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POISONING BY HYOSCYAMIN.

BY A. J. JOHNSON, M.D., TORONTO.

(Read before the Toronto Medical Society.)

The frequency of cases of partial poisoning by hyoscyamin is a sufficient excuse for my proposing to give you the details of a case of this kind which recently occurred in my practice. I am the more urged to do this, as I hear that other medical men in this city have suffered very much as I did. My patient did not die, though his symptoms were for a time so alarming that his life was despaired of.

The case is shortly this: On September 8th, 1887, I was consulted by a gentleman from a neighboring town, who was suffering with symptoms of gastric trouble, probably beginning ulcer. After carefully explaining the nature of the trouble, and advising him as to his diet, etc., I prescribed a powder containing five grains of carbonate of bismuth and one-twelfth of a grain of hyoscyamin—a powder which I have ordered scores of times before in similar cases. The powder was made up by one of the oldest and most reliable firms of druggists in this city. The hyoscyamin used was made by Merc, and was quite fresh, as it was the first used out of a certain bottle.

The effect of the first and only powder taken by my patient will be perhaps best described in his own words, as he has very kindly forwarded me an account of his symptoms. He says:—

"1. I took the powder about half-past five o'clock on the evening of the 9th of September last, and immediately after sat down to my tea.

"2. I had scarcely eaten half a dozen mouthfuls before I felt a very strange feeling come over me. The said feeling was, I did not care to hold up my head, and felt like letting it drop in the plate before me. This feeling seemed to pass upwards, out of the top of my head, and went away.

"3. This feeling returned in a few seconds with increased force. I then mentioned to my wife that there was something the matter with me, and that I had better go down stairs, and probably this feeling would pass away.

"4. As I got up from the chair at the table I felt like flying up to the ceiling of the room, and, as I stepped forward, staggered against the doorway, and, as I straightened myself up again, fell against the other side of the doorway.

"5. I then laid down on a sofa for about one minute, and in getting up fell . . . and then laid down again for about one minute longer.

"6. As I got up again a second strange feeling passed over me, like a creeping or crawling sensation, which started at the ends of my toes and ends of my fingers, and went over my entire body, and passed out of my head and was gone. I then said to my wife, 'I am poisoned; get a doctor at once.'

"7. A messenger was sent after a doctor, and in the meantime I took a very large tumblerful of mustard and warm water, and to my surprise it refused to act. I then repeated the same of salt and warm water, which seemed to have no