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ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

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ANTIDOTE TO POISON OAK.

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I came to California in 1874, and located in San Jose. In the following spring, excursions in the country of parties and families were frequent; I then saw for the first time cases of poisoning by rhus tox., which grows abundantly in that vicinity. I was not called upon to treat a case during the year that I lived there, but was told that doctors could do nothing to benefit such cases. The custom was to apply a carbonate of soda solution which would give some relief, provided it was frequently or constantly applied.

I went to San Francisco in the autumn of 1875, and often heard of cases of rhus poisoning. *Grindelia robusta* was at that time being advertised by druggists, and thinking that I might have occasion to use it, I enquired of a prominent druggist (who had on his counter circulars advertising it as a cure for poison oak) as to its efficacy. He replied that it did not give satisfaction. He also stated that there was no specific for poison oak. Shortly after the conversation, I

was reading in "Hale's New Remedies" the provings of cypridium, and found the following statement:

"It has not been known heretofore that cypridium had any specific action on the skin, but a communication from Professor H. H. Babcock, a scientific botanist of Chicago, would seem to show that its effects are often mistaken for rhus poisoning.

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I have attended Professor Babcock several times for what was supposed to be rhus poisoning; the symptoms are identical with those of rhus. He says in his letter to *The Pharmacist*, "Working botanists have so often been poisoned by rhus toxicodendron that many of them have come to regard it as their special bane. In five seasons, commencing with 1868, I was particularly careful not to touch this poisonous plant, not to pluck a specimen growing in its immediate vicinity, not to receive from the hands of another person a freshly-gathered plant, for fear it might have come in contact with rhus. In spite of these precautions in the latter part of May or the first of June in each year, I was poisoned so severely as to be confined to my room for several days. In June 1872, after gathering many specimens of cypridium spectabile, I observed that my hands were stained with the purplish secretion of the glandular hairs with which its stem and leaves are densely clothed, and shortly after experienced a peculiar irritation about my eyes. The next day my whole face presented the appearance of a severe case of rhus. In reviewing my notes of the previous years, I found in each season the poisoning had appeared on the day after I had collected cypridium spectabile or *C. pubescens*. In 1873 and 1874 I collected more extensively than ever before, but suspecting that my previous sufferings had been caused by these two specimens of cypridium rather than the rhus, took no unusual pains to avoid the latter, but refrained from touching either of the former with the bare hand. The result was what I expected, for I escaped entirely the poisoning that I had begun to regard as inevitable, and am now convinced that upon myself, at least, cypridium spectabile and *C. pubescens* are capable of producing effects similar to those caused by rhus toxicodendron."

After reading the above, it occurred to me that this drug ought from its similarity to rhus to be an antidote to the poison of that drug; and I determined to try it on the first opportunity. This opportunity presented itself in the summer of 1877. Miss L— had a mild attack of rhus poisoning, and I gave her drop doses of the first decimal dilution in water every hour for a few hours; finding no change in the symptoms, I gave one drop of the tincture in water every hour, and after four or five doses the itching and burning entirely disappeared.

The next case was that of a young Italian, by name, Pattenghi; a marble cutter in San Francisco. I saw him on a Thursday, about five o'clock p. m.; he had been in the cemetery, in the vicinity of poison oak. He was bolstered up in a rocking chair with pillows; he had a bandage over his eyes, one of which was nearly closed, and the other entirely closed. One blister on his chin was about two inches long and fully an inch wide. His, face, neck, hands and wrists were covered with blisters. I put a half dram of cypripedium tincture into a teacup half full of water, directed him to take a teaspoonful of the solution every hour until relieved. I went the next day, found that he had enjoyed a fair nights rest; the vesicles were almost dry, the cuticle shriveled up, leaving a reddened base, with scarcely any soreness or irritability.

The next case was a boy about twelve years of age, the son of Mrs. Casebolt living in the Western Addition of San Francisco, neighbors to my former patient. A sister of this patient came to my house at about 6:30 p. m. while I was eating dinner. I put up a half dram vial full of the tincture of cypripedium, told the girl to put one-half of it into a teacup half full of water, and give a teaspoonful every hour till patient was relieved. I went the next day about three o'clock. I saw a boy sitting on the front steps of Mrs. Casebolt's house. Upon inquiry, the boy informed me that there was no one at home but himself. I asked him how the poison oak patient was? He said he was the one. I then observed a little puffness around the eyes. I asked him if he was better? He replied that he was almost well; that one eye had been entirely closed and the other one

almost closed. I then looked at his wrists and neck and found the remains of a bad case but not so bad as the previous one. A few days after this I called at the house to ask Mrs. Casebolt if I could use her name as a reference as I was intending to make a report of the remedy; she readily gave her consent. I found that she had prepared and administered the remedy according to directions. She said she gave the first dose at seven o'clock, another at eight o'clock, and the third dose at nine o'clock; and that a few minutes after the third dose, the itching and burning subsided, and soon the swelling began to diminish.

In 1881 I purchased a ranch in Sonoma county having ten acres of wild woods in a body, with poison oak growing in every part of the woods. There were mineral springs, pleasant walks, and streams of water, and I concluded to make a summer resort of it. I had guests from San Francisco and different sections of the country. Contrary to my expectations, I went into the practice of medicine around the country, and if I ever had an opportunity to make a specialty of anything, it was poison oak during the five years I was on the ranch. I doctored in Santa Rosa, Windsor, Healdsburg, Fulton, Forestville, going from five to eighteen miles in different directions, including the Coast Range on the west; and poison oak was growing everywhere. I had one case where a woman's jaws were set as firmly as in lock-jaw, but her teeth were open about half an inch. The case had been going on about three days when I was called. The one drop doses failed, so I gave her five drops for a dose every two hours; and the next day found the case somewhat better, but it was about a week before the case was fully recovered. Miss W—, living in Mendocino county, on a sheep ranch, had not been free from the effects of poison oak for six months. Drop doses every hour during the day for three days, cured the case.

The worse cases I found as a rule were among men who were clearing land and burning brush containing poison oak. Inhaling the smoke for one thing and the relaxed condition of the pores of the skin while in a state of perspiration, facilitated the absorption of the poison into the general circulation. In such cases I insisted upon the avoidance of all stim-

ulants, and all exercise that would be likely to produce perspiration; and when these rules were followed the disease soon yielded to the treatment.

To a few of the guests at my house who had previously been poisoned by rhus, I gave six or eight drops daily of the tincture of cypripedium, and they wandered in the woods to their hearts content with perfect impunity; so it is, to a certain extent, a prophylactic of rhus poisoning; but not permanently so; for in many patients (chiefly among farmers who were burning brush,) the disease would return on exposure to poison oak.

There were several cases that had been running a number of days where they had used external applications, and two cases where no external treatment had been given, that would not yield promptly to drop doses of the tincture. In such cases I gave five drop doses every hour till three doses had been given, then every two hours until relieved; which was generally in from three to six hours.

I procured the tincture from Boericke & Schreck, San Francisco. It may also be used externally.

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## MINERAL SPRING WATERS.

BY WM. E. LEONARD, A. B., M. D., MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

This is a neglected corner of the *Materia Medica*. The waters of which we know something are extremely difficult to classify, unless we accept the general terms of alkaline, or alkaline-saline, calcic., sulphur, iron, earthy, etc., names applied to the most striking constituents of the waters. These terms, though long accepted, tell but little of the therapeutic uses of the waters, nor are our provings at all satisfactory. Most mineral waters contain in general the salts that are constituents of the human body, being various combinations of the alkaline elements, soda, potash, magnesium, etc., with lime, sulphur, iron and silicon. Frequently carbonic acid and other gases found also in the animal economy give character to the waters.

It is a noticeable fact that several of the analyses show from one to six of the Schuessler salts in quite appreciable