

## PHARMACOPŒIAL VEGETABLE DRUGS.

### NUX VOMICA

This drug is the fruit of a tree (*Strychnos nux-vomica*) indigenous to most parts of India, especially the coast districts, and is thought to have been introduced into medicine by the Arabians. The natives of India did not, however, value it, probably because of its exceedingly energetic nature. Although the Hindoos of the present time employ it extensively, it is probable that they were not acquainted with it before its introduction into Germany, in the sixteenth century. Its European employment was originally as a drug-shop poison, for the purpose of killing animals and destructive birds, such as crows; it was not until after the days of Parkinson (492), 1640, that its employment in medicine began. The Pharmacopeia values nux preparations by the amount of strychnine present, the Eclectics by *quality*, strychnine being subordinated so as not to dominate the product unduly.

### OPIUM

The discovery of the medical qualities of opium is lost in times gone by. Theophrastus (633), the third century B. C., mentions it. The poppy producing opium is (from a remote period) native to Asia Minor and Central Asia. The early use of the decoction of the poppy head, as well as the early use of opium, the product of the poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, antedates, as has been said, professional medication and crept into home use as well as professional use at a very early period. The Welsh physicians of the seventeenth century used a wine of poppy heads to produce sleep, and prepared pills from the juice of the poppy. Syrup of poppy was given a position in the first pharmacopeia, of the London College, 1618. Dioscorides (194) distinguishes between the juice of the poppy capsule, and an extract from the entire plant. Inasmuch as he describes how the capsule should be incised and the juice collected, it is evident that he plainly refers to opium. Pliny (514) also devotes considerable space to this drug. Celsus (136), in the first century, mentions it, and during the period of the Roman Empire it was known as a product of Asia Minor. It is supposed that the prohibition of wine by Mohammed led to the spreading of the use of opium in some parts of Asia, the drug being then an import from Aden or Cambay. The Mohammedans introduced opium into India, it being first mentioned as a product of that country by Barbosa (39), who visited Calicut in 1511, its port of export then being Aden or Cambay. The German traveler Kämpfer (349), who visited Persia in 1685, describes the various kinds of opium then produced, stating that it was customary to mix the drug with various aromatics, such as nutmeg, cardamon, cinnamon, and mace, and even with ambergris. It was also sometimes colored red with *cannabis indica*, and was sometimes mixed with the strongly narcotic seeds of *stramonium*. This writer could find no instance of the Turkish people of the present using opium in any form (388c). A description in brief detail only of the many kinds of opium and the different qualities of opium, as well as its sophisticants and adulterants, is herein un-

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necessary. It may be briefly stated that this insidiously active drug came to the attention of the profession of medicine through its well-known qualities, as established by the people of its native land. Much the writer recorded concerning opium and its culture as noted in his travels in Turkey, is to be found in Lloyd Brothers' Drug Treatise No. XXII, "Opium and Its Compounds."

### PAREIRA

Pareira brava (*Chondrodendron tomentosum*) is a climbing shrub, native to Peru and Brazil, and adjacent sections of South America. The Portuguese missionaries of the seventeenth century who visited Brazil learned of its reputed qualities from the natives, who under the name *abutua* or *butua* valued it highly for its therapeutic virtues. The Portuguese gave it the name *Pareira brava*, or *wild vine*, with reference to its mode of growth. Its reputed medicinal qualities, learned from the natives, were made conspicuous by Michel Amelot, ambassador of Louis XIV to Lisbon, who found it in that city and carried it with him to Paris. The botanist Pomet (519), 1694, described the plant in his "History of Drugs," Paris. After an eventful botanical record embracing considerable discussion as well as confusion with some other drugs, during which Pareira brava enjoyed professional conspicuity in Europe, it dropped from general use, the extraordinary pretensions long made for it being now practically forgotten.

### PEPO

The seed of the pumpkin, *Cucurbita pepo*, in the form of an infusion as well as in a pulpy mass, has been long a favorite home remedy for intestinal parasites, which use introduced it to the medical profession. Although the medical profession has used pumpkin seed somewhat in this direction, as a rule they now prefer other remedial agents, santonin being employed for round worms and pomegranate bark for tape worms.

### PHYSOSTIGMA

Physostigma, Calabar bean (*Physostigma venenosum*), is the fruit of an African vine growing near the mouths of the Niger and the Old Calabar Rivers, Guinea, where it furnished one of the ordeal tests of the pagan tribes of tropical Western Africa. The seed is therefore known as the "Ordeal Bean," and was administered in the form of either an emulsion or infusion, as the case might be. It was introduced to England by Dr. F. W. Daniel (182), about 1840, its method of use being again mentioned by him in a paper read before the Ethnological Society, 1846. Professor Balfour (36), of Edinburgh, obtained the plant from the Rev. W. C. Thompson, a missionary to the west coast of Africa, and described it in a paper read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, including it also in his "History of Plants." Its power of contracting the pupil of the eye was discovered by Dr. T. R. Fraser (246) of Edinburgh. Its power of paralyzing the