

KALI BROMATUM

Bromide of potassium

'Bromides', have practically always 'Pot. brom.', that powerful inhibitor, that grand suppresser, in almost universal use for the treatment of epilepsy, sleeplessness, 'nerves', and yet which, as commonly administered, has never cured the chronic conditions for which it is prescribed, *and never can*.

How do we know this? Simply by the fact that the dose has to be always increased, as through the months or years the patient gradually asserts himself, and gets the better of the drug. You see there are two ways of prescribing. You may give a drug in order to *do something to a patient*, to "depress his nervous system and more or less paralyse the higher functions of his brain"; but this does not recommend itself as an ideal form of treatment to the homoeopath, whose concern is, always, *the vital stimulation of the patient, according to definite laws, whereby he is roused to cure himself*. Drugs do not cure, popular opinion notwithstanding. Cure must come from within; or there is no cure.

We will detail, presently, the joys, mental and physical, of the condition termed *bromism*, from the pen of one of the best known teachers of Old school medicine in his textbook for the use of students. No wonder that one of them, years ago, preparing for her 'finals' exclaimed, "Medicine is all pop. I shall *never* give medicine to *my* patients!" We will also give extracts from the poisoning of men and animals by Potassium bromide; our authority being the *Cyclopaedia of Drug Pathogenesis*. We will also see how Homoeopathy applies the drug, in non-poisonous but gently stimulating doses, to elevate and rouse latent qualities, inhibited by disease, and to relieve the sufferings of those whose health, or rather ill-health-picture resembles, but is not caused by Bromide of potassium.

Personally, looking back, one has seldom, if ever, used this drug, or had occasion to use it. For 'nerves' and sleeplessness, we have so many rapidly curative remedies which, given in regard to cause, and exact symptoms, act like a charm; no need to 'push' the remedy, or increase the dose. Take *sleeplessness*—caused, say, by over-exertion and extreme weariness of mind or body. Here Arnica never fails to summon "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep". In sleeplessness from anxiety, restlessness, anguish, fear; when man, woman, or child tosses feverishly, in despair of ever getting off to sleep, Aconite is simply scientific magic; since it is Aconite that has thus tormented its provers, who, long ago, suffered for us, that we might cease to so suffer. Or, again, in the case of an elderly woman with a huge goitre—once—who in one of the air raids of the last War was pinned down under a beam, while her house was burning over her head. (Some of the doctors who come to see what we are doing with our out-patients, know her). When raids began

again, last September, (was it?) she turned up with the tale, "I cannot sleep! I keep listening for them!" and for this she, if anyone, had ample excuse. A dose or two of Arsenicum put her right; and her next report was "Sleeping well", and *she had "lost her fear"*. Who would, for this, substitute the stupefied sleep of bromide, which for a few hours would have made her unconscious of her terrors, but would have needed constant repetition, and would never, like Arsenicum, have simply, promptly, and entirely charmed them away. One sees her from time to time, and knows that during all these months of war, with houses falling around her, the healthy reaction from those few globules of milk-sugar, medicated with Arsenicum in potency, has sufficed to overcome even such great terror. With Hahnemann, one can only give thanks for "*God's good gift, Homoeopathy,*" where it is no question of a few hours' inhibition and suppression, but of the one, most precious remedy that, causing a certain terror in those who are out to test its properties, can cure the same, when otherwise caused.

By the way, though the striking suppressions of Pot. brom. have never appealed to us, and we have never been tempted to shepherd our patients along that broad and easy path that can lead to a destruction of mind and body, yet, our drug picture of January last dealt with potentized Bromium the element, which as we showed, was used to cure in the small doses of homoeopathic preparation, the asthma of a sailor whose life was only tolerable when at sea. That is one of the precious tips of our school. It appears in the *Repertory* as, "*Asthma of sailors as soon as they go ashore, Brom.*", the only drug given, and in black type. Anyway it works; and is, therefore, worth knowing, if only needed once in a medical life-time. We have also cured quite a number of cases of epilepsy, each with the special remedy demanded by the symptoms of the individual, and never by the remedy of the disease-name. One has also failed to cure—they are difficult cases, and this is the narrow way of those who seek to enter into life, and who regardless of difficulties and labour, and the necessity to use queer freaks of intuition and knowledge, aim sincerely at doing things that matter. There is no great merit in changing a beautiful and intelligent child into a 'pimpley idiot', even if, by doing so, the actual number of fits can be somewhat reduced. . . "*Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?*"

The price that may have to be paid, for a mere decrease, not cure, of epileptic fits, or for such sleep as bromides can offer, is, in our thinking, not worth having. Sedative drugs may be used with impunity, even with advantage, to tide over a difficult crisis; but in chronic work—No!

Distrust any 'cure' which never cures; which can never be dispensed with, but which forms a habit, and in order to maintain a seeming alleviation must be ever increased. Such a drug can never cure—such cases!

And yet, all these powerful drugs *can* be used to cure where prescribed for the symptoms they evoke: Such conditions as skin diseases, like those—

five in number, we are told, that bromides can cause; states of unconsciousness with bromide symptoms. Here, in the small and careful dosage of Homoeopathy, they may prove curative, provided that the condition—? cerebral haemorrhage etc., has not gone too far; for there are things that are incurable.

Hale White, *Materia Medica of Pharmacy, Pharmacology and Therapeutica*: (We will quote what Old School has to say in regard to this drug, so often abused by the profession and by the laity.) "Bromides are powerful depressants to the nervous system. . . . In man at least, not only is the cortical area, but the brain as a whole is depressed, therefore these drugs are powerful hypnotics. . . . the bromides are well worthy to be called powerful nerve depressants. . . . *Circulation*—large doses exert a direct paralysing influence on the heart, lessening the force and frequency of the beat and producing stoppage in diastole. . . .

"If bromides are taken for too long a period, a series of symptoms of poisoning, to which the name of *bromism* has been given may appear. The earliest of them is a rash, consisting of red papules, chiefly on face and back, exactly resembling some forms of acne. . . . Next symptoms are general lowering of cutaneous sensibility, and also that of the pharynx; then there is a diminution of sexual power; the patient becomes lowspirited, easily fatigued, unfit for work and his intellect is dulled. . . . Potassium bromide in man, at least, the higher functions of the brain are depressed before the lower, and these again before the spinal. Thus the depression takes place in regular order from above downwards. In the reverse order of the physiological development of the function, and this is commonly the case with many drugs.

"Those who take bromides habitually find themselves unable to sleep without them. These bad effects are intensified by the fact that gradually larger doses are required to produce sleep, and thus the unfortunate sufferer becomes more and more a slave to the drug. . . . They are the most valuable drugs we have for the treatment of epilepsy. . . . They rarely cure, but often, greatly diminish the number of fits. It is impossible to say of any given case, whether bromides will do good, therefore they must be tried in all. . . . insomnia of overwork, worry. . . ." And so on.

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"Among the symptoms caused by the drug are some which have escaped the notice of previous observers, but which if not recognized, might lead to serious mistakes in diagnosis. I refer to cerebrospinal affections—characterized by general delirium, hallucinations, fancies about being persecuted, violent actions, ataxia of the limbs and of the tongue, and impeded articulation—which might be taken as indications of general paralysis. All these alarming symptoms disappear on leaving off the medicine."—Allen's *Encyclopaedia*.

In *The Cyclopaedia of Drug Pathogenesis* we find:

A prover, after large crude doses of 1 oz. repeated in half an hour, found speech difficult. . . . painful sadness and indifference, almost disgust at life. Attempting to walk he experienced a strange vertigo: a sense of emptiness around and under his feet, which he was afraid of placing wrongly; the ground seemed at fault, the sense of resistance lost, his walk was staggering, and he was obliged to give it up. A profound obtuseness of sensibility, especially in regard to reflex actions. Tickling, pinching did not provoke their usual effects; sense of touch was altered, so that there was inability to grasp with firmness. Pulse slower and compressible as if extinguished.

Symptoms of a toxic dose . . . nauseous breath; oedema supervenes on congestion of uvula and fauces; the whispering voice sinks into aphonia, sexual weakness degenerates into impotence; muscular weakness becomes complete paralysis; reflex, general and special sensibility disappears; the ears do not hear, nor the eyes see, nor the tongue taste; expression of hebetude becomes first that of imbecility, and then that of idiocy; hallucinations of sight and sound, with or without mania, precede general cerebral indifference, apathy and paralysis. As the bromism becomes more profound, the patient lies quietly in bed, unable to move or feel, or swallow or speak, with dilated and uncontractile pupils, and scarcely any change of colour. Extremities grow gradually colder and colder; the action of the heart feebler and slower till it ceases.

In an epileptic who had taken large doses for a year, there was emaciation, yellowish skin, face covered with acne; she suffered from gastralgia, was harassed with dry cough and dryness of throat. Finally she died, delirious, oppressed in breathing, with small frequent pulse and acute abdominal pains.

There are five principal forms of eruption. Erythema, with fever, causing great pain; acne, the most frequent form of 'Pot. brom.' eruption. A thickened, greasy skin, with comedones predisposes to this eruption of acne punctata and acne pustulosa. The number of the pustules are said to increase or diminish with increase or diminution of dose. The whole face is sometimes covered and disfigured by them. Another form is urticaria—erythema nodosum. The vesicular form—a moist eczema; apparently rare. The furuncular form. Also warts have been seen on face and legs.

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Remember: what a drug can cause, it can cure, if properly administered. One supposes that few drugs have been allowed to 'cause' to the extent of potassium bromide; the remedy that relieves and mitigates but never cures sleeplessness, epilepsy, 'nerves' in general, and therefore obtains such a wide application and gets so rudely 'pushed'. But where you recognize, in any sickness, the *pot. brom.* picture, and give that drug as a homoeopathic

remedy, it will act curatively. And in small dosage, discontinued when no longer demanded by symptoms, it is, of course, harmless.

Black Letter Symptoms

- Loss of memory; had to be told the word before he could speak it.*
- Hands constantly busy; all sorts of fearful delusions; walks the room groaning, bemoaning his fate; full of fear. Unsteady.*
- Fits of uncontrollable weeping and profound melancholic delusions.*
- Depressed; low spirited. Nervous anxiety.*
- Night terrors of children (not from indigestion) with screaming.*
- Unconsciousness of what is occurring around them. Cannot recognize or be comforted by their friends. Sometimes followed by squinting.*
- Seminal emissions, with depressed spirits, dull thought, backache, staggering gait and great weakness.*
- Nervous; restless; cannot sit still, but must move about, or otherwise occupy oneself; often suits nervous women.*
- Spasms: from fright, anger, or other emotional causes, occurring in plethoric nervous persons, or in women at time of menses; during parturition; from sexual excitement. Too great reflex excitability; sleeplessness; during teething, whooping cough, or laryngismus stridulus; from Bright's disease.*
- Sleepless; restless; can only calm herself by incessant occupation.*
- Night terrors of children; grind teeth in sleep; moans; cries; horrible dreams.*
- Loss of sensibility; of body generally; also fauces, larynx, urethra, etc.*

Important Italic

Characteristic or Queer Symptoms.

- Memory absolutely destroyed; anaemia; emaciation.
- Single words forgotten; syllables dropped.
- Singled out as an object of divine wrath.
- Imagines she is a devil; cannot sleep; fears to be alone.
- A remedy of delirium tremens.
- Frightful imaginings (in late pregnancy) have committed, or are about to commit some great crime or cruelty; such as murdering her child or husband.
- Hallucinations of sight and sound, with or without mania, precede brain and paralytic symptoms. Delirium with *delusions*: is pursued, will be poisoned; is selected for divine vengeance; her child dead.
- Dread of impending destruction to all near to her.
- Acute mania, with fullness of blood vessels of brain.
- Feels as if he will go out of his mind.
- Melancholia; profound depression; feeling of moral deficiency; frequent

(Continued on page 87)

The chief remedies in appendicitis, which I have found useful are: Belladonna, Bryonia, Mercurius cor., Lycopodium, Colocynth.

Belladonna in the early stage, where there is heat, abdominal distension and tenderness and pain.

Bryonia where there is tenderness, and pain felt most on moving; necessity to lie still—in rheumatic subjects and where a chill or exposure to damp has been the exciting cause.

Mercurius cor. where local symptoms are acute, conjoined with enteritic or diarrhetic conditions, and sometimes with bladder irritation.

Lycopodium in a more chronic type of case, where there is much distension of abdomen, and where the bowels are torpid or absolutely constipated.

Colocynth specially indicated by a high degree of pain, which may be cutting, twisting or cramping. There is also distension of the abdomen and soft stools. Pressure on the abdomen may give some relief to the pain, which occurs in paroxysms.

Dioscorea is also to be thought of, where the pain is acute.

Nux and Arsenicum must also be kept in mind, especially where there is much nausea or vomiting.

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(Continued from page 83)

weeping, low-spirited and childish, profound indifference, almost disgust for life.

Brain feels too tight; with a feeling of anaesthesia of brain.

Cholera infantum. Brain irritated, face flushed, pupils dilated, eyes sunken, rolls head, wakes shrieking, extremities cold.

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