

Columbo-root / [William Lewis].

Contributors

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Columbo-Root.

There are still numberless untrodden paths in physic which remain to be explored; every successive year may add some new and useful discovery to the common stock of medical knowledge.—PERCIVAL.

EMINENT as the medicinal qualities of the Columbo-root are acknowledged to be, by every medical man, “of skilful enquiry into his art,” yet we are really unacquainted with the precise place of it's growth.

For the last forty years the Europeans have imported it from Columbo in the isle of Ceylon, and the Portuguese, (with whom it has been a staple export) have always very carefully concealed from whence they procured it. It is called by them *Raijs de Mosambique*. They imported it to Columbo from some parts of the vast continent of India, or perhaps from Africa; and most probably from the country of the Caffrees, or those parts of Zanguebar which border on the Mosambique*.

Of the high estimation in which this root is held in India, we have the testimony of all the English physicians who of late years have resided at Madras, Calcutta, or Bengal. Such is the attachment which the natives of that country have to this root, particularly in disorders of the stomach and bowels, that we have been told even thirty years ago they carried it about them, and took it sliced or scraped in Madeira wine.

* Since I have written the above, Dr. Berry of Madras, has given a short memoir of this root, with a coloured plate, in the tenth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, printed in 4to at Calcutta. It appears to grow in great abundance on the shores of the Mosambique. After speaking most highly of its general virtues, Dr. Berry says: “the Africans find it wonderful for the bloody-flux, they use it in powder for that, and for almost every dis

We are indebted, perhaps entirely, to that humane and amiable man, the late Dr. Percival of Manchester, for its first introduction into the *Materia Medica* of this country. The researches and experiments on the Columbo-root, with which he favoured the public, in his "Medical and Philosophical Essays," urged a still further spirit of enquiry, not only in England, but in France and Germany; and the genius of Darwin, Haygarth, Josse, and others devoted to their science, have only tended to confirm and sanction the high opinion formed of it, by the acute and investigating mind of the late Dr. Percival. It was admitted into the Pharmacopeia of the Royal College of Physicians, in 1787, and has been since regarded as a medicine of the highest class.

I will not repeat what the English, or the American medical writers, or those of France, have said in favour of the Columbo or Calamba root, nor give extracts from the letter of Dahlberg, in Murray's Med. Biblioth. but will merely present the reader with a few extracts from the scientific experiments of the late Dr. Percival*.

"The observations on the Columbo have been read at the College of Physicians, and before the Royal Society; and have been communicated to a considerable number of my friends and correspondents, to some of whom this remedy was unknown, and by others applied only to the cure of the *cholera morbus*. During the course of the last year, I have had the satisfaction of receiving from them the strongest testimonies of its efficacy in a variety of disorders. What I have advanced, therefore, in its favour, may be regarded, not as the conclusions of an individual, partial to a

* The estimation in which the Columbo-root is held in America, may be seen even from the following brief extracts from the New York Med. Repos. v. 5, 1802. "Substitute for Columbo. The *Xanthoriza simplicissima* has been found by Professor Woodhouse to afford a beautiful yellow dyè; it possesses medicinal powers not materially unlike those of Columbo-root." p. 94. And again, "it is a strong and pleasant bitter, and very nearly allied to the celebrated Columbo-root; it promises to become a valuable addition to the American *Materia Medica*; it is preferable to all our native bitters." p. 164.

favourite remedy, but as facts supported by the experience of many learned physicians."

" It corrects acrimony, and strengthens the organs of digestion; it is a useful remedy in *cholera morbus*, or violent vomiting and purging, in bilious fevers, in a languid state of the stomach, attended with want of appetite, nausea, and indigestion, and in habitual vomitings, when they proceed from weakness, or irritability of the stomach, from an irregular gout, from acidities, or from acrimonious bile."

" In the *cholera morbus* it alleviates the violent *tormina*, checks the purging and vomiting, corrects the putrid tendency of the bile, quiets the inordinate motions of the bowels, and speedily recruits the exhausted strength of the patient. Mr. Johnson of Chester, a surgeon of eminence, who served ten years on board one of his Majesty's ships in the East Indies, and in 1756 had the care of an hospital-ship, gave the Columbo-root in that climate to a great number of patients, often twenty in a day, attacked with this disease. He seldom employed any means to promote the discharge of bile, or to cleanse the stomach and bowels, previous to its exhibition: and he generally found that it soon stopped the vomiting, which was the most fatal symptom, and that the purging and remaining complaints quickly yielded to the same remedy. The mortality on board his ship, after he used this medicine, was remarkably less than in the other ships of the same fleet; and this difference he attributes entirely to the good effects of the Columbo-root in this fatal disorder."

" Though Columbo-root does not seem to possess much, if any degree of astringency, yet I have often observed very salutary effects from its use, in violent looseness, and even in the bloody flux. In the first stage of these disorders, when astringents would be hurtful, this root may be prescribed with safety and advantage, for by its antispasmodic powers it corrects the irregular action of the *primæ viæ*; but as a cordial, tonic, and antiseptic remedy, it answers better when given towards their decline."

“ I have more than once experienced its efficacy in the vomitings which attend the bilious cholic, and in such cases where an emetic is thought necessary, after administering a small dose of ipecacuan, the stomach may be washed with an infusion of Columbo. This will prevent those violent and convulsive reachings, which in irritable habits abounding with bile, are sometimes excited by the mildest emetic.”

“ Dr. Haygarth of Chester, by my recommendation, made trial of this root in a fever of the bilious kind, which has been epidemic at Namptwich, and in other parts of Cheshire; and he has favoured me with the underwritten account of his success*.”

“ Children during their *tecthing*, are frequently subject to severe vomitings and purgings. In these cases the Columbo-root is an useful remedy; and I have seen almost instant relief procured by it, when other efficacious medicines had been tried in vain. The more effectually to correct the acidities which at such times usually prevail, a little chalk or magnesia may be combined with it.”

“ The Columbo-root is extremely beneficial in a languid state

* “ After the *primæ viæ* have been sufficiently unloaded of their bilious, and other putrescent contents, I find the Columbo-root a most useful remedy, in allaying the nausea and reachings, to which the patients are liable. In this fever, though the remissions are very evident, and the accessions generally marked with chills and other symptoms of an intermittent, yet the bark appears to do more harm than good, as it occasions an increase of feverish heat, and a parched tongue. The Columbo in these cases seems to supply its place most admirably, by correcting the bile, restoring the proper tone of the stomach, and of the whole habit. It also prevents relapses, to which in this fever the patients are particularly disposed.”

“ Such have been the good effects of the Columbo-root in the cases which have fallen under my own observation; but a judicious apothecary informs me, that he has often seen it fail of success in this fever, which in no respect seems wonderful. It is not supposed that Columbo has any febrifuge quality, similar to antimony, or Peruvian bark. By correcting the putrid bile it destroys the *fomes* which aggravates the fever, and produces many of its most dangerous symptoms. When bilious fevers are epidemical, does it not seem a probable remedy to prevent the disease?”

of the stomach, attended with want of appetite, indigestion, and nausea*.”

“ A light infusion of this root in mint water succeeds better than any other medicine I have tried, in the nausea and vomiting occasioned by *pregnancy*.”

Dr. Percival relates the following, among a great variety of cases, which exemplify “ the peculiar, or if the expression be allowable, specific qualities of the Columbo-root.”

CASE I.

“ A poor man, in August 1770, from exposure to cold when overheated with hard labour, was attacked with a severe purging and vomiting, accompanied with violent pain in his stomach and bowels. He continued in this miserable condition twenty-four hours before I saw him, and his strength was then nearly exhausted. I directed two scruples of the powder of Columbo-root to be given every three or four hours in peppermint water. This remedy afforded almost immediate relief; but the patient returning too soon to his occupation, had a relapse, and was again restored to health by the same medicine.”

CASE II.

“ W.W. August 1770, had been seized with a looseness three days before, which had gradually increased, and for the last four hours been most violent, attended with frequent vomiting, and cramps in his extremities. He was directed to take a scruple of the powder of Columbo every two hours, and had neither vomiting nor purging after the first dose. Nine doses restored him to perfect health.”

CASE III.

“ Mrs. P. in the third week of her confinement in child-bed,

* Dr. Percival also observes, that this root surpasses all other remedies “ in an impaired digestion, from corrupted bile, or vitiated or unsound saliva.” I quote this, in order to introduce a remark of the late Dr. Darwin’s, that a want of appetite, or a foul stomach, often proceeds from the imperceptible swallowing of the vitiated spittle from a bad set of teeth.

began to complain of great pain and uneasiness in the bowels with frequent and copious evacuations by stool, pulse from 100 to 115. Emetics, opiates, elixir of vitriol, and other cooling restringents afforded no relief. A strong infusion of the Columbo in cinnamon tea was then given; after every tea-cup full of the infusion she found herself better, the painful sensations were relieved, and the evacuations diminished. In five days she was entirely cured."

CASE IV.

"A child, aged two years, with other symptoms of *teething*, had severe purging and vomiting, which continuing three days, reduced him to the lowest degree of weakness. I directed five grains of Columbo-root, and three grains of *pulv. e. chel. c. c.* to be taken every two hours. The vomiting was stopped by the first dose; the looseness was soon after checked, and in two days the child recovered his usual strength."

These experiments (says Dr. Percival) shew, that the Columbo does not belong to the class of heating bitters; it may, therefore, be used with propriety and advantage in pulmonary consumptions, and in hectic cases, to correct acrimony, and strengthen the organs of digestion. The Peruvian bark often proves oppressive to the stomach in such disorders, and sometimes excites a violent looseness, but the Columbo-root occasions no disturbance, and agrees very well with a milk diet. It has the advantage over all other bitters, in preventing acidities in the stomach*.

* Dr. Aikin, in his edition of the *Materia Medica*, after mentioning its efficacy in correcting putridity of bile, its great repute with the European practitioners in the East Indies, in disorders of the stomach, and bowels, the *cholera morbus*, and the experiments of Dr. Percival, concludes by saying, "the experience of other practitioners has confirmed its utility in these cases."

Dr. Woodville in his interesting work, the *Medical Botany*, thus speaks of it: "Practitioners in the East Indies, first borrowed the use of this root from the natives of those countries where it is produced, and found it of great service in most disorders of the stomach and bowels, and especially in cholera, so very fatal in hot climates. It stopped the vomiting in this complaint more speedily and effectually than any other medicine, an effect attributed to its property of correcting the putrid disposition of the bile. It has been successfully

The medicinal virtues of this fine root, are better preserved in the elegant form of a tincture than any other preparation could give; this avoids also the unpleasantness of swallowing the powder. The opinion of Dr. Percival sanctions the form of a tincture; "it yields its virtues most perfectly to spirits of wine." And Dr. Aikin says; "it gives out its virtues more completely to spirituous than to watery menstrua."

The present is an *improved* tincture of the Columbo-root, for it combines with the Columbo, such ingredients from the vegetable Materia Medica, as our first writers have strongly recommended to accompany the Columbo. The present tincture, therefore, so prepared, may be reckoned one of our finest aromatic bitters.

This patent and proprietary medicine continues to be sold, wholesale and retail by the importer and proprietor, William Lewis, at his warehouse, No. 14, Charles Street, Covent Garden, in bottles, price seven shillings each, including the medicine duty, or three bottles for 1*l.* medicine duty, and package box included. Each bottle is accompanied with full and ample printed *directions*, so that each one may adapt it to his own particular case.

N.B. Captains of ships, and merchants, who wish to take a consignment to the West Indies, America, the Cape, Brazils, the coast of the Mediterranean, and Turkey, will find that the

used in this country not only in bilious complaints, but in want of tone in the stomach."

Dr. Geo. Wallis, the learned editor of Sydenham, and of Motherby's Medical Dict. 5th edit. 1801, thus speaks of it: "the Columbo-root is particularly useful when the stomach is languid, the appetite defective, or when a nausea attends. It is almost a specific in cholera morbus, nausea, vomiting, purging, dysentery, bilious fever, indigestion, want of appetite, acidity, and most disorders of the stomach and bowels. It is powerfully sedative, corroborant, and antiseptic. It exceeds the bark in preserving the bile from putridity, and in correcting its begun putrescency. A tincture of this root is the most useful remedy known for moderating the retchings so commonly attendant on pregnant women during the first months of pregnancy. It powerfully and speedily relieves cholicky pains, from flatulence, or from indigestion."

esteemed reputation of the Columbo, in its improved state, will cause it to turn out a valuable article of commerce, for it will be found to be highly beneficial in many of the alarming and destructive maladies so frequent in hot climates. There are proper packages for exportation always ready, and a liberal allowance to those merchants and captains who give orders. It must be needless to mention, that it will keep any length of time, and in any climate.

It is also sold in London, retail, by Mr. Lewis's appointment, by Randall, *Royal Exchange*; Ward, *Middle Row, Holborn*; Hawkins, 13, *Old Bond Street*; and Barry, 2, *Bridge Street, Westminster-bridge*. And in the country, at

<i>Andover,</i>	by Maude.	<i>Maidstone,</i>	by Blake.
<i>Basingstoke,</i>	— Hulbert.	<i>Marlborough,</i>	— Harold.
<i>Bath,</i>	— Binns, Crutwell,	<i>Newbury,</i>	— Fuller.
	Keene, Meyler.	<i>Newport Pagnell,</i>	— Innwood.
<i>Brentwood,</i>	— Tyler.	<i>Northampton,</i>	— Dicey, Edge.
<i>Bristol,</i>	— Bulgin, Mills, Norton	<i>Oxford,</i>	— Munday, Jones.
<i>Buckingham,</i>	— Seeley.	<i>Reading,</i>	— Cowslade.
<i>Chatham,</i>	— Townson.	<i>Rochester,</i>	— Dixon.
<i>Chelmsford,</i>	— Meggy & Chalk,	<i>Salisbury,</i>	— Brodie.
	Stanes.	<i>Sherborn,</i>	— Crutwell, Langdon.
<i>Colchester,</i>	— Marsden.	<i>Taunton,</i>	Joggett.
<i>Crewkerne,</i>	— Jolliffe.	<i>Wells</i>	— Evill.
<i>Dunstable,</i>	— Queenborough.	<i>Wickham,</i>	— Edes.
<i>Exeter,</i>	— Trewman, Woolmer	<i>Uxbridge,</i>	— Lake.
<i>Gravesend,</i>	— Dadd.		