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VERATRUM VIRIDE AS AN ARTERIAL SEDATIVE.

[Communicated to the Middlesex East (Mass.) District Medical Society, July 8th, 1857. WILLIAM INGALLS, M.D., Secretary.]

BY EPHRAIM CUTTER, M.D.

ABOUT five years ago, Dr. Norwood, of South Carolina, called the attention of the profession to the fact that the veratrum viride was eminently an arterial sedative. He stated that with it he could reduce the frequency of the pulse at will. He used it in the form of saturated tincture. He administered it to adults in quantities of eight drops, repeating the dose every three hours, "increasing by one drop at each dose until the pulse is reduced or nausea and vomiting are occasioned, when it is to be diminished one half, and continued as long as may be necessary to prevent a return of the symptoms."

Wishing to make a trial of the truth of Dr. Norwood's statements, the writer, early last fall, prepared a tincture from the fresh indigenous plant. The roots, dug from the edge of a mountain streamlet, were dried over the register of a hot-air furnace, then pulverized, and macerated a week or two in something more than an equal measure of 95 per cent. alcohol. The tincture was separated by displacement.

This preparation was distributed to all the members of the Middlesex East District Medical Society, early in the winter, for the purpose of testing the drug in such cases as seemed to require an agent possessing the medicinal properties ascribed to this. The statements since made by these gentlemen, as to the results of their trials, have confirmed my own views.

Properties.—The veratrum is a powerful and quite certain arterial sedative. It has been found so sure that, to my knowledge, several members of the above Society, since their attention has been called to it, have carried in their pockets an ounce or two of the tincture to meet the exigencies of daily practice. Says one of these physicians, "I have administered the veratrum in many cases

as an arterial sedative, and the drug has always answered my expectations." Another said, "I want some more tincture; it is a good article. My patients have got well under its use so speedily that I am in some doubt whether nature or the remedy accomplished the cure." A third states that in every case in which he has used it, he has found the pulse invariably to come down.

The emetic, diaphoretic and sternutatory properties of the *veratrum viride* are secondary. That it is an emetic, the nausea and vomiting which attend an overdose sufficiently testify. That it is diaphoretic, has been likewise proved, but with much less certainty; and that it is sternutatory, the writer can establish by his experience of a prolonged sneezing and copious nasal flow, resulting from the inhalation of the dust arising from the dried drug while being comminuted.

The present object, however, is to show that the *veratrum viride* does reduce the pulse, throwing aside all consideration of the other properties. The preparation used in the following cases was, as stated above, a saturated tincture, given in doses varying from one to twenty drops, at intervals of one to six hours. Tilden's *extract of veratrum viride* is evidently a similar preparation, and may be used in the same manner.

Case of *Irritation of Brain* (from the note-book of a friend). Master J. H., 6 years of age, has been, all his life, subject to sick headaches lasting from six hours to two days.

May 5th, 1857, 12, M.—Has had one of his sick turns. Sent for me because he seemed particularly dull, as well as occasionally nauseated. I found some febrile action, but attributed the symptoms to swollen and hard gums. These were cut, and rest, with a few drops of nitrous ether every hour or two, was ordered. At 11, P.M., a hasty summons found him with hot head, rapid pulse, dry skin, frequent cries, and rolling his head in his mother's arms. After a hot pediluvium and cold to the head, his excitement abated, the skin became moist, and pulse less frequent.

6th, 8, A.M.—Very restless during night; frequent outcries; tongue dry; head hot when for a few moments the cold water was left off; pupils natural, but countenance indescribable; pulse 120. Calomel and castor oil ordered at last visit had operated, and he was seemingly unconscious of it. Head was shaved, two small blisters applied to each temple, and two drops of tincture of *veratrum viride* at 10, A.M., 12, M. and 2, P.M. At 2.30, P.M., Dr. S——, of S——, saw him in consultation. We agreed in our estimate of the importance of the symptoms, but the child was easier. Pulse, two hours before, 120; it was now down to 96. The *veratrum viride* was continued.

7th.—Pulse 92. Patient intelligent. Ordered same care, sinapism to feet, and two drops of *veratrum viride* every four hours.

8th.—A great deal better.

I think the veratrum viride had considerable influence in the case.

Pneumonia.—Dr. Cutter, my father, has used the veratrum in a large number of cases, particularly of infants and children, with a success that has been very satisfactory to him.

A. T. F., a stout, hearty shoemaker, of 21 years, got a thorough wetting May 17th, 1857, by being capsized in a boat. The succeeding day he took sick, and was subjected to a domestic "sweat." I saw him the next day. He was a-bed, with face very much flushed, some headache, pain in left side, and cough, with bloody sputa. Pulse 120. Dulness and fine rales over left thorax, lowest third. He was put upon emetic doses of tartrate of antimony and potash, with neutral mixture.

19th.—Tongue dry and yellow. Was purged ten or twelve times. Pulse 104; respiration 28. Gave him nauseating doses of antimony, with neutral and cough mixtures.

20th.—Pulse 104; respiration 28. Feels sore about left hypogastrium. Discontinued the antimony; continued cough and neutral mixtures, and left him veratrum viride, to be taken in six-drop doses every hour.

21st.—Was crazy in the night. Feels weaker. Tongue dry. Complains of pain in præcordium and left lower chest. Physical signs of solidified lung and pericardial effusion. Did not take veratrum viride according to directions. Ordered cough mixture and veratrum viride.

22d.—Took the veratrum. Pulse 80; respiration 32. Feels better, not troubled with pain. Tongue moister. Slept well. Continue the veratrum every two hours. Cough and neutral mixtures.

23d.—Being anxious to get well fast, he took about one drachm of the veratrum viride during twenty-four hours. This vomited him, brought on profuse sweats, and *reduced the pulse to 40!* At the time of my visit, under a discontinuance of the medicine, it was 60. The disease rapidly yielded after this period.

CASE II.—G. F., father of the preceding, succeeded him with a pneumonia of the right lowest lobe. Under the usual treatment, his pulse still kept at 120. Upon taking the tincture of veratrum viride, six drops every two hours, till about half a drachm was exhibited, his pulse fell to 96. By continuing its use, the frequency stood at the same point for several days. It was then omitted, and the pulse rose. Upon a resumption, it fell to 80. The patient experienced much relief from its use, and ultimately recovered.

Phthisis.—Miss N., 21 years of age, who complained of palpitation and præcordial distress, with cough, night sweats and anorexia, presented, on percussion, dulness over upper third of thorax, front and back; on auscultation, well-defined tubercular respiration, with inspiratory and expiratory rales in coughing, and pec-

toriloquy over right upper third; and over left, crackling, with rude respiration. The heart's impulse was strong and heaving, and a bellows-murmur coincided with the first sound. Pulse 120; respiration 40. This patient derived great relief from the *veratrum viride*. At first the frequency was reduced, but afterward, although it rose to its former height and could not be diminished without nausea, still the *feelings* of the patient were improved, and she is, although awaiting a speedy dissolution, continuing its use. (Since the above was written she has been compelled to relinquish it, because of the irritability of the stomach induced by its continued exhibition.)

CASE II.—Mrs. C. G., with all the rational and physical signs of phthisis, was so troubled with palpitation that it formed her chief distress. She was supplied with the *veratrum viride*, an ounce at a time, such was the relief that accrued from its employment.

CASE III.—Mrs. E. W. N., a homœopathic "laywoman," 33 years of age, the mother of three children, and a victim of phthisis, cardiac disease and uterine derangements, complained chiefly of palpitation so distressing that she could not ride, much less walk half a mile. She took the *veratrum*, six drops every three hours until one fluid ounce of the strong tincture was disposed of, and then reported no effect of any kind!

Hæmoptysis.—Mr. H. W., a stone-cutter for twenty years, in January, 1853, had a rather copious hæmoptysis, and up to the time of observation (Dec., 1856), more or less of the same. He complained, during the paroxysm, of præcordial uneasiness and palpitation, and the "blood," to use his language, "seemed to come from the heart." In addition, the man certainly had many of the physical and rational signs of tubercles in the apices of both lungs. Still, the progress was so slow that I rather deemed the cardiac trouble the chief agent in the blood-raising, especially as the second sound was distinctly prolonged. With directions for a general tonic course, and an ounce of the *veratrum viride*, he was dismissed. In June, 1857, he reported himself in perfect health, not yet having had a recurrence of hæmoptysis, and attributed great good to the use of the *veratrum*.

CASE II.—Miss C. R., 15 years of age; began to menstruate before the age of 12. June 10th, 1857.—Had a slight cold for four days. This morning, during a severe paroxysm of coughing, raised some blood. This continued two and a half hours, when she had brought up four fluid ounces. She complained of oppression at the upper third of the chest, and also of some præcordial distress. By physical signs, I was unable to detect any disease. Pulse 85. Her treatment was, quiet, Rochelle salts, tannin, and *veratrum viride* three drops every two hours. Next day, pulse 60. Not much of any recurrence of hæmoptysis. A few days after, reported all well.

Cardiac Functions disturbed.—Mr. M. L. R., a divinity student, consulted me in regard to a pain in epigastrium, and palpitation, which troubled him occasionally, but especially when about to address an audience. I gave him *veratrum viride*, six drops three times a day. This relieved him in a short time, and he applied for a fresh supply for future use.

Mrs. J. A. C., aged 28, had aborted fourteen times in eleven years. She was very much troubled with palpitation. She had used the *veratrum viride*, ten drops thrice a day, without effect. During her fourteenth abortion, the præcordial pain and oppression was distressing. Pulse 120, with other febrile symptoms. She was directed six drops of the *veratrum viride* every hour till nausea or relief. This was taken, and the next day her trouble was abated. Pulse 96. Afterward, however, the drug failed.

Miss L. T., a seamstress of 30 years, had general debility, and also a pain in right hypochondrium and epigastrium while sewing or leaning over. A deep inspiration produced pain. Any excitement or extra exercise brought on palpitation. She was placed upon tonics and tincture of *veratrum viride*. This was in April, 1857. Late in May she sent for more *veratrum*, with the statement that it had helped her much.

Scarlet Fever.—C. P., a boy of 4½ years, May 15, 1857, was taken with anorexia, soreness at stomach and great thirst. His head was hot, and he vomited occasionally. His mother gave him rhubarb and magnesia. The night of the 15th he was tossing about, whining and drinking all the while.

16th, 8.30, A.M.—Pulse 120, incompressible. Skin dry. Face flushed. At 9, 11, 1 and 3 o'clock he took two drops of tincture of *veratrum viride*. At 8, P.M., he was asleep, breathing quietly; a genial perspiration all over; pulse 106, softer. Directed drops again, if fever returned.

17th.—Took *veratrum viride* twice in the night. Pulse 96.

18th.—Down and playing.

F. N. S., a girl of 6 years, when advanced in a well-developed scarlatina, had a pulse of 120. She was directed to take three drops of the *veratrum* every hour. In about six hours the pulse came down to 60, with some nausea. The medicine was then discontinued, and the pulse rose to 108. Upon resuming the *veratrum viride*, in the same dose, but at intervals of two hours, the pulse kept between 60 and 80, up to the seventh day of the complaint, when the little patient was rapidly convalescing.

I will conclude this paper by quoting the written testimony of one of my seniors, who has been kind enough to experiment at my request.

"The *veratrum viride* has been tried by me about nine months. The cases have not been numerous enough in which I have given it, to settle my mind in regard to its reliability. I continue to use

it, and if it shall still impress me as favorably as heretofore, it will take the place in my practice of some old and long-tried remedies. It has been given as a *sedative* in cases of high vascular excitement, usually those of an inflammatory character, in doses of two to six drops, according to the age, in intervals of three hours. In *scarlatina* and *pneumonia* it has, with *much certainty*, reduced the pulse rapidly. It has fallen, under its use, twenty, thirty and even forty beats a minute, in the course of eight hours, and under such circumstances that I had no doubt the change was owing to the remedy. In typhoid fever and some other cases, it has not seemed to do as well, though my trial has not been sufficient to satisfy me of its effects in them."

Woburn, July 18th, 1857.

EXTRACTION OF A COPPER COIN FROM THE ŒSOPHAGUS.

BY DR. BELA H. COLEGROVE, SARDINIA, N. Y.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal by Dr. JAMES B. COLEGROVE.]

MESSRS. EDITORS,—I have regarded the following case as one of very unusual interest, both as to the manner in which it was conducted and its fortunate termination. Whether any similar case stands recorded, or whether such mode of procedure has been authorized in any of the surgical books that have been published, I do not know—certainly none has fallen under my observation.

A little boy of four years, son of Mr. Isaac Carpenter, of the town of Farmersville, in Western New York, accidentally swallowed a copper cent late in the afternoon of November 20th, 1856. The coin was of the ordinary size, being about one and an eighth inch in diameter and two lines in thickness. It appears that while the child was reeling to and fro in a rocking chair, the coin being loose in his mouth—the head being thrown carelessly backward—it fell into the pharynx, and immediately caused a spontaneous, and at the same time powerful effort at deglutition, by means of which it was forced about two inches below the pharynx into the œsophagus, and entirely out of sight.

A physician residing in the neighborhood was called, and several attempts made, by means of forceps and blunt hooks, to extract it. It seems, however, that all efforts in this line only resulted in sinking the coin lower in the œsophagus.

The day following, Friday, another physician was called, and together, the two renewed their efforts at extraction, but with no success. Saturday was also spent in like manner, when, having failed entirely, all operations for its removal were discontinued, and on Sunday the child was brought to Dr. Colegrove, senior, the parents ready to despair, having been told by the physicians first in attendance, that should the coin once enter the stomach, its re-