

CXIV. *A further Account of the poisonous Effects of the Oenanthe Aquatica Succo viroso crocante of Lobel, or Hemlock Dropwort, by W. Watson, M.D. F.R.S.*

To the ROYAL SOCIETY.

Gentlemen,

Read Dec. 21, 1758. **I**N the month of June 1746. I communicated to you some observations concerning the *Oenanthe aquatica Succo viroso crocante* of Lobel, in relation to its poisonous effects upon some French prisoners at Pembroke. These observations were afterwards published in the *Philosophical Transactions* *, with an accurate representation of the plant itself, from an original drawing by that compleat artist Mr. Ehret. This at that time I thought the more necessary, as it was of no small importance to the public, to be well acquainted with a plant, the effects of which, when taken into our bodies, were so much to be dreaded. This account of mine, as well as the representation of the plant, were republished from the *Transactions* into the periodical works of that time; from whence a more extensive knowlege of and acquaintance with this plant might have been hoped for. A late instance however has evinced, that these endeavours have not had their full effect, as the plant in question is not yet sufficiently known, and attended to.

* See Phil. Transf. N°. 480. p. 227.

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John Midlane, a cabinet-maker of Havant in Hampshire, aged about 58, and of a gross habit of body, was advised to make use of the water parsnep, as a remedy for a severe scorbutic disorder, which he had long been troubled with; and for which he had taken a variety of medicines. Instead of the water parsnep, which he purposed to take, there were gathered for him some roots of the *oenanthe* above mentioned; a large one of which was pounded in a mortar, and the juice thereof squeezed through a linen cloth, and amounted to about five spoonfuls. This was suffered to stand all night, and the next morning (Mar. 31. 1758.), at about half an hour past five, he drank the whole quantity, except the sediment.

In about an hour and half after he had taken this juice, he walked about the town upon some business; and a little before seven, upon his return home, about an hundred yards from his own house, he first complained that he was ill; and having walked about thirty yards further, was so bad as to go into a neighbour's house to rest himself. He was soon led from thence to his own house by two men, and told them, that he was affected as though he had lost the use of his limbs. When he was placed in his chair, he complained greatly of pain all over him; but particularly in his head. His stomach was immediately after affected, and he had great reachings to vomit. At the second attempt he threw up about half a pint of a clear watry liquor; at the first and third attempt he discharged scarce any thing. He was then seized with a great propensity to go to stool, which went off in about three minutes. After this,

he with the greatest difficulty was conducted up stairs to bed, where he pulled off part of his cloaths himself. When he was put to bed, he was attacked with very severe convulsions, which in about a quarter of an hour deprived him of his senses; and continued, with a few intermissions, till he died, a little before nine o'clock; which was about three hours and half after the juice had been taken. A profuse sweat accompanied the whole of these symptoms: he foamed considerably at the mouth, and his belly swelled greatly. He purged very much soon after he was dead, but not before.

As this poor man had taken this dose before his family were up, no one could imagine from whence his disorder arose; and consequently the apothecary, who was called to him, was able to form a judgment of his case only from the symptoms; as on his coming he found his patient senseless, and who had not, while his mind was undisturbed, told any one the probable cause of his complaints. He took from him however about ten ounces of blood, and endeavoured to get some *vinum ipecacuanhæ* into his mouth: but his jaws were closed so fast, not above a spoonful passed, and that by the accident of his mouth opening of itself.

The symptoms, with which the person above-mentioned was attacked, were much the same as those which were observed in the French prisoners, who were poisoned by the same root at Pembroke. In both instances occurred those severe muscular spasms, which kept the under jaw so close to the upper, that, while the spasm continued, scarce any force could separate them. In both instances like-
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wife a considerable time passed before the persons, who had eaten of this root, though they had taken enough of it to destroy them, perceived themselves disordered by it.

I am obliged for this communication to Richard Warner, Esq; of Woodford, a gentleman of great merit, whose zeal for the promotion of useful knowledge I have many times experienced.

The expediency of laying before you observations of this sort, which may tend, by making people careful of what they take, to the saving the lives of many, makes no apology necessary for so doing. I am, with all possible regard,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

Lincoln's-Inn-Fields,
20 Dec. 1758.

W. Watson.

CXV. Extract of a Letter to John Eaton Dodsworth, Esq; from Dr. George Forbes of Bermuda, relating to the Patella, or Limpet Fish, found there.

2 April, 1758.

Read Dec. 21,
1758.

AS a curiosity for your esteemed friend Mr. Theobald, the Captain will deliver you two fishes, intirely singular here, and never before observed amongst us. The one is of the shell kind, and changed its figure so often, that it was difficult to make a drawing. However

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