

Observations on the internal use of the solanum or nightshade / By Thomas Gataker.

Contributors

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OBSERVATIONS

On the Internal Use of the

SOLANUM

OR

NIGHTSHADE.

By THOMAS GATAKER,

Surgeon to WESTMINSTER Hospital.

THE THIRD EDITION,



Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall; and
sold by M. COOPER, in Pater-noster-Row.

MDCC LVII.

(Price Six Pence.)

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TH E chief Part of the following Account relating to the internal Use of the Plant *Nightshade*, was lately read at a Meeting of the Royal Society; and, from the favourable Reception which it then met with, I flatter'd myself it might deserve some Notice in the next Publication of their Works. Finding however that an Opportunity of this kind will not occur in a considerable Time, and receiving daily Enquiries concerning the Manner of administering the Medicine, and the Operations which usually result from it, I am induced to give the Account in this Manner to the Public. Thus I shall hope at once to answer the Enquiries abovementioned, and at the same time more effectually promote my original Design of communicating these Particulars. This,

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I presume, might serve as a sufficient Reason for the present Publication : But I must beg leave to mention a Circumstance or two in regard to my general Conduct in this Affair ; as it will not, I hope, appear unreasonable that a Man should wish to avoid Censure, where he renounces all Pretensions to private Interest and Advantage.

As soon as I had discovered the common Operations of this Medicine, and found that, under certain Regulations, it might be given with perfect Safety, and, as I imagined, with great Benefit to Mankind, I immediately made them known to my Acquaintance ; but as the Extent of such a Communication could not sufficiently diffuse the Knowledge of these Particulars, I was desired and readily prevailed upon to give an Account of them to the Royal Society, as has been customary on like Occasions.

In this Account my Design was to show, that the Medicine might be used with great Safety, and probably with great Advantage—to point out the Method of administering it, and to describe the Operations which it usually had upon the human Body. By this means I imagined that I should furnish the judicious Practitioner

tioner with a very valuable Acquisition, and, by the Directions which I gave for its Use, should not only facilitate his Experiments, and enable him to use the Medicine with Propriety, but at the same time should prevent in some degree an injudicious, ineffectual, or perhaps dangerous Application of it by Persons of less Skill and Judgment.

As to all the Uses which a Medicine of such Powers might be applied to, I did not pretend to determine them. I rather thought that the united Experience of others would be the most ready and the most candid Method of pursuing such a Design; and I chose neither to confine the Virtues of the Medicine to my own Advantage, or Opportunities of Practice, nor to rely upon my own Knowledge or Judgment to ascertain them.

For these Reasons I was little solicitous about embellishing my Account with Histories of particular Cases. I mentioned indeed two of a cancerous Nature, for Reasons which are explained in the Account, and I have now added some others, as well to serve as a Specimen of the salutary Effects which may be expected from the Medicine, as to illustrate

and confirm what I have advanced of its common Methods of operating.

The Cases which are now added are not selected from many others as particular Cases, but are designed as an unreserved Account of the State of those Patients who are now under my Inspection in the Hospital, and are either taking the Medicine, or, after having taken it with Success, are ready to be discharged from thence. The Event of some of these must at present be necessarily in doubt ; * but if, as will appear by the first of them, the Medicine is capable of restoring Use to the Limbs of a Person who had been Bed-ridden several Months—if it is capable of removing the Anguish of constant and violent Pains, which nothing else had relieved, and of giving Rest, Strength and Appetite to one who had long been a Stranger to all these Enjoyments, it must be some Satisfaction, and, I presume, of some Use to know what were the Means that accomplish'd these desirable Ends. Nor can it, I think, be reasonably objected to the receiving this Information, that the Sore upon the Leg, which is one of the Grievances this poor Creature labour'd under, (see p. 15.) is not yet quite healed.

* In this Edition a farther Account is given of these Cases.

I must beg leave to add, that tho' I doubt not great Services will accrue from the internal Use of the *Nightshade*, yet, like other Medicines of much Efficacy, it will be productive of some Inconveniencies, and liable to many Disadvantages. It will probably be employed too promiscuously, either where there is no Indication to direct its Use, or where it is absolutely improper. It will sometimes disagree where the Use of it seems reasonable, and in other Instances it will prove ineffectual, not merely as it fails to cure, but even in its common Operations ; Circumstances to which all Medicines are liable from the Peculiarity of different Constitutions, or even from a temporary Difference in the same Constitution. It must be expected that the Medicine will be given by some, not only in Cases that are improper, but at unfit Times of the Disease, or in improper Doses, where it might otherwise be serviceable ; and that it will sometimes be mixed with Medicines which may interrupt its Operation, while in many Instances it may be rendered much less effectual for Want of being assisted by other Things. These however are such Disadvantages as every Medicine of much Efficacy is subject to, and therefore I would imply no more by these Observations, than that
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the Infusion of *Nightshade* is not to be given indiscriminately by every Person in every Disease, but requires Attention, Judgment, and Discretion in the Management of it.

I shall conclude this Introduction by hoping, that however I may err in my Judgment in this Affair, I shall be justified in my Intentions; and I must beg leave to acquaint those who may try the Medicine with Care and Impartiality, that I shall esteem it as a Favour to receive any useful Intelligence relating to it.

The following is the Account, with some Additions, which was read at the Royal Society, May 26, 1757.

ABOUT half a Year ago I read a Memoir, published in the *Bibliothèque des beaux Arts & des Sciences*, in which an Account is given of a Disorder declared to have been cancerous, and to have been cured by an Infusion of *Deadly Nightshade*. I determined to make some Experiments with this Plant; but as the Season of the Year would not then permit me to procure any that was fresh, I was obliged to make use of some *Nightshade* that had been gathered

gathered and was dry'd. Soon after I had begun to give it, with great Care and Caution, to three or four Patients, it was discover'd to be the Species of Nightshade called *Garden Nightshade*, and not that which is distinguished by the Name of *Deadly*, and which is the Sort recommended in the Memoir abovemention'd. Finding however very remarkable Effects from the former, and not being then able to procure any of the other Kind, I pursued my Experiments with the *Garden Nightshade*. The Cases in which I first try'd the Operation of this Plant, besides the two cancerous Cases hereafter to be related, were foul or painful Ulcers, obstinate Pains in particular Parts of the Body, scorbutic Eruptions, and other common Disorders: But as these were seldom attended with any very particular Malignity, when I say, that upon taking the Infusion the Ulcers healed, the Pains ceased, and other Complaints were removed; I ought likewise to acknowledge, that the same Purposes might possibly have been answer'd by other Medicines, tho' in several Instances this succeeded where the common Means had failed.

By these frequent Experiments I became better acquainted with the common Operations of
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the Medicine, and with the proper Manner of giving it. I found from repeated Trials, made with great Caution and Safety to the Patient, that so small a Quantity as one Grain-weight of the Leaf, infused in about an Ounce of boiling Water, and the Liquor afterwards strained from the Leaf and taken at Bed-time, would sometimes have a very considerable Effect; but that two or three Grains seldom failed either to vomit, sweat, or purge the Patient moderately, or to increase the Quantity of Urine. It sometimes occasions a Headach, Giddiness, and, probably in consequence of these, a Dimness; Symptoms which are not constantly to be expected, and when they happen they generally cease or abate after the first or second Dose: A Drowsiness or Disposition to sleep, particularly upon the first Use of the Nightshade, is another Circumstance which not unusually happens. In other respects, the most common Effects that I have observ'd to ensue upon taking this Medicine were a Heat or Warmth diffused in a few Hours over the Body, a plentiful Sweat succeeding this Heat, and a gentle Purging the next Day: If a Sweat did not break out, an extraordinary Discharge of Urine was the Consequence, and sometimes followed likewise by a Purging. One or more of the natural Evacuations were almost always increased.

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. These are the general Effects proceeding from the internal Use of the Nightshade, and are such as I am persuaded will correspond with the Experiments made by others ; as much at least as can be expected from any Medicine of Efficacy given to Persons of different Constitutions and under different Circumstances and States of Health.

As to all the Uses which this Medicine may be applied to, Time and much Experience only can ascertain them. I have already try'd it in some Disorders with Advantage, as I took notice before ; but as a circumstantial Account of particular Cases may be desired, I will relate the Effects of the Infusion in a few Instances.

I shall begin with two Cases of a cancerous Nature ; not with a View to establish an Opinion that this Medicine is a Specific for that Complaint, nor indeed would these Cases sufficiently authorise such an Opinion ; but as they were the first in which I try'd the Medicine, as they were likewise the only ones that, till lately, I took a regular Account of ; and as the particular Case which induced me to use the Medicine at all is said to have been a Cancer, and

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radically cured by an Infusion of the *Deadly Nightshade*.

One of these was in a Woman about 50 Years of Age, a Patient in the *Westminster* Hospital. She had a Sore under her Right-eye, which began by a slight Accident upon the Part about a Year and half before she came under my Care. The Sore, which was as broad as a Half-crown, consisted of several indigested, foul Ulcerations, intermix'd with callous Eminences, or hard Knots rising in particular Parts of it, and the Whole was encircled by an unequal jagged Edge. Below the Sore the Cheek was discolour'd by a deep red Appearance, and was swelled. She had suffered considerable and frequent Pains in the Part many Months. The common Methods were try'd for her Relief ineffectually. Amongst other Things the Solution of Mercury, and other Mercurials were used so as to produce a slight Salivation. The Sore however appeared in full as bad a State as has been just represented, when I began to give her the Infusion of *Garden Nightshade*: In a Month after taking it the Pain intirely ceased, and in little more than another Month the Ulcerations were healed, and the Callosities subsided, leaving only a slight

flight Soreness or Tendernefs of the Skin, with two or three scurfy Inequalities in the Upper-part of it. No Application was used to the Sore except common softening Dressings to keep it from the Air.

As the Woman was quite free from Pain and saw very little Appearance on the Part more than was natural, and as she was very desirous to go into the Country to her Family, I could not prevail on her to stay, unnecessarily as she thought, any longer, in order to confirm the Cure, and prevent a Return of the Symptoms.

The Medicine, in this Instance, occasioned at first a Sicknefs and Giddinefs, producing a plentiful Sweat in the Night, and a moderate Purging in the Morning, with some Increase of Urine. It continued to sweat her considerably as long as she took it, preserving also in general a lax State of her Bowels, and acting sometimes as a Diuretic. She never took more than an Infusion of two Grains at a time. I have not yet had any Account of her since she left the Hospital.

The other Patient who suffered under this Disease, was a Woman above 70 Years of Age, and in the same Hospital. She came there about five Months ago with a very large and bad-looking Sore on her Left-Breast, with callous Edges surrounding the Ulcer, and Hardnesses in other Parts. This Complaint began above a Year before with a small hard Knot, which increasing, broke into a Sore, and for some Months had gradually spread broader and corroded deeper. She began to take the Infusion of *Garden Nightshade*, after a Dose or two of purging Physic, and in less than three Months, using only common Applications to the Part, the Sore was reduced to a very inconsiderable Size, without any remaining Hardnesses at the Edges of it, and had the Appearance of healing in a Week or ten Days. The Hardnesses about the Breast were likewise diminished. In this Situation, she was attack'd with feverish Complaints, a slight Difficulty of breathing, and an inflammatory Swelling on her Left-hand. Upon these Accounts it was judg'd necessary to suspend the Use of the Infusion ; and during this Interval the Surface of the Sore enlarg'd and grew foul again. Soon after, she lost her Appetite, and was affected with a general Weakness of Body, arising probably in some degree from a long

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Confinement in the Hospital. All these Circumstances, join'd to her Age, afforded no Encouragement to try the Medicine again, nor Hopes of Success from any other Method †.

When this Woman began to take the Infusion it made her giddy, and sweat her very considerably. It continued to sweat her moderately, but never affected her either by Urine or Stool, and some time before she left off taking the Infusion, it produced no visible Alteration in any of the natural Evacuations, tho' the Dose was increased to five Grains. I was afterwards concerned that I had not increased the Dose still more, as her Strength was not at that time impaired ; but the Progress of the Cure was so remarkably favourable in the Method she was then in, and the Dose being larger than I had ever given before, I omitted to do what might possibly have been of service to her.

As I neglected till lately to give a strict Attention to the Particulars of each Case wherein this Medicine has been used (except in the two preceding Instances) I cannot properly enter into a Detail of them : For this Reason,

† She is since dead.

as well as to avoid the Imputation of giving partial Accounts, I shall at present only mention such others as are now in the Hospital, and were this Day (June 21) examined there.

The first of the Patients is a Woman of 35 Years of Age. She was admitted into the Hospital about seven Months ago. She had then a very great Inflammation and Swelling of her Foot, Leg, and Knee, attended with a Fever, besides a very large Sore on the lower Part of of the Leg, which began two Years before, and had gradually been growing worse. The Sore had the most malignant Appearance, discharged a great deal of a sharp thin Humour, and was extremely painful. The Swelling and Inflammation were considerably abated after she had been in the Hospital some time, but the Sore continued in a very bad State, having extended itself from the lower Part of the Calf to the Heel, and from one Ankle backwards to the other. The Fever was sometimes very intense, and violent Purgings with other Symptoms intervened, which reduced her Strength and left very little Hopes of her Recovery. In this Situation she was about a Month ago, having been bed-ridden five Months, unable to feed or help herself, and the last six Weeks

Weeks having never enjoyed one Hour's Sleep at a time, on account of violent Pains which she felt in her Head and Limbs. She complained also of a great Weight and Heaviness in her Head, and at times was not sensible. The first Dose she took of the Infusion of *Garden* Nightshade affected her in a Manner, to use her own Words, as if she had drank too much strong Liquor. It then threw her into a plentiful Sweat, and purged her twice. The second and third Doses operated as the first, except that they occasioned no Sensation of Giddiness. After the third Dose her Pains were much lessened, and she was able to walk with a very little Assistance. In eight Days she was perfectly free from Pain, could walk very well about the Ward, had an exceeding good Appetite, and her Strength was remarkably increased, as was soon evident; for on the twelfth Day after she had made use of this Medicine, she, without my leave, and imprudently in regard to her Leg, walked near two Miles. The Sore however healed incredibly fast, and as it is at present quite easy, and continues mending, it probably will not be long before it is well. It is now a Month and some Days since she began the Infusion, and except the remaining Sore she has not had a Complaint from

from the eighth Day after she began the Medicine. She has continued the Use of the Infusion, though generally at the Distance of a Night or two from each Dose. It still sweats her moderately, and sometimes purges her gently. It has always increased the Quantity of her Water, but particularly since the Sweats have decreased. Another Circumstance has likewise lately occurred in her favour which had not happened the five preceding Months. She began with a Grain of the Leaf, and never increased the Dose to above a Grain and a half; the Infusion still preserving in a great Degree its Powers, notwithstanding the long Use of it, an Observation which may frequently be made of this Medicine, though hardly of any other †.

The next Patient is a Man 68 Years of Age. About five Months ago he received a violent Bruise on his Loins and Hips, by falling from a Height as he was carrying a great Weight, under which he was pressed, while his Body was bent double. In some time he recovered from this Accident, except that it left a Weakness, and sometimes a Stiffness

† Since the first Edition of this Pamphlet, published three Weeks ago, the Sore has gradually lessen'd, and is now almost heal'd; tho' the large Extent and unfavourable Situation of the Sore have made it very difficult to procure Skin enough to cover it. She is in other Respects perfectly well.

about those Parts. Being afterwards seized with violent Pains in his Back and Knees he was unable to stand upright, or to walk, but with difficulty; and not without the Assistance of a Stick: Nor could he attempt to bend his Knees without occasioning great Pain. He came out of the Country, and was admitted into the Hospital about seven Weeks ago, in the Condition just represented. After having been there a Fortnight without receiving any Advantage, he took the Infusion of *GARDEN Nightshade*. The first Dose, a Grain of the Leaf, had no Effect; but two Grains the next Night sweat him plentifully, made him a little giddy, and purged him three or four times in the Morning. The third Dose made him sick, which was the only time it did so, and operated in other Respects as the preceding. He had little or no Complaint after the fifth Dose, but nevertheless he repeated the same twice or thrice at the Distance of two or three Days between each. These acted like the others, and they all occasioned some increase of Water. He never took more than two Grains for a Dose. He has left off the Infusion above a Fortnight and continues well, except sometimes the Weakness or slight

Stiffness of his Back; the Consequences, as was before observed, of his Bruise §.

The third Patient is a middle-aged Man, who was received into the Hospital about a Month ago, with a Swelling and several painful Sores on one of his Legs. He has taken the Infusion of *Deadly Nightshade* three Weeks. It worked chiefly by Urine, though sometimes it sweat him slightly. As he was generally costive, he took occasionally some purging Medicine. The Dose in this Man was increased from one Grain to twelve, without producing any Sickness, Giddiness, or other Effect than what has been just related, except that the last Dose, twelve Grains, sweat him plentifully several Hours. His Leg is well. This Case may serve as much to shew the Difference of the Dose necessary in different Constitutions as for any other Purpose, since it is probable, that Rest, proper Applications, and other internal Medicines, might have succeeded here equally well with the Infusion *.

The fourth Patient is a Girl, 16 Years of Age; she has been in the Hospital a Month. When she was admitted, she had a large scrophulous Sore on one of her Thighs, which had

§ This Man continues well.

* He continues well.

been troublesome to her several Months, and another on the Foot, with an Enlargement of the Bones of the Foot. She has taken the Infusion of *Deadly Nightshade* three Weeks. It operated by Urine considerably, and generally purged once or twice in the Morning; and two or three Nights it sweated her. The Dose was increased to four Grains. The Sore on her Thigh is well; that on the Foot much the same as it was, and must necessarily continue for some time, as there is a Piece of Bone which must come away.

The fifth Case is that of a young Woman who came into the Hospital four Months ago, with a large Sore on her Leg, which had a Tendency to mortify. She had another exceeding painful Sore under her Arm, and it was with great Difficulty that either of them could be made to digest. After a considerable time the Sores were brought into a better State.—At last that under the Arm healed, and the other on the Leg was reduced into a narrow Compass; but still there remained an obstinate small Ulcer, which no Application or Medicine seemed to have any Effect on. During the last two Months, her Body has been covered with a scorbutic Eruption. The breaking out of this was probably the Reason

of the Sores having grown better ; but as it was constantly very troublesome to her, and appeared as bad as the most inveterate Itch, 'twas necessary she should, if possible, be relieved. Most part of the time she has been troubled with a Pain in her Head and Stomach, a Lowness of Spirits, and Loss of Appetite. Finding no Advantage from any thing she took, though some of the Medicines produced a gentle Perspiration, she began the Infusion of *Deadly Nightshade*. The first Dose, one Grain, had no effect ; the second, two Grains, purged her twice ; the third, three Grains, made her sick and giddy, and threw her into a profuse Sweat. She has now taken six Doses. The Eruptions almost intirely disappear, except some few small ones about the Arms, and several upon the Hands, where they form themselves into Boils, with a great deal of well-digested Matter in them like large Pustules of the Small-pox. The Pain in her Stomach is at present removed. She continues the Medicine †.

The sixth, and the last Patient which I shall mention at present, is a Man who was brought into the Hospital about a Month ago, with several large Wounds made on his Leg by

† She is well.

the Bite of a Leopard. The Leg was very much inflamed and swelled, and a common symptomatic Fever attended ; but in ten or twelve Days these Symptoms went off, and the Wounds were in a good State. In a few Days after he was seized with a violent Pain in the Shoulder, Arm, Hand, Thigh, Leg, and Foot, of the Side opposite to the wounded Side ; so that he was quite unable to move those Parts: Nor was he much more capable of Motion in the other Side, having a considerable Pain in that Shoulder, Arm and Hand. Having continued in this State four Days with great Heat and other feverish Symptoms, he was bled (the Blood very fizy) and took an Infusion of one Grain of the Leaf of *Deadly* Nightshade at Night, and the same the next Morning. It threw him into a very plentiful Sweat, which continued more than two Days, without taking anything more than common diluting Liquors. He was considerably easier, but his Heat being still too much, and complaining of a Tightness over his Breast, he was bled again (the Blood still very fizy) and not having had a Stool he took an opening Medicine. The fifth Day he had no Complaint but in his Hands, which were both very painful, and the Sweats having now ceased more than 24 Hours, he

he took the same Quantity of the Infusion once again Night and Morning, which produced the same Degree of Perspiration as before for two Days. He has taken only one Dose since. This is the 10th Day, and he is now free from any Complaint, except in one Wrist. The Medicine never made him at all sick or giddy, nor occasioned much Alteration in the Quantity of his Water §.

Upon the Whole, whether there is any Specific Property in this Plant, either for the Cure or the Alleviation of cancerous Disorders, or whether its Efficacy may be more particularly useful in the Removal of other Diseases, I will not yet presume to determine with Confidence. It would as ill become a Man of Candour to say more of a Medicine than it deserved, as it would to conceal or confine its Virtues when they were once ascertained: But from the Effects which I have already seen of this Plant; from considering the Powers which this simple Production of Nature has on the common Discharges of the Body; and from reflecting how trifling a Quantity of it, infused only, and the Substance not taken, is capable of producing these great Effects; — From

§ This Man had a slight Return of his Pains, which were remov'd in a few Days by a Repetition of the same Method. He has since recover'd his Strength and been perfectly well.

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all these Considerations, I am led to imagine, that an extensive Use may be made of this Medicine, as a powerful Promoter of most of the natural Discharges of the Body, exclusive of any specific Properties, which by future Observations may be found with Certainty to reside in it.

We are now in a Way to determine this : Several Gentlemen, induced by the Trials which I have made, being desirous to prove the Effects of the Infusion by their own Experience. In the mean time, as this celebrated Society have thought the single Case related in the *Bibliothèque des beaux Arts & des Sciences* to be worthy their Attention, I have presumed to offer the Result of a more extensive Use of this Medicine; and thus far I can venture to assert at present, that it may be given with great Safety in the Manner which I have recommended for its Use.

I shall only beg leave to add, that the Circumstances which I have mention'd are designed to assist the Endeavours of others; and if any one valuable Purpose shall be answer'd by our Enquiries, I hope I shall not want an Apology for giving this early Intelligence, without waiting for more Facts to illustrate what has been said.

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I observed in the Beginning of the preceding Account, that an Infusion of one Grain-weight of the Leaf would sometimes have a very considerable Effect, and that two or three Grains seldom failed to increase some of the natural Evacuations. As this Medicine, however, like all others of great Efficacy, acts very differently in different Constitutions, it may not be amiss perhaps in some Cases to begin with half a Grain, and repeat the Dose sooner, or increase the Quantity of it occasionally, according as it operates and agrees, and according to the Strength of the Patient, and the Nature or State of the Disease. In general it should be taken at Bed-time, and repeated only every second or third Night.

If the Patient is hot and thirsty in the Night, after taking the Infusion, some small diluting Liquor should be provided to drink warm, and encourage a Discharge by Perspiration or Urine.

If Costiveness prevails, tho' the Medicine frequently has the opposite Effect, this Circumstance must be particularly attended to.

In some full or sanguine Constitutions, a Purge and the Loss of some Blood may be thought necessary before the Infusion is given: But as
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it is imagined, that no one will administer a Medicine of this Efficacy without some Knowledge of Physic, most Directions of this kind will, it is presumed, be best supply'd occasionally.

As to the Sort of Nightshade which should be made use of, I cannot discover any essential Difference in the Effects between the *Garden* and the *Deadly* Nightshade; nor do I believe it of much Importance whether the Leaf be fresh or dry. I have not yet tried the other Species (the Bitter Sweet) sufficiently to speak of it with Certainty, but am inclined to think from the use I have hitherto made of it, that it partakes very much of the Virtues of the other two. This Similarity of Effects in Plants of very different Appearances, is a Circumstance as remarkable as the Effects themselves are extraordinary.

To these Observations I shall subjoin, as a Subject of Curiosity, an Account of the various Purposes for which the Nightshade has been formerly employed.

There are three different Plants, Natives of *England*, which are known by the Name of Nightshade.

1. (1) Common, or Garden Nightshade.

This Plant, tho' of late Years it has fallen into Neglect, was formerly used in Medicine externally for several Diseases; (*a*) in Poul-tices, both alone and compounded, for Disorders of the Eyes, Head-achs, Heart-burns, and King's Evil. Its expressed Juice was also used for the same Purposes, and for acrimoni-ous Defluxions and Pains in the Ear. In the same Form it has been looked on as an ex-cellent Remedy for Inflammations of the vene-real Kind, (*b*) and for Ulcers. (*c*) It has been applied to the Wrists, and given in Gargles, and, as it is said, with Success in Fevers. A Lini-ment made of the same, compounded with Houseleek and White of Eggs, applied warm, has been thought of wonderful Efficacy in cold Tumors of the Breast. The whole (*d*) Plant, and a Water distilled from it, is recommended in Inflammations, Scirrhuses, &c.

(1) Solanum Officinatum, C. B.

————— Vulgare, Park.

————— Hortense, Ger.

————— Hortense seu vulgare, J. Bauh.

————— Nigrum, Linn.

(*a*) Dioscor. Lib. 4. C. 71.

(*b*) Raj. Hist. Plant. 673. Trag. Hist. Plant. 305.

(*c*) Cæsalpin. de Plant. 213.

(*d*) Linn. Mat. Med. Sect. 94.

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Some Authors (*e*) disapprove the internal Use of this Plant, and *Wepfer* (*f*) gives an Account of three Children poisoned by it; yet *Dioscorides* mentions it as esculent, which seems impossible, if he meant the same Plant that is now called the Garden Nightshade, as must be evident by the preceding History. Other botanical Writers mention it also as used in Food; but as they in general are mere Transcribers from him, no Strefs could be laid on their Testimony, if one of them, (*g*) who lived in the sixteenth Century, had not asserted the same Thing, as it were, of his own Knowledge. His Words are, *A multis Nationibus estur in oleris*, and he cannot well be supposed to mistake the Plant. The Curious perhaps may think it worth while to enquire farther into this Affair; but however this Mistake, if it be a Mistake, may have arisen, and however unfit this Plant may be for Food, yet it appears from an Author (*h*) of great Accuracy and Knowledge in Plants, that it was commonly made use of by Physicians internally in many Cases, as Inflammations of the Stomach and Bowels, for Heat of Urine, and for the Stone.

(*e*) Raj. loc. cit. Fuchf. Hist. Plant. 729.

(*f*) De Cicut. Aquat. 229.

(*g*) Ruellius de nat. Stirp. lib. 3. c. 109.

(*h*) Cæsalpin. de Plant. 213.

The Effect of it was Sweating ; a Water of it, but he does not say how obtained, being given with Wormwood to the Quantity of three Ounces.

2. (2) Bitter Sweet, or woody Nightshade.

It does not appear that this Plant is described either by *Theophrastus* or *Dioscorides*. In latter times it is frequently mentioned, and has been used externally by way of Poultice to assuage Pains in the Breast, and to disperse Tumors ; (i) internally for the Dropsy, for the Jaundice, for Contusions and Wounds, to dissolve coagulated Blood, and to open Obstructions in the Liver and Spleen. It is said to be Diuretic and Purgative, particularly of the Bile. *Linnaeus*, who, as he declares, has been very cautious in attributing Virtues to Medicines, of which he had not sufficient Proof, either from his own Experience, or that of credible Witnesses, recommends (k) two Ounces of the Stalks of it (but does not say whether by Decoction or Infusion) in Contusions, Rheumatisms, Jaundice, Pleurisy and Asthma,

(2) *Solanum scandens* seu *dulcamara*, C. B. Lin.

——— *Lignosum* seu *dulcamara*, Park.

——— *Amara dulcis*, Ger.

——— *Gycypicos* seu *amara dulcis*. Bauh.

(i) Raj. Hist. Plant. 671.

(k) Mat. Med. § 95.

as a most powerful Remedy, though seldom used.

A late * Writer observes, that the Efficacy of this Plant in purifying the Blood was unknown till *Linnæus* made Use of the Stalks : Before that time the Leaves only were prescribed, and even now he says, few are acquainted with its Virtues, as it is generally given in too small a Dose.

3. (3) Deadly Nightshade, or Dwale. Ger.

Theophrastus describes certain Plants under the Name of Strychnos, one of which is supposed by some Authors to be this Nightshade ; but the Description being very imperfect, and some of the Notes not agreeing with it, it seems impossible to decide any thing about it with Certainty. The same perhaps may be said in relation to *Dioscorides*, and this Difficulty has forced *Cæsalpinus* (1) to suppose that he has joined the Description of two Plants together. However, this is a Point of very little Consequence ; since neither of those ancient Authors attribute any medicinal Virtues to the Plant in question.

* J. G. Beyerstein *Obstac. Medicin. Amanit. Academ. vol. 3. pag. 70.*

(3) *Solanum melanocerasus*, C. B.

Belladonna, Clus.

Atropa, Lin.

(1) *De Plantis*, 213.

Later Writers (*m*) make frequent mention of it, and give many Instances of its poisonous Effects ; particularly upon Children. Every part of this Plant may be used externally, but the fresh Leaves of it, bruised and applied to the Breast, have been found very efficacious in cancerous Humours, if we may believe the Testimony of a very ingenious and candid Writer (*n*) who first made the Discovery. An Infusion of its Berries given, internally operates by Sweat and has been used with great Success in Inflammations (*o*) and Dysenteries (*p*). Vinegar is said to be an Antidote against its poisonous quality.

These Extracts, for which I am oblig'd to a very worthy and ingenious Friend (Mr. *Stillingfleet*) who took the trouble of collecting them, may serve to shew the Character which the Nightshade had acquired formerly.

It will appear by them that many and great Virtues have been attributed to this Plant, though the Uses of it, and its common Operations upon the Body, have been described

(*m*) Raj. Hist. Plant. 670. Bod. a Stapel. comm. in Theophr. 1078. 2.

(*n*) Willughby apud Raj. Hist. Plant. 680.

(*o*) Tragus Stirp. Hist. 305.

(*p*) Raj. Hist. Plant. Linn. Mat. Med. §. 95.

with too little Exactness or Certainty to afford much Instruction for Practice.

I find likewise that the Nightshade has been recommended by other Writers: (*q*) *Juncker* particularly speaks of two Cases of Cancers cured by it, and recommends the future Use of it; but upon the Whole we meet with very little Satisfaction upon the Subject. One Notion seems to have prevailed in general, that there was some Specific, or very powerful Property in Nightshade, for the Cure or Relief of cancerous Disorders. But however strongly this Notion has prevailed, it has by no means been properly determined. A modern Writer, Dr. *Lambergen*, a professor of Physic Abroad, gave the History of a Case some time ago serving to confirm this Opinion. In the Year 1754, he printed, as I am informed, at *Groningen*, an inaugural Oration, to which was added an Account of a Cancer in a Woman's Breast that had been radically cured by the Infusion of the Deadly Nightshade.

In the *Bibliothèque des beaux Arts & des Sciences* for the Months of *January*, *February* and *March*, 1755, there is an Abstract of this History. It was the latter of these which I

(*q*) *Conspect. Chirurg.* pag. 314.

read, and which determined me to try the Effects of this Plant. I shall not enter here into a Detail of the Particulars related by Dr. *Lambergen*. 'Tis sufficient to observe, that it was the united Opinion of the Doctor and three other Physicians, that the Case related was a confirmed Cancer. We are afterwards informed that the Disorder was cured by an Infusion of the *Deadly* Nightshade, or *Belladonna*, and that the Patient had remained perfectly free from the Complaint eight Years, when this Account was originally printed. It is however a Circumstance very extraordinary, that so many Years had elapsed without any other Cure appearing to have been effected by the same Person, and by the same Medicine. It is hardly to be supposed that Dr. *Lambergen* had not made some other Trials in an Affair so important to his own Reputation, as well as to the Happiness of thousands. Yet there is great Reason to imagine he had not. If he had repeated his Experiments and they had failed, he never could have offered this Case to the Public afterwards; if he had succeeded again, he certainly would have confirmed his first Account by the Addition of other Instances. It seems farther probable that he never did repeat the Experiment, from his Silence about the remarkable Effects which the Infusion is

now

now generally found to have upon the natural Evacuations of the Body.

I have lately endeavoured to procure other Intelligence relating to this Affair, but have not yet met with any sufficiently satisfactory to be related. We shall soon however supply this Want by the more certain Testimony of our own Experience. The Medicine is now introduced into our Hospitals, where its real Uses will be publickly known; where Prejudice or want of Abilities will be less likely to mislead than the Reliance upon any one Man's Judgment; and where Facts are not so liable to be misrepresented as in a more confined and private Practice, for the Enhancement of Gain or the Support of false Pretensions.

I am far from being convinced that the Infusion of Nightshade will cure a confirmed Cancer, though I think it is highly probable that great Advantages will be found from it in many Cases approaching to Cancers. Whatever be the Power of the Medicine in this Respect, I have the Satisfaction to think that Success attends the Use of it in many obstinate Disorders, and that in Cases where it fails to

cure, it will at least often afford great Ease and Relief: nor has it been subject, as far as my Practice has extended, to produce any lasting ill Consequence.

P O S T S C R I P T, *August 10.*

THE Author of the preceding Observations takes the Opportunity of this Edition to remark, that as Medicines of seemingly the same Properties are sometimes found to act very differently in different Constitutions, the same Circumstance may happen in the Use of the *Garden* and the *Deadly Nightshade*: One of them may in particular Instances agree better and prove more effectual than the other. He desires likewise to observe, that tho' he cannot positively say there is any essential Difference in the usual Effects of these two Plants, he is inclined to think that the *Garden Nightshade* may be rather milder in its Operation than the other; at least he would in general recommend the Trial of that first. Upon the whole, if neither, after a few Trials of them, occasion any Encrease of the natural Evacuations, he would advise a Discontinuance of them, as a Perseverance with enlarged Doses under such Circumstances, might in some Constitutions probably irritate too much; and as he imagines that little Good can be expected from this Medicine, where it does not visibly promote some of the natural Discharges of the Body.

The E N D.