

The *Polygala Senega* is too well known to need description. It is much used by the Indians, who give it in cold infusion during the remission of fevers, attended with great prostration of strength, and in diseases of the pulmonary organs. They also esteem it highly in female complaints, and in this agree with Dr. Chapman, who considers it the most efficacious emmenagogue, and useful in all forms of amenorrhœa.

It is not a little remarkable, that among all the Indian tribes known to Europeans, the production of increased perspiration constitutes one of their principal remedies. A favourite and universal mode of procuring this is, the use of the vapour bath, and the construction of this is similar throughout the different nations of the North West. Mr. Cormack, in his account of his expedition to discover the aborigines of Newfoundland, or Red Indians, says, that he discovered, in a deserted village, the remains of a vapour bath. The method used to raise the steam was by pouring water on large stones made very hot. Over these a hemispherical frame-work, closely covered with skins, was placed to exclude the external air. The patient then crept in under the skins, with a birch rind bucket of water, and a small bark dish to pour the water on the stones, and thus enable him to produce the steam at pleasure. He remains as long as the heated rocks retain heat sufficient to raise the vapor, when he retires, wrapped in a robe or blanket, and goes to bed. The bath is principally used in rheumatism, dropsy, and the cold stage of fever. Warm sudorific infusions are taken in the bath, and the debility induced is sometimes so great that the patient faints, which, however, followed by proper treatment, generally has a beneficial effect.

I have said that the Indian is guided by experience in his treatment of disease. For example, when suffering from acidity of the stomach, he takes some of the absorbent earths that are found on the banks of the rivers. Bleeding in their inflammatory diseases is also much used. But the simple native of the forest does not employ the former from any knowledge he possesses of the principles of chemistry, nor the latter from any acquaintance with the laws of physiology. We, on the contrary, when a few grains of soda are taken to effect the same object, shew our learning, and sometimes our pedantry, by explaining that, as the soda contains an alkaline principle, the acidity of the stomach is neutralized by its administration, and a purgative salt being formed, in some measure, by the combination, the double purpose is thus effected of a corrective and an aperient; whilst the bleeding lessens the momentum of the circulation, and checks inflammatory action. Still the results are the same. The uncivilized man gropes his way in the dark, and though we are led by the light of the lamp of science, each attains his object by the same means. Their re-

medies must necessarily be simple in ordinary cases, consisting chiefly of warm infusions, powdered barks, roots, and leaves. A modern writer states, that in their febrile diseases, they make the state of the skin and bowels the guide by which to regulate their practice. When the skin is moist for a considerable time, and the thirst ceases, they say there is no danger. When the evacuations from the bowels become less offensive, and change their colour, the tongue becoming clean, they stop purging and diaphoresis. If there is great debility, they commence giving tonics, which are commonly bitters. Should these induce costiveness or a return of the fever, evacuants are again had recourse to. There is something so rational, and yet so simple, in all this, that I hardly think we should find anything to improve upon it in Sydenham, or Cullen; and, as the great Boerhaave tells us, that "simplicity is the seal of truth," probably here is as much practical, unsophisticated truth, as will be found in the elaborate treatises of ancient and modern professors.

That they are acquainted with the mode of relieving inward pains by treatment similar to the moxa, is seen by their burning a piece of touch-wood over the pained part, and suffering it to produce a blister. They are also aware of the advantage of relaxing the muscles in dislocations, for in cases where they do not succeed readily, they nauseate the patient to a most distressing degree, and then find very little difficulty in reducing the luxation. Tumors and abscesses are allowed to suppurate, generally, without any application to them. When much inflamed and painful, plasters of bruised herbs, or warm fomenting poultices are used. If matter forms, they make an incision for its escape, and continue the poultices to promote the discharge.

The subject of Indian diseases, and remedies, affords much matter interesting to the philosophical inquirer, particularly as to their mode of treating the more formidable complaints of Dropsy, Rheumatism, Syphilis, Pulmonary Consumption, and Asthma, in which they are sometimes very successful.

The space I have now occupied warns me to conclude for the present, but having received, through the kind attention of Mr. Vardon, chief clerk in the Indian Department, a copy of the Sick Report of the Indians, for the year 1844, I hope to make it the subject of a future communication, with some observations on the diseases abovementioned.

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OBSERVATIONS ON SMALL-POX IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS OF CANADA EAST:

By A. VON IFFLAND, M.D.

One of the most destructive scourges in human so-