

THE WESTERN MEDICAL REFORMER.

WORTHINGTON, OHIO, OCTOBER, 1836.

SANGUINARIA CANADENSIS.

[BLOOD ROOT.]

CLASS POLYANDRIA. ORDER MONOYNIA.

This plant grows abundantly in almost every part of the United States, and possesses properties which entitle it to rank high in the list of remedies provided by a beneficent Providence for the benefit of our afflicted race. From a sincere conviction that the value of this agent is not sufficiently understood, or duly appreciated, by practitioners generally, we have thought proper to appropriate a few brief remarks to its consideration in the present place, with a view of directing the attention of medical men to what we regard as one of the most valuable articles of the *Materia Medica*. It forms no part of our object to disparage the labors of others who have investigated the properties and uses of this medicine, but having used it very extensively in the treatment of a great variety of diseases, for a term of several years, we thought a brief statement of the results of our experience in its use, might probably contribute, in some small degree, to place before the medical public, and more especially medical Reformers, the various properties and powers of this article in a more conspicuous point of view.

The root of this plant is the only part used in medicine, it is collected for this purpose, in August and September, when the leaf begins to turn yellow, washed and dried in the shade and kept in a dry place. It may be used in a great many different forms, to fulfill a variety of indications. The spirituous tincture, prepared by 4 oz. of the bruised root to one quart of alcohol, will act as an emetic if given in doses of four or five tea-spoonsful at intervals of 15 or 20 minutes, producing an acrid burning sensation in the fauces, and a strong stimulating impression on the stomach, and a sense of heat over the surface, followed by nausea and vomiting. In smaller doses, insufficient to vomit, it will diminish the fullness, hardness and frequency of the pulse by the nausea which it excites; and in still smaller, say from 15 to 30 drops, it will act as a stimulant and tonic. The powdered root, in doses of from 15 to 20 grains, will operate as an efficient emetic, if given suspended in warm water every half hour; and in doses of from five to ten grains, will exert its influence in diminishing the force, frequency, fullness and hardness of the pulse, and is very useful in the treatment of many febrile and inflammatory diseases. It may also be used in the form of infusion or decoction, prepared by adding one pint of water to half an ounce of the bruised root and boiling or infusing till the strength is extracted, also, in the form of pills. A strong decoction of Blood root and *Asclepias*

tuberosa (Pleurisy root), in the proportions of one part of the former two of the latter, forms one of the most valuable preparations with which any acquaintance, in the treatment of Pleurisy, inflammation of the lungs and in many other similar affections. It should be given to the extent of producing a pretty copious perspiration and a slight sensation of nausea, and continued for several hours, promising, in all such cases, with suitable evacuation by emetics, purgatives, etc. It promotes expectoration, increases the freedom of breathing and equalizes the excitement and circulation in a most admirable manner. From one to two table-spoonfuls every 20 or 30 minutes might answer as a kind of general rule by which administration might be regulated in the treatment of this description of disease, varying as the circumstances of the case might seem to require.

In the form of pills in combination with the extracts of Butternut and Dandelion, it forms an invaluable preparation in the treatment of chronic inflammation of the liver, connected with pulmonary irritation and cough. The mass should be formed by taking any quantity of the two extracts, equal parts, and add the finely powdered Blood root, until the mass acquires the proper consistence to form into pills of the ordinary size; one should be given as often as the stomach will bear it without too much nausea. This preparation excites a singular sensation in the region of the liver of a somewhat painful character, which may be regarded as an evidence of its specific influence on this organ; it promotes the secretion of bile and the expectoration of mucus, and acts as a gentle laxative and removes the irritation of the liver and lungs, on which the cough depends. We have witnessed several instances of the successful issue of cases of this kind in which this preparation was the principal remedial measure used. Indeed it seems to exercise quite as decided a control over the functions of the liver as any of the preparations of mercury so much relied on by physicians generally for this purpose, without being liable to produce the bad consequences so commonly resulting from the use of this metal in some of its numerous combinations.

But, of all the various forms in which this active and important medicine has been used, we are inclined to regard its acetous tincture of the most valuable. This is prepared by saturating any quantity of good vinegar with the active principle of Blood root; say take one gallon of vinegar and add to it two pounds of the root well bruised, let it stand for a week, and it is ready for use.

This preparation will operate as an active emetic, and is particularly valuable in scarlet fever and croup. Its dose is one tablespoonful every 15 or 20 minutes, till it operates freely. We have found this preparation well adapted to the treatment of fevers and many inflammatory affections, more especially those of a low grade of action. In teaspoonful doses it is a febrifuge of

surpassing value this should be given every hour or oftener, as long as the fever continues, during the remission as well as the exacerbation of the paroxysm.

There is an intermediate period in most fevers between the crisis of the stage of excitement and the collapsing stage, the proper treatment of which is a source of much perplexity to the practitioner. If he give stimulants the consequences are, an objectionable increase in the action of the heart and arteries; the pulse becomes hard, and a sense of oppression is felt about the stomach and chest; the tongue becomes more furred, and the bowels more costive; in short, the most incontestible evidences that the patient will not bear stimulants, properly so called: and on the other hand, the great debility of the patient is such as to forbid the use of much more evacuation by emetics and cathartics, etc.

Under circumstances of this kind, the acetous tincture of bloodroot is a medicine of incalculable value. It increases the fullness and force of the pulse, (if given in tea spoonful doses, at suitable intervals,) without increasing its frequency or hardness, restores the appetite and improves the tone of the digestive organs, and diminishes the irritability of the system. .

In combination with the spiritous tincture of *Macrotys racemosa* [*Actaea racemosa*], (Black Cohosh,) in the proportions of two parts of the vinegar of bloodroot to one of the tincture of *Actaea*, a compound is formed which is entitled to much confidence in the treatment of many of those cases which exhibit the incipient symptoms of pulmonary consumption. We have witnessed several, demonstrations, lately, of the superior efficacy of (his compound in cases of this description. The circumstances of one, we shall here take the liberty to mention:

A young lady of this neighborhood had been laboring under amenorrhoea for ten or twelve months, when she was attacked severely with bilious remitting fever, for which she was treated successfully:—at least, the severity of the symptoms, yielded in a great measure, though not entirely;—but shortly after the subsidence of her most urgent symptoms, the aspect of her case began to change. Symptoms of pretty extensive pulmonary irritation supervened, giving to the case rather a dangerous character. , She had a daily exacerbation of fever, which continued Several hourly—pulse from 110 to 140 per minute, small and corded; difficulty and shortness of breathing, during the exacerbation; hectic flush on the cheek; partial loss of hearing; cough and difficulty of speech; subsultus tendimun; occasional chilliness, with difficult expectoration and great debility.

Under these very unfavorable Circumstances, the above mentioned compound was commenced in doses of from one half to a tea spoonful every half hour, and continued for

several weeks, gradually diminishing the frequency of its administration till it was used but once in an hour. The patient soon began to improve, and is now rapidly recovering, contrary to the expectation of nearly all who saw her after her pulmonary symptoms developed themselves.