

## THRIDACH,\* OR LACTUCARIUM.

The *lactucarium* of Dr. Duncan, and the thridach of Dr. François, are nothing more than the white, viscid juice of the garden lettuce, (*lactuca sativa hortensis*,) procured without the aid of heat at the flowering time of the plant. It has been employed in Britain for many years, and its properties are described in most of the British pharmacopœias and dispensatories.

*Physical and Chemical Properties.*

The juice in question, obtained by incision, is bitter, and soon concretes and turns brown; it becomes hard and brittle like gum, but readily returns to a pasty consistence if exposed to the open air. Preserved in a well-stopped bottle, it gives out a slight and transitory ammoniacal smell. Evaporated at a gentle heat, it retains the peculiar odour of the plant, and has a strong flavour.

When dried, it attracts the moisture of the atmosphere, being in this distinguished from the extract of lettuce prepared by the ordinary process with heat, which continues to be dry in the open air. Dissolved in distilled water and filtered, the solution is clear and brownish yellow. It reddens turnsol paper, and by ammonia yields a white flocculent precipitate, which appears to be in great part composed of phosphate of lime. Infusion of gall-nuts also makes a copious precipitate; the same is effected by the oxalate of ammonia, the nitrate of baryta and of silver, and by a large proportion of alcohol: chloruret of platina has no effect.

MM. Caventou and Boullay endeavoured to ascertain whether any principle analogous to morphia existed in lactucarium, but found none such.

\* Θριδάξ; lettuce.

*Mode of Preparation.*

In the Memoirs of the Caledonian Horticultural Society, Dr. Duncan has described the different modes of obtaining lettuce juice, by him called lactucarium. He recommends it to be collected on cotton, sponge, or brushes, as it flows from the stem of the plant. Mr. Probart, of London, has given a process for obtaining it in large quantities. He takes the stalk and young shoots at the flowering time and macerates them in water for twenty-four hours: he then boils them for two hours, and allows the decoction to pass through a sieve without any pressure: he then evaporates, as far as it can be done with safety, and pours the remainder of the concentrated decoction on plates. Mr. Probart calls this the concentrated extract of lettuce, and he says it has the same properties as the thridach, but requires to be given in larger doses.

M. Caventou prepares thridach by bruising the stalks of the plant at the flowering period, and pressing them to extract the juice, which is then evaporated to a due consistence at a temperature not exceeding  $30^{\circ}$  to  $35^{\circ}$ . This, of course, differs from the extract of Mr. Probart.

*Action on the Animal Economy.*

Dr. François says this medicine is a sedative, diminishing the circulation and the heat of the body—characters that distinguish it from opium.

He states that immediately after it is taken, a strange sensation, resembling cold, but not disagreeable, is felt at the stomach. The latter soon becomes accustomed to its action, and it is therefore necessary to increase the dose rapidly, to refrain from it for a day or two, and then return to the original dose, which, for an adult, is generally two grains. If this does not induce sleep, it causes perfect quietude and absence of restlessness: nor is it accompanied or followed by narcotism, constipation, suspension of several functions, itch-

ing, and other inconvenient attendants on opium and its preparations.

By accurate inspection Dr. François found that in individuals under the influence of lactucarium, the pulse was on an average reduced from 67 to 60 beats in the minute: in many the reduction was 10 or 12 beats in that period, and in a few instances much more. The medium diminution of temperature he found to be one degree of the centigrade thermometer, and in one or two instances as much as a degree and a half.

*Cases for the Administration of Thridach.*

In August, 1824, eleven patients were chosen from different wards of the Pitié, some of whom were affected with rheumatic attacks, others convalescent from acute disorders, and all afflicted with sleeplessness. Dr. François gave M. Caventou's extract to all of them, and ten were benefited by it. From the 25th of September to the 24th of October, 36 patients from the same hospital were subjected to the effects of the same remedy. The cases were rheumatism, acute and chronic, quotidian fever, gastro-enteritis, organic affections of the stomach, chronic peritonitis, chronic irritation of the bladder, pulmonary consumption, hypertrophy of the heart, and abscesses in the arm; others were convalescents exhausted for want of sleep. They all derived decided and permanent benefit from the use of the thridach: pain was lulled and sleep procured. In none of these patients was the contracted pupil, so remarkable after the employment of opium, observed.

Dr. François also mentions that he has known individuals affected with nocturnal emissions, cured by the continued use of the thridach for six weeks or two months. The dose was 2, 4, 6, and 8 grains in 24 hours, divided into two, three, or four doses. I have frequently exceeded this dose without perceiving any disagreeable effect.