

sequence of the lesions in their development and retrogression, in the intensity of the subjective and absence of constitutional symptoms, the affection is unmistakably acute eczema. It may be that cases occur in which the inflammation extends so deeply and reaches so high a degree, as to warrant the title dermatitis, but I have never seen them.

The cause was also plainly manifest. The inflammation followed in all the cases the applications of tincture of arnica to the skin as a fomentation. In one of the instances, the first, the epidermis may have been slightly broken; but in the other the skin of the parts was whole and healthy at the time of the applications. The inflammation began to show itself after intervals varying from a few hours to several days, and was confined to the part to which the applications was made, or extended from this as a centre.

These cases will serve, as well as more which might be presented, as typical illustrations of the action of arnica at times upon the skin. The affection, as will be seen, follows a very regular course in the character, distribution and duration of its lesions, differing widely in some of these respects from the wayward manifestations so peculiar to the action of rhus. Like the latter, arnica must therefore be regarded as an irritant poison when applied to the skin of some persons, but of less intensity and probably of less certainty in its action than rhus. With regard to this latter point, the proportionate frequency of poisoning after its external use, I do not know that we can form any judgment. There can be no doubt that tincture of arnica is very often used in the same way as in the cases above given. It has long enjoyed an exceptionally permanent reputation, and almost miraculous healing powers have been attributed to its Oesterlen says that "its reputation dates from the times when magicians carried on their hocus-pocus with it; from these it passed into the hands of quacks, and finally to physicians." There is scarcely a symptom of disease which, it was at one time thought in Europe, its internal administration could not successfully meet.

The physiological action of both the root and the flowers of arnica is said to be irritant, large doses producing vomiting and diarrhoea, inflammation of the stomach and bowels, headache, and dizziness. Its properties reside in an acrid resin and volatil oil. Our official preparations are a tincture, an alcoholic extract and a plaster. That tincture of arnica retained for centuries its great reputation as an application in bruises and sprains, and remains to this day perhaps the most popular remedy for such purposes, it may, thank the alcohol associated with it, for this beyond doubt is the only active agent in such applications.

The appearances which follow its use are no doubt often mistaken for the immediate effect, or the sequelæ, of the injury or other trouble for which it was applied. Even the physician, there can be little doubt, often fails to recognize the artificial nature of the eczema he is called to treat, and to connect it with the prior application of arnica to the skin. The almost universal belief in its harmlessness, too, would prevent in most cases the patient from communicating

to the physician the fact of its use before the appearance of the disease. It is not to be wondered at, however, that physicians are so little acquainted with these poisonous properties, when we see how little mention is made of them in medical literature. The works on materia medica that I have at hand give it a more or less feeble commendation, but make no allusion to its injurious action upon the skin. Very few of the works on toxicology place arnica among the poisons and Van Hasselt, who gives the fullest account of its injurious properties when administered internally, says nothing of its action upon the skin.

It is to warn physicians who may be ignorant of these properties belonging to it, and that through them the public may be more generally informed concerning the dangerous character of one of the most popular and useless among domestic external remedies that I have thus brought the subject before the profession.—*Abridged from Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

#### GUM-CUTTING

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For some time I have been making inquiry of physicians whom I met, and I was rather surprised to find among the younger practitioners so many who had never used the gum lancet, and who could not imagine the case in which it would be necessary.

The let-alone system of treatment is good; in very many cases it is the best; but it is not always the best. The relief afforded by a free incision through the gum in some instances in which there was acute pain has, under my observation been more marked than that afforded by any other operation that I ever saw. The tooth, it is true, in the very great majority of cases finds its way through without difficulty to the child. The first indication to the mother whose child has always been nursed, and never fed, is often the feeling of an incisor against her nipple. In some cases where a proper plan of feeding has been followed, there is as little indication of trouble during dentition. Occasionally when the child is nursed, more frequently when it is fed, and often when it is improperly fed, the little one apparently suffers pain in the mouth, in the head, and in the bowels, whenever a new tooth is about to make its appearance. In another class of badly-fed patients there is always loss of appetite at this time, with sleepless nights, nausea, and vomiting. In others, cough comes on which only exists then, and for which auscultation gives no explanation; and the little patient's sufferings are augmented by "hive syrup," squills, and other nauseants which gave no relief, and by "Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup," and other narcotic drugs, which stupefy but do not cure. There is still another class consisting mainly of improperly-fed children, who have convulsions, sometimes slight it is true, and sometimes fatal. There is no disturbance of the nervous system so far as I know which may not exist in the teething child, and some which may not be aggravated by improper food. Indeed the time of dentition is the time when by far the greatest