

NEW REMEDIES (AMERICAN).*

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Come now, let us consider a few American drugs developed by empiricism, partly by suggestions inherited from the American Indian, partly through experimental domestic medicine, but seldom, if ever, discovered by a scientific man in a scientific position. Indeed, as yet many who occupy positions in authoritative places are either uninformed concerning these remedies that are standards with American physicians or oppose them because they lie outside their field of knowledge, or because they do not disturb the normal functions of an animal when injected into the veins. It will, I take it, surprise the majority of my readers to learn that the preparations now to be named could by anyone at the present date be considered as "new remedies." Familiar have they been, most of them, for half a century and more, but at one time each individual item was a "new remedy," and, to some physicians each is yet a "new remedy."

Chionanthus Virginica.-Who would imagine that this very popular drug, introduced originally by Rafinesque, in 1830, for ague and chronic fevers, and externally in cataplasms, as an application to wounds, was, as far back as 1843, brought to the attention of the profession for its present uses by Professor I. J. M. Goss, M.D., of Marietta, Ga.? Such, however, is the fact, as enlarged upon by Dr. Goss in his "New Materia Medica and Therapeutics" in 1877. It is a "new remedy" to many talented physicians.

Collinsonia.-In 1848, Lee's "New York Plants," accepted on the authority of the Thomsonian authors, as well as from those of the Eclectic school, that collinsonia was a valuable remedy when a reliable preparation of the drug was properly administered. However, such observers as the two Bartons, Dunglison, Zollicoffer and Griffith neglected it. This applies likewise to other authorities of the present date, who are unacquainted with its virtues. Others, because it is not a poison, oppose it.

Dioscorea.-In 1836, Dr. Horton Howard, an antagonist of Samuel Thomson, accepted that dioscorea was a valuable remedy, giving it a place in his "Howard's Botanic Medicine." In all independent schools and colleges dioscorea has been recognized as serviceable when properly administered. But, probably because it had no poisonous qualities, many authorities, on this account, neglected it.

Eupatorium Perfoliatum.-Never, possibly, was a remedial agent, at the start, more unanimously eulogized by physicians in high authority and after ward condemned by others of like standing than was the drug eupatorium. From the very beginning of the settlement of America, under the name "boneset," it occupied a position of importance, and with thousands of American physicians it yet stands in high favor. First prominently introduced by Dr. Anderson, in 1814, it quickly assumed a position of importance, but previous to Dr. Anderson, it was mentioned by Dr. Schoepf in 1787, B. F. Barton in 1798, Thacher in 1810, Bigelow in 1817, W. P. C. Barton in 1818, Chapman in 1819, Rafinesque in 1828, and by others, all in very high authority, by all of whom it was looked upon as invaluable, but it is now in disfavor, probably because of its inertness" as an energetic.

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Gelsemium. What American physician reading these lines ever looks upon gelsemium as a "new remedy?" As far back as Rafinesque (1830), gelsemium was utilized in medicine. After that time it became popular with physicians in all sections of medicine, and with the exception, perhaps, of echinacea and cactus, no other American drug is probably more popular with American physicians at the present day. Overdoses are dangerous, which possibly commends the drug to some persons.

Macrotys.-With its mixed-up botanical names, landing finally in the Pharmacopeia of the United States under the term *Cimicifuga*, macrotys has been a very sheet-anchor with physicians who understand the uses of the American materia medica. Its employment was inherited from the American Indians, from whom it came into domestic medicine, and thence was carried to the profession. Overdoses give headache, which fact may please some patients who want to feel the drug action of a medicine.

Veratrum Viride. This was given early attention by all the writers of American domestic medicine, being discovered by the traveler, Josselyn, in 1672. Physicians of all schools of medicine value veratrum. It was excluded by none, but did not have qualities energetic enough to make it a favorite with physicians who seek poisons. In very dilute form it was employed by physicians who, desiring the kindly action of drugs, aimed to exclude poisons. Whoever would now call veratrum a "new remedy" would unquestionably have to think afar back.

Hydrastis. Used by the North American Indians from time immemorial, but accepted as a dyestuff only by Hugh Martin (1782), hydrastis has passed into medicine by reason of its service to the Indians, and was accepted by B. S. Barton in 1798. With physicians who employ hydrastis it stands today as a drug not to be replaced by any other. But hydrastis was once a "new remedy," and for many decades was scarcely mentioned. outside of writers on domestic medicine.

Scutellaria.-So conspicuous was this drug as early as 1812 as to have led Thacher to figure it as the frontispiece to a book of 301 pages, and to have led Spalding, in 1819, to issue a "History of the Introduction of Scutellaria."

It was, under exceedingly high authoritative commendation, commended, "if taken in time," for hydrophobia. the evidence of its "curing" in that direction being not less positive than many of the "authoritative" statements of the present time concerning the uses of some other agents. However, in the direction of hydrophobia, it has passed into disuse, possibly merely through neglect, possibly because it may be administered in heroic doses without injuring a living creature.

Echinacea.-With this drug we shall close this brief summary of American "new remedies," referring to it as challenging almost any other remedial agent that has been introduced, unless it be coca, which yields cocaine. Just what there is in echinacea that has led it, in the face of opposition such as came to no other drug (excepting coca or cinchona), surprises one acquainted with its history and record. Introduced by an empiricist as a constituent of a home-cure remedy, taken up by "irregular" practitioners, it crept thence into the attention of Professor John King. Afterward, although neglected by "authority" for one reason or another, chiefly perhaps because it did not physiologically disturb a normal creature, echinacea passed into the position of being first of the American drugs employed by physicians in medicine. Even readers of these articles who are not old may recall the time when, in 1886, echinacea was first professionally mentioned as a remedy by Dr. John King.

But enough. The object of this article is merely to touch upon a phase of American medicine that bids those who are willing to think to ponder over the problem as a whole.