

EXTRACT OF OPIUM DEPRIVED OF NARCOTINE.

I have ascertained by experiments that narcotine is decidedly injurious, if not united with an acid, and that it is exceedingly exciting when so combined. This latter fact M. Orfila has very recently denied, but I still assert the accuracy of my experiments. M. Robiquet be-thought himself to prepare an extract of opium entirely free from this substance, and possessing a decided advantage over the aqueous extract. For this purpose the last-named extract is to be treated with ether, which takes up the whole of the narcotine. It is only fair to acknowledge, however, that many years before M. Robiquet's memoir on the subject, M. Limousin Lamotte obtained the same result by boiling opium in water with resin, filtering and concentrating the liquor.

Mode of preparing this Extract.

Macerate sliced crude opium in cold water: filter and evaporate to the consistence of a thick syrup: digest this with rectified ether, and shake it well before pouring off the ethereal tincture. After separating it, distil in order to get rid of the ether; repeat this operation so long as crystals of narcotine are obtained from the distillation. When the ether no longer acts, evaporate the solution of opium to a pilular consistence.

M. Dublanc has modified this process of M. Robiquet in the following manner:

Take 300 grammes of extract of opium prepared in the cold; dissolve it in 150 grammes of distilled water; pour the solution into a retort, and upon it add 2000 grammes of pure ether. The apparatus is to be arranged for the reception of the products of the distillation, and a gentle heat applied. Having drawn off about 500 grammes of ether, the apparatus is removed,

and the supernatant ether is to be quickly poured off the extract in the retort. Meantime the ether obtained by distillation will serve the purpose of washing the still warm extract; after which, the latter is evaporated to a proper consistence. Lest the ether poured off from the extract after the distillation should leave some narcotine behind in the mass, the concentrated extract is to be dissolved in distilled water and filtered, when minute crystals of narcotine will be seen on the filter mixed with a pulverulent extractive matter, insoluble in the small quantity of water employed to take up the extract. Evaporation is then practised in order to reduce the extract to its usual form. Thus obtained, the extract may be considered as entirely deprived of narcotine. It rapidly imbibes the humidity of the atmosphere; dissolves with facility in water, to which it imparts a much lighter colour than the common extract, and in which it deposits no foreign substance.

A digester may be also employed for the purpose of obtaining the pure extract of opium by means of ether.

Action on the Animal System.

This extract is employed in the same manner as the watery extract of opium.

I have tried it on animals, and it appeared to me to be purely narcotic, and to possess an exactly similar action to, though somewhat weaker than, that of morphia.

I have also used it in medical practice with advantage, particularly in the case of a young Greek physician, with whom the common aqueous extract did not agree. On these accounts I consider the preparation worthy of further attention.