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Original Communications.

THE CHLORAL HYDRATES.

By JOSEPH BEMROSE, F.C.S., Lecturer on Practical Chemistry, Medical Faculty Bishop's College.

For a number of years one of these anæsthetics has been prescribed by physicians and dispensed by druggists under a wrong name. When Liebreich introduced the "Croton Chloral" into medical practice, it was supposed to have—owing to an error in the hydrogen estimation—a composition agreeing with that of the trichlorinated aldehyde of crotonic acid; the mistake was discovered by Krämer & Pinner in 1876; and in the *British Medical Journal* of February 12, 1876, will be found a report of an article by Liebreich from the *Deutsche Med. Wochenschrift*, wherein he states that the compound is really a butyric chloral.

To show clearly the relation existing between the acids—acetic, crotonic and butyric—and their aldehydes and tri-chlor derivatives we may formulate them as follows:—

Acid.	Aldehyde.	Chloral.
Acetic CH_3COOH	CH_3COH	CCl_3COH
Crotonic $\text{CH}_3(\text{CH})_2\text{COOH}$	$\text{CH}_3(\text{CH})_2\text{COH}$	$\text{CCl}_3(\text{CH})_2\text{COH}$
Butyric $\text{CH}_3(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{COOH}$	$\text{CH}_3(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{COH}$	$\text{CCl}_3(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{COH}$

The hydrates of the first $\{\text{CCl}_3\cdot\text{C}(\text{OH})_2\text{H}\}$ and of the third $\{\text{CCl}_3(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{C}(\text{OH})_2\text{H}\}$

of these chlorals only are in use in medical practice; and although this has been pointed out many times since 1876 we still find the latter more frequently prescribed by the wrong name, Croton Chloral Hydrate, than by the right one Butyric (or Butyl) Chloral Hydrate.

Progress of Medical Science.

THE INDICATIONS FOR THE USE OF DIGITALIS.

Dr. J. Milner Fothergill, in a paper published in a recent number of the *Glasgow Medical Journal*, says, touching the use of digitalis:

The correct use of this potent remedy—invaluable in certain cases of lack of power in the heart—is scarcely as yet general. Old established views take a great deal of uprooting; and yet they must be uprooted before new views can be built up in their place on the same ground. Digitalis was long regarded as a cardiac sedative, "the opium of the heart," because it rendered the heart's action slower or less tumultuous. Slower, certainly, in those cases where the rapidity is due to the action of an irritable muscle; irritable, because becoming exhausted. But when the rapidity of the heart's action is due to nervous disturbances the digitalis is useless, or very nearly so. Digitalis then is not useful "because it slows the action of the heart." This is an error. In many cases it exercises no action worth estimating upon the rapidity of the heart's contractions. While in others it is of the greatest service when the action