

*The Progress of Materia Medica.* By A. H. KOLLMYER, M.A., M.D., Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the University of Bishop's College, and Lecturer on Materia Medica and on Botany in the Montreal College of Pharmacy.

*Koumis*, or perhaps more correctly *Kumyss*, is a beverage used in the families of the people of Tartary. It resembles sour buttermilk somewhat, without being at all greasy. According to Sir George Simpson it is prepared in a very simple way, from mare's milk, which is merely allowed to stand for some days in a leathern churn to become sour. It is then bottled for use. This drink is more nutritious than exhilarating; but from the same material the Burats and the Kirghez prepare an intoxicating spirit, in which they sometimes indulge to excess. A similar preparation is said to be in use in the Orkney and Shetland Islands (Dunglison's Dictionary.) It can also be equally well prepared from the milk of the ass, as well as from that of the cow; indeed recent clinical observations have appeared to indicate that the latter is preferable to either of the others in a therapeutical point of view.

In oriental countries, Koumis has long been used as a common beverage, and men of note have, from time to time, endeavoured to secure for it a prominent place in our catalogue of remedies, and partially with success. In 1783, John Grieve, physician to the Russian army, proclaimed its invigorating properties; and in 1874, Labadie-Lagrave wrote a very interesting essay on Koumis, and extolled it as a valuable tonic in debility, and especially in phthisis.

Recently the subject has been more thoroughly ventilated through the columns of the *London Lancet*, and a number of cases have been reported where it has apparently proved a successful agent, even after every other means of treatment had failed.

The article used by the English physicians is known as Chalmer's Cow-Koumis, of which there are several qualities described as Nos. 1, 2, and 3, each differing from the other in therapeutical powers.

Dr. Myrtle, of Harrogate, reports four cases in which he gave it a fair trial, and is highly satisfied with the results. (1) In a case of marasmus, where every kind of ordinary food was vomited, and enemas of beef-tea and Champagne had been abandoned as mischievous,—two ounces of No. 2 were taken with pleasure and retained; twelve ounces being consumed each day for a fortnight, that being the only article of diet whatsoever. (2) In a case of inflammatory rheumatism accompanied by gastric irritability, all

other remedies having failed, No. 2 was given to the exclusion of all other diet for five days, five pints being taken daily with the happiest results. (3) Was a case of advanced phthisis with diarrhoea and hectic fever: No. 3 acted beneficially, and for weeks formed the chief article of diet, one-third or half new milk being sometimes added to it. (4) Was a case of pyæmia, with vomiting, intense thirst, and a temperature of 105°, all food being rejected: five ounces of Koumis were taken greedily and retained, a pint and a half was consumed in twenty-four hours for six days, when the patient improved; other kinds of food were now gradually added, and the Koumis diminished; the latter alone relieved the intolerable thirst which accompanied the disease.

Cases one and three died, but they were grateful for the relief they experienced. Two and four recovered, mainly, the Dr. says, from this remedy. It never disagreed, always allayed the thirst, and was easily digested. No. 3, he remarks, if kept too long sours, besides which patients soon tire of it. When fresh he regards it as the more suitable, in all cases of fever and thirst; if these symptoms are absent, however, he prefers No. 2.

Mr. J. Willis Mason, of Regents Park, writes that he has used this remedy for three years. His first case was a lady suffering from paralysis after delivery; she was thin, weak, and anemic, all food was rejected, and there was great prostration; the catheter had to be used daily. When seemingly dying, he continues, the sparkling Koumis was given frequently in small quantities, and its good effects soon became manifest. The dry skin became moist; the catheter was no longer required, the bowels, which had not acted for many days, were naturally relieved, and the paralysis gradually improved: he considers that her life was saved by the Koumis.

A member of his own family is now taking it with marked benefit; she has been long suffering from nervous debility, anorexia, sleeplessness, sudden heats and flushes, and her assimilative powers feeble in the extreme. Ordinary medicines, and residence at the seaside, produced no good results, yet Koumis is bringing about a complete change, and he soon expects to her in see her usual health.

Mr. T. Carter Wigg, of Southminster, Essex, reports a case of heart disease with albuminuria, dropsy, thirst, dyspepsia, and vomiting of all ingesta, which was greatly benefited by Koumis, the albumen diminished while he took it, and strength and the spirits improved wonderfully. He commenced with a pint of No. 1, and gradually increased it to two imperial quarts daily from January, 1873, till the following