

ble to all other preparations, and when that fails, I have recourse to the acetate of morphia.—*Ibid.*

25. *On Hyoscyamus as a remedial agent, its effects and modes of employment.* By G. G. SIGMOND, M. D.—Although there has been some discrepancy of opinion as to the medicinal effects of hyoscyamus, or henbane, upon the human frame, yet I am persuaded that you will have great occasion, in the course of the practice of your profession, to be satisfied with the value of it, as a most important instrument in the cure of disease, and that you will be led to acknowledge its utility. I have always found it a most serviceable narcotic, prescribed in the mode which I am about to explain; and I have learnt to place the firmest reliance upon its effects,—upon the certainty and celerity of its influence. Like all other medicines it demands our attentive examination, and when we are once satisfied by experience, we must fearlessly employ it, when called upon to relieve disease, whatever may be the opinions that others may have entertained of it. It is an agreeable anodyne; it may not so rapidly diminish pain as do some of the other narcotics. As a soporific, it is highly to be commended. The sleep that follows upon it, when judiciously administered, is not heavy; there is no stupor attending it; the repose seems that which nature, in her ordinary course, affords: it comes on gradually, rather stealing over the senses than suddenly overpowering them; it does not benumb them. Neither languor nor lassitude succeeds it; the refreshment seems complete, during its operation a gentle, warm perspiration not unfrequently bursts forth; the patient feels great tranquillity, experiences no excitement, no troublesome dream. It very rarely constipates the bowels, and occasionally, where they are overburthened, relieves them. It also has some slight influence on the urinary secretion, augmenting its quantity. Its stimulating power upon the nervous system is, comparatively speaking, very trifling, when the dose is not great. In almost all those diseases in which I have recommended you to have recourse to opium, you may occasionally substitute hyoscyamus, and even where the former drug has lost much of its potency from the constitution having become accustomed to its use, you will find the change to be of service, and that this plant will produce all its wonted effect.

It is principally to the Baron Stoerck that we owe our knowledge of this remedy; his experience has furnished us with some very material information on the subject, which has been of infinite value; and I think you will find, that although there are some sceptics upon the subject, amongst whom Cullen is to be ranked, it deserves the reputation which it gained at Vienna. Much must naturally depend upon the circumstances under which every article of the materia medica is employed, and I think that this remedy, both from the large doses which have been given, and from the inertness of the extract sold at some of the shops, has obtained less character among us than it deserves. Certainly the doses which Cullen gave of a well-prepared extract would have produced the mischief which he describes. He states that he seldom discovered its anodyne effects until he had proceeded to eight or ten grains, sometimes to fifteen or twenty; and both Messrs. Fouquier and Ratier have in their practice complained, that headache, delirium, nausea, vomiting, and feverishness have followed its use, and that its good effects have been exaggerated. There is no doubt that if either of the two preparations which are in our Pharmacopœias, the *tincture* and the *extract*, are given in too large quantities, very bad symptoms will supervene, and I am quite willing to acknowledge that the doses which are mentioned in our different works upon materia medica are very much larger than I ever prescribe. This arises from experience of the effects which are consequent upon various quantities employed. Neither of the preparations admit of being given indiscriminately or carelessly. Where they are properly prepared, they are powerful and energetic remedies; they contain all the medicinal and toxicological properties of the plant, and I have pointed out to you that it is a poison of very considerable intensity of action.

I place the greatest reliance upon the tincture, because it is much more uniform in strength, and does not vary so much in the shops as, I am sorry to say, I have found to be the case with the extract. The tincture is directed to be made of five ounces of the leaves of henbane, macerated in two pints of proof spirit for fourteen days; thus are obtained all the virtues which reside within the vegetable.

The extract is likewise made from the leaves; they are bruised in a stone mortar, a little water being sprinkled on them; the juice is then pressed out, and without any separation of the sediment; it is evaporated to a proper consistence. It may be considered as a fault in our Pharmacopœias that the degree of heat for the evaporation of the extract is not stated. Extracts are generally directed to be made by evaporation of the water, by a water bath, in a pan, as quickly as possible, towards the end constantly stirring it with a spatula; it is true that a water bath is described to be that by which any substance contained in a proper vessel is exposed either to hot water, or the vapour of boiling water; but this is too indefinite. The process of evaporation is differently followed by different druggists, sometimes in vessels heated by steam, at others in vessels at very low temperatures, exhausted at atmospheric air; and at other times spontaneous evaporation is preferred. I have seen extracts prepared in these various ways, and have not been able to perceive any difference as to taste, smell, or external appearance. You will find very great dissimilarity in the extracts of the shops, both as to the colour, the name, and also the strength. I have known it, even in a hospital, to be perfectly inert, and have been obliged to abandon its use, until I procured some on which I could rely, when the effect upon disease was very quickly perceptible. Of such an extract I have found three grains quite enough; of the other, any quantity almost might be given with impunity; and, therefore, I am not surprised that Callier gave from twenty to twenty-five or thirty grains a-day.

My much esteemed friend Mr. Judd, who is in the habit of administering the extract of hyoscyamus in his extensive field of practice, related to me that which had occurred to himself in consequence of taking more than his ordinary dose, to which he occasionally has recourse for disturbed stomach. On retiring to rest at eleven at night, he took a pill which was somewhat larger than he usually employed, his dose being generally from two to three grains. He fell asleep very shortly after, but before twelve his sleep became very much disturbed, and he was awake by a continual fluttering and agitation about the centre of the body. On laying his fingers on his wrist, there was no perception of pulsation; he then laid his hand upon the cardiac region; he found the heart in a state of tremulous motion, circulating the blood by the smallest and quickest possible motion, transmitting, probably, not above a twentieth of its usual volume of blood; repeating this mere tremor perhaps a hundred times in a minute. He thus ascertained that this was the peculiar sensation, or tremulous motion, which had aroused him from his sleep. About one o'clock the bowels relieved themselves, but the bladder was so influenced as not to discharge its contents but by partial efforts. He experienced the loss of the sense of touch; the skin of the palms of the hands seemed like stiff thick leather, which at last appeared to be quite benumbed; they were bedewed with a clammy moisture, and were exceedingly cold; he judged that the temperature of the body must be very low, although he had scarcely sensation enough to be conscious of cold. The tremor about this time extended to the muscles, and they shook violently; he had horripilation, and perfect rigors. He experienced cramp and pain in the right ischiatic nerve, and could not put the muscles on the stretch without their becoming cramped. He was determined not to have recourse to any emetic, or to remedial agents, but to go through this unpleasant stage of narcotism, as he felt confident of the nature of the attack, and of the strength of his own constitution. At about three o'clock the abatement of the symptoms commenced; the heart's action became gradually more free, and the tremor soon after that ceased; the wonted sensibility returned, the pulse was perceptible, and beat with its due regularity; he gradually fell asleep, and remained very tranquil for two or three hours, after which he awoke with no symptom remaining except that of headache.

In the *Bulletin Universel* you find the remarks of the learned editors upon the experiments made by Dr. Walter, and which are to be found in *Buchner's Repertorium*. They point out the fallacy of trying the effects of an extract made from leaves gathered early in the spring; and show that, although he obtained no result until six grains had been taken, such would not have been the case with a properly prepared extract. However, the doubts which have been started have not influenced our more modern English practitioners, and you will find many of them at the present day recommend it highly. Dr. John Davy speaks of its combination with extract of hemlock, in pthisis pulmonalis and chronic catarrh, in

very strong terms of approbation, and he thinks that these two extracts combined afforded more relief than any remedy which he had tried; and others have spoken of its excellence, more particularly where it has been united with other narcotic extracts. I am so well pleased with the tincture, and have had such reason to doubt the goodness of the common extract of the shop, that I now invariably have recourse to the first of these preparations, and as I have had no occasion whatever to find fault with the tincture, I continue to prescribe it. Of this as much as a drachm may be taken without producing any unpleasant symptoms; nevertheless this is, in my estimation, a much larger dose than, under ordinary circumstances, you should administer. My experience of this remedy, and it is confirmed by that of a great number of medical men whom I have consulted, has taught me that I can obtain all I expect or require from much smaller quantities. I seldom find it necessary to prescribe more than thirty drops as a soporific; as no one, even a still smaller dose often proves quite sufficient.

It is usefully combined with many of the narcotics. Camphor mixture is the best vehicle in which it is given; in about two ounces of this fluid it is readily conveyed, through the medium of the stomach, into the system. To this I sometimes add a half of a drachm of *tinctura humuli*, or tincture of hops. This is a very useful medicine; it has, however, none, little or no anodyne power, but it is an excellent addition to any of the narcotics; it is particularly grateful and soothing to the stomach; its slight bitterness is by no means disagreeable. I am also in the habit of combining a few drops of some aromatic diffusible stimulus, such as the compound tincture of cardamom, the compound spirit of lavender, or the spirit of cinnamon, for these medicines form a most valuable adjunct to the more potent medicaments; they diffuse a warmth and glow, and they promote a more rapid imbibition by the vessels of the stomach, and hence they cause a more instantaneous action upon the organs, or the tissues, to which the agency of the more important medicine is to be directed. You must, at the same time, be careful that too much stimulus be not given, and that your patient do not become habituated to the use of tinctures, which at last become as necessary as a dram to a regular drinker of ardent spirits. This class of medicines is to be ranked amongst the "*cito et jucunde*" of the older authors, who were generally fond of overloading their prescriptions; a judicious use of them is, however, of very great consequence. — *Ibid.*

26. *External use of hyoscyamus.* By G. G. SIMMONS, M. D.—Externally, hyoscyamus has been used with considerable advantage; and poultices formed of the leaves have been found to be sources of considerable relief in painful swellings, and likewise in cancerous and scrofulous sores, and they have the character of giving this relief where pain has existed for any considerable length of time, and has not yielded to internal remedies. I have seen this application made for the *douloureux*, but must confess that I have not drawn any favourable opinion from what I have witnessed. It may, nevertheless, be worthy of a trial when all things else have failed, and it is extraordinary to find, occasionally, unlooked-for relief from some applications, when the most esteemed remedies have failed. In open ulcers these poultices seem not only to soothe the irritable nerves, but to induce a more healthy action; I am not aware that any bad consequences have resulted from this practice. Dr. Fourcroy seems to have revived the old practice of fumigation, with the leaves and the seeds, for rheumatical odontalgia, catarrhal odontalgia, and for pains in the neck and face. You will find his practice in the *Bulletin Universel*, but it is not altogether unattended by danger. The effect of emanations from various narcotics is well known to be productive of much mischief, and hyoscyamus has been ranked amongst those which have proved deleterious. I have had occasion to mention to you some curious instances, which are principally derived from the German Ephemerides, in which the vapour of the seeds, assisted by heat, have produced a very marked effect upon the passions, exciting anger, and a disposition to quarrel, and although Alston, in his "*Materia Medica*," which is distinguished by its proof of the great reading of its author, doubts the fact, there are so many instances of the power of fumes that we must prefer the authorities which state cases, to opinions, however ably delivered and ingeniously defended. — *Ibid.*