæmia. The value of higueron will be appreciated when one considers that up till the present day we have not had any drug which will cause the expulsion of the whip worm from the intestine.

The higueron is a very handsome tree, which sometimes attains to a height of eight to ten metres. Botanically it is known as *Ficus glabrata*, and belongs to the family of the *Moraceæ*, order *Urticales*. Its fruit is much like the European fig (*Ficus carica*).

Other trees of the same genus have the same properties, particularly *Ficus doliaria*, which is generally used by Brazilian physicians.

The latex is collected by making incisions in the bark. It has a syrupy consistence, a milky aspect, a styptic taste, and mixes easily with glycerine and water.

The latex has a mild aperient action. It is not dangerous, nor does it cause unpleasant symptoms. It is given in doses from ten to forty grammes, according to the age of the patient, mixed with milk or sweetened water.

The best plan is to give on the evening before a saline purge, then early the next morning the latex, which is then followed two or three hours afterwards by another purgative.

This cure may be repeated every week till the complete expulsion of the parasites. Three to four courses are generally sufficient.

How the latex acts has not yet been ascertained.

Dr. F. M. SANDWITH: Of course we are very ignorant about the value of these various figs. Figs were used ever since days immemorial to soothe the outside of the body. We don't know much about their use internally—*Ficus doliaria*, MART, juice has been used in Brazil for dozens of years against this very disease we are talking about. The suggestion now is that this new fig is probably as good or better than the

old fig. *Ficus anthelmintica*, MART, gained its name on account of its being prescribed successfully against tapeworm. It is obvious that if there are two or three kinds of vermifuge figs they should not be neglected, as any of us would be glad to be supplied with a better drug than thymol if we can get it, especially just now, when thymol can hardly be procured.