

XLI. *Observations on the Effects of the Vitrum Antimonii ceratum, by Mons. Geoffroy, of the Royal Academy of Sciences, and F. R. S. Translated from the French by Tho. Stack, M. D. F. R. S.*

Read Oct. 31. 1751. THIS medicine, the preparation of which was first published in the Edinburgh *Medical Essays*, is made by mixing an ounce of the glass of antimony in powder with a drachm of yellow wax. This mixture is kept in an iron ladle over a slow clear charcoal-fire about half an hour, taking care to stir it continually with an iron spatula, until the wax is consumed, and ceases to emit fumes. Such is the process of the preparation, published in the Edinburgh *Essays*.

In the memoirs of the Royal Academy of Sciences for the year 1745, I gave the detail of this operation, with some remarks on the changes, which wax may occasion in the glass of antimony.

Of all the preparations of glass of antimony this is doubtless the most perfect; for it is infinitely superior to the *chylista* of Hartman. This *chylista* is nothing more than a glass of antimony well pounded, and opened by acids, and then digested in spirit of wine impregnated with mastic; which never can cover the particles of this glass with coats of equal impenetrability with those form'd by wax bituminized by burning.

This medicine succeeds equally in bloody-fluxes, diarrhoea's, simple loosenesses, quartan agues, even
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the most obstinate, and in certain cases of the *fluor albus*.

It must be given with caution, beginning with a very small dose, as one, two, or three grains, especially when it has been levigated again after its calcination: and thus it may be safely given to children, and even to pregnant women.

In giving it to robust persons, I always began by a small dose, as 4 or 5 grains, which I gradually increased to 18, according to the effects produced by less considerable doses. This medicine, which sometimes vomits or purges, sometimes also cures, especially in robust constitutions, without producing any visible effect.

By gradually increasing the dose of this medicine, I have given as far 24 as grains at a time, which had no other effect, but to procure two or three moderate stools the next day: but in this case it would be imprudent to continue its use without interruption; because, as it passes slowly, the dose may possibly unite with the first at the time, that it begins to operate; and these two doses thus joined might cause a superpurgation, which is always to be dreaded.

I should never have ventured to give this medicine to pregnant women, if chance had not convinced me, that it is not more dangerous for them than for others, when given with caution. For, among several women, whom I cured of bloody-fluxes with this medicine, there were some, that were actually with child, and did not know it themselves, at the time of their taking it. They were all cured, and no accident happen'd to any of them.

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In pursuance of this observation, I thought I might try it, with all imaginable precautions, even on sucking children. In the mean time I was very attentive to the effect of the medicine. When the first dose vomited or purged sufficiently, I did not increase the second. Sometimes I diminished it, or even totally laid it aside for some days.

When this medicine produces nothing more than heekings at stomach, and a plentiful expectoration of thick slime, the dose may be safely increased half a grain or a grain every day. And this slight augmentation of the dose does not hinder the effect of the medicine from diminishing, in proportion as the patient comes nearer a perfect cure.

When the patient has been purged too violently by one of the first doses of this medicine, which are always small, it is a proof of the weakness of the patient; and then I give it to him but every second or third day. The distance of time observed between the doses of this medicine makes it operate less briskly, and more equally.

When the *vitrum antimonii ceratum* vomits, the patient is to drink warm water at every motion.

When the dysenteric flux is attended with sharp pains in the *abdomen*, with heat and tension, the *vitrum antimonii* is not to be given, till the pains are removed by emollient clysters, and other proper remedies.

I have not observed any difference in the effects of this medicine, whether the patient had, or had not, been bled or purged; whether the disease were recent, or of long standing; whether in fine it were attended with a fever, or not. They were all cured

equally well ; agreeable to what is said in the Edinburgh observations.

The *vitrum antimonii ceratum* is a good febrifuge. Three or four days use of this medicine generally suffices for removing the fever accompanying diarrhœa's, loosenesses, &c. But, in order to its having this effect, it must either purge or vomit the patient ; otherwise it cures the looseness, but the fever continues, and requires a very long use of the medicine to cure it. When it operates in a sensible manner, it generally gives the patient an appetite, when he is near being cured : but the weakness of his stomach does not allow his giving way to it, without running great risks.

When this remedy operates a cure without producing any visible effects, it would be dangerous to increase the dose till it causes evacuations : for, unless the patient be of a strong constitution, you endanger the bringing on a hypercatharsis.

Moreover I have observed, that the fineness of the powder has a great influence on the manner of its operation. That, which is very fine, is much more active, than that which is somewhat less so : for example, a grain of the *vitrum antimonii ceratum* reduced to a very fine powder will have more force and action, than two grains of the same glass reduced to a powder somewhat less fine. Wherefore I always prefer'd the first sort, as productive of more certain effects, and less incommoding the stomach.

The vegetable acids develope and increase the emetic quality of this medicine to such a degree, that you would always put the patient's life, who takes it, in great danger, if you did not absolutely forbid

forbid him the use of acid fruits, and aliments, that are liable to turn sour, as milk, wine, &c.

This medicine succeeds equally well in uterine evacuations. In these cases it must be continued 15 or 20 days, giving it every other day, according to the patient's strength, or the quantity given at a dose.

With this medicine alone I have likewise cured a girl of eighteen, who had the *fluor albus* abundantly from the age of twelve. At first I gave her three doses for three days together. The first dose was half a grain, the second a grain, and the third a grain and half. The two first made her vomit very gently, but the third purged her plentifully. After some days of rest I repeated the same three doses. During this time the discharge was much greater than usual, and it changed colour several times. At the end of eight days the patient had her courses in larger quantities than ordinary. Some days after her courses were over, the *fluor albus* appeared again, but was much diminish'd; and by continuing to give the same doses of this medicine every week for two months, the patient was perfectly cured.

In obstinate quartan intermittents, which had resisted the most powerful febrifuges, I have given this medicine on the two days of intermission, omitting it the day of the paroxysm; and continuing it thus, and increasing the dose very gradually, the paroxysms grew considerably weaker; and generally the fourth did not return. The patients, whom I cured in this manner near a year ago, have never had the least return of the fever.

Excepting in the cases of fevers, all the patients, who used the *vitrum antimonii ceratum*, drank habitually of a ptisan made with rice, oatmeal, or hartshorn.

hartshorn. These ptisans prevent the pains of the stomach, which this medicine sometimes occasions.

I have always given this medicine in a bolus incorporated with the bitter extracts, or cordial electuaries; by which method we partly guard against the pains of the stomach. Great care ought to be taken, not to make it up with conserves or syrups of acid fruits, for the reasons already given.

I am in hopes, that, notwithstanding the prejudice, which prevails against this preparation, it will be used with success in all the cases above-mention'd; provided attention be given to the observations, which I have made in this paper. And it is to Dr. Pringle that we are indebted for an excellent medicine, which may be brought into familiar use, if people accustom themselves to administer it with prudence.

XLII. Extract of a Letter from John Browning Esq; of Barton-Hill near Bristol, to Mr. Henry Baker, F. R. S. concerning a Dwarf.

Dear Sir, Barton-Hill, Sept. 12, 1751.

Read Nov. 7, 1751. **I** AM just returned from Bristol, where I have seen an extraordinary young man, whose case is very surprising. He is shewn publicly for money, and therefore I send you the printed bill, which is given about to bring company; and also a true copy of a certificate from the minister of the parish, where he was baptized, together with the attestation of several of the neighbours of great credit and