

THE CANADA LANCET:

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE.

VOL. VI. TORONTO, JULY, 1874. No. II.

Original Communications.

SUPPLEMENT TO PAPERS ON DYSENTERY, SCARLET FEVER, &c.

BY WILLIAM KERR, M. D., GALT, ONT.

In the September (1873) number of this journal, I expressed a hope that I would be able to bring forward a modification of my remedy for Dysentery, suited to those cases which altogether resist the Digitalis and Squill combinations. I cannot yet speak with confidence, as my experience is very limited, but I think I may venture to lay the investigation before your readers, as a step, I hope, in the right direction, which the diligence of other explorers may carry further forward.

Fifty years ago, Dr. Duncan inculcated in his lectures on *Materia Medica* in the University of Edinburgh, the advantage of extending the examination of the medicinal properties of a plant into other plants of the same natural order, and Dr. Paris, in his *Pharmacologie* insists that the power of all classes of medicines, Laxatives, Diuretics, Narcotics, &c., is increased by joining together several of the same. To these views I am indebted for the measure of success which has attended what I have styled the Digitalis and Squill combinations, and these views have been my guides in extending the investigation. It may not be without interest to connect the whole from the beginning, and to show by what changes the present stage has been reached.

I had used Henbane and Camphor, successfully in a case of excoriation of the fauces, when I was consulted for nursing sore mouth, by an elderly female, who had suffered from it for twenty years. It was cured by the same remedy in fourteen days, and several others yielded readily. In one as related by me in the Upper Canada Medical Journal, Dec. 1853, the sensation of scalding

aggravated by swallowing whatever is pungent, a characteristic of nursing sore mouth, extended down the gullet to the stomach, and gave rise to symptoms of Dyspepsia. These complaints had lasted several months, and were cured in four weeks. Others having both nursing sore mouth and Dyspepsia, were readily cured of the former, but more rarely of the latter. Believing myself to be on the right track, and confident of some gain, I did not discard Henbane and Camphor in the succeeding cases of Dyspepsia, but added Hemlock, (*Conium Maculatum*) when I had the satisfaction of curing several whose complaints had previously resisted me. In the course of months I again encountered unyielding cases, when, encouraged by what a combination of narcotics had already accomplished, I included Stramonium, and obtained an additional and decided gain.

Accident led to the selection of the next ingredient. I had several times used with benefit the combination of equal parts of Henbane, Camphor, Hemlock and Stramonium, together with a similar proportion of opium in Dysentery, which in a generally mild form was prevalent at this period. One man was cured so rapidly that I enquired minutely into the circumstances, and found that for some time previously, and while using my prescription, he was under the influence of a medicine containing a diuretic. Acting on this suggestion I added Digitalis, and soon recognized increased efficiency not only in Dysentery, but in Dyspepsia, and other affections of the mucous membrane. I may say here that during the whole investigation it was found that any addition which was beneficial in one disease of this membrane, was likewise beneficial in every other of the same in which I had an opportunity of trying it, and *vice versa* a retrogression in one was a retrogression in the others. It is, therefore manifest that, though Dyspepsia and Dysentery afforded the greater part of the evidence, the search was not merely for a remedy for these, but generally for diseases having their seat in a tender or ulcerated state of the Mucous Membrane.

I had exhausted the officinal narcotics, and in most instances Dysentery yielded more readily than with opium alone, and Dyspepsia more frequently than with the simpler combinations. It is not to be understood, however, that as the medicine rose in efficacy, there was a correspond-