

VIII. *Extract of a Letter concerning the Poison of Henbane-Roots, from Dr. Patouillat, Physician at Toucy in France, to M. Geoffroy, F. R. S. and Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, communicated to the ROYAL SOCIETY, London, by Sir Hans Sloane, Med. Reg. and Prof. R. S. Translated from the French by T. S. M. D. F. R. S.*

February 9. 1737.

THE 26th of last Month, I was called to a Cottage very near *Toucy*; where I was surpris'd to find nine Persons together, all having the true Symptoms of being poison'd; with this Difference, that some were speechless, and shew'd no other Signs of Life than by Convulsions, Contortions of their Limbs, and the *Rifus Sardonicus*; all having their Eyes starting out of their Heads, and their Mouths drawn backwards on both Sides; others had all the Symptoms alike. However, five of them did now and then open their Mouths, but it was to utter Howlings: And whenever they express'd articulated Words, it seem'd as if they would prophesy. One, for Example, said, In a Month my Neighbour will lose a Cow: Another, In a little time you will see the Crown Pieces of sixty Pence at five Livres [100 d.] Among these nine Persons there was a Woman five Months gone with Child, a Child of two Years; four Boys of 9, 12, 15 and 18; and three Girls of 15, 17 and 19 Years of Age, who had all three the Misfortune

fortune of the Green-sickness upon them at that Juncture of Time. The Madness of all these Patients was so complete, and their Agitations so violent, that in order to give one of them the Antidote, I was forced to employ six strong Men to hold him, while I was getting his Teeth asunder, to pour down the Remedy: And as they could not all be watch'd at once, one of the Boys got away, and ran to a Pond 100 Paces from the House, into which he leap'd; but as he was seen, he was soon taken out. You must be sensible, Sir, what Confusion I was in at so pressing a Juncture of Time.

'Twas vain to examine those Wretches concerning the Nature of the Poison they had taken, as they were quite senseless. Happily the Father of the Family, by being absent, was free from this Misfortune. Of him I learn'd, that digging his Garden the preceding Day, he had found several Roots resembling common *Parsnips*; and having carried them home for *Parsnips*, they were boil'd in the Soup; and the unlucky Mistake was not apprehended, till the Children were in this dreadful State. He described to me the Plant, which he thought he had taken for *Parsnips*; whereupon I went into the Garden, in order to find and know what it was; but as it had no Leaves, I was obliged to derive the Knowledge of it from the Roots; and soon knew it to be the *Henbane*, which is a very strong Poison; and so much the more dangerous, as the Patients could give no Account of their Ailments, nor of the Quality of the Poison they had taken.

To the Boys I gave the *Tartar. Stibiat.* in so large a Dose, that the oldest took 45 Grains, and the others in Proportion.

For the Woman, I had recourse to *Theriaca* in a triple Dose; not thinking it safe to give her the Emetic, on account of her Pregnancy. I gave the same Remedy to the Child, by reason of its Tenderness.

To the Girls, besides the *Theriaca*, which they took in very large Doses, (having made use of four Ounces of it) I gave warm Milk, wherein I dissolved *Salt of Rue*. The next Day I visited the Patients, and found them in a quite different Condition; for they had all recover'd the Use of their Reason, but remember'd nothing of what happen'd.

All this Day, every Object appear'd double to them, that is, upon looking at a Man, a Beast, or a Tree, they saw two.

I return'd to see them the next Day, and found that the Symptoms were removed; but were succeeded by another altogether as surprising, to wit, all Objects appear'd to them as red as Scarlet. This last Symptom ceased gradually on the third Day, and since that Time they have made no Complaint.