with water, when the codeia can be precipitated by caustic potash, and crystallised from ether. It is in colourless crystals, soluble one in eighty parts of water; the dose is ½ to 2 grains. It is recognised in the British Pharmacopœia.

Opium is well known for two different reasons. One is because it is so largely employed in medicine, another is because of opium smokers and the much-talked-of opium dens.

The preparations made from opium are numerous, not to speak of those prepared from morphine. The pure opium is used in pills frequently; the dose is ½ to 2 grains. There are two extracts; one is a liquid. The dose of the ordinary extract is ¼ to 1 grain. It contains 20 per cent. of morphine. The dose of the liquid is 5 to 20 minims; the strength is ¾ of a grain of morphine in 110 minims.

There is a tincture of opium called laudanum; it contains 1 grain of opium in 15 minims. There is also an ammoniated tincture, of which the dose is ½ to 1 fluid drachm.

There is a compound powder of opium, and it enters into the aromatic powder of chalk. There is the compound soap pill, otherwise opium pill. It enters into ipecacuanha powder (Dover's powder), also ipecacuanha pill, into lead suppositories and pills, and compound tincture of camphora. There is a liniment of opium—it enters into an ointment of galle and opium—and there is a plaster. Then there are the morphine salts, and the numerous preparations made from them.

In small doses opium is a stimulant, in large doses a powerful sedative to the brain and nerves. Preparations containing opium are used to relieve pain, either if it is given itself or if any of the preparations are ordered. In various forms of inflammation opium is of great service on account of its soothing properties; it is much used in peritonitis. Tincture of opium enters into cough mixtures very often.

For external use, opium is employed in cases of neuralgia and sciatica to relieve the pain, also for local inflammatory swelling. Numerous as are the preparations and the objects for which they are used, the general idea of opium is to relieve pain and induce sleep.

In cases of poisoning from opium the chief thing is to keep the patient awake. Emetics must be given and the stomach pump used. Hot coffee may be used. Cold affusions are used, and a hypodermic injection of sulphate of atropine, as well as artificial respiration.

*Vermin Killers.*

Every compound containing a poison within the meaning of the Act when prepared or sold for the destruction of vermin.

Of the numerous vermin-killers offered for sale, most contain highly poisonous drugs. Whether there ought to be a need for such things at the present day may well be asked, but the fact remains there is, though often ammonia or methylated spirits will suffice, or weak carbolic.

In rat pastes, strychnine is frequently present, also phosphorus; the latter is not on the poison list.

Arsenic is another ingredient of "vermin-killers."

Should need ever arise for the use of a rat paste, its deadly nature must be borne in mind and great care exercised in its use. Beyond these few remarks, this last portion of the poison schedule requires no further mention.

## The Mediæval Physician.

In his presidential address at the commencement of the Cooper Medical College, says a writer in the *Westminster Gazette*, Professor D. S. Jordan drew the attention of his audience to those distant days when the physician was a compound of the sorcerer and the priest. He was distrusted by the sorcerers lest he should "give away" their trade secrets, while the priests were afraid that he might work against them by leading the faithful to indulge in sorcery. For, by the use of Latin words, carefully selected and judicially applied, he could call up spirits from the womb of Time or he could imbue a broomstick with life. Hence the statutes which forbade the physician to work except in the presence of a priest. Each drug in his extensive pharmacopœia had its own special potency, marked upon it by the forethought of the Almighty. The snake-head or snake-root would cure the snake-bite, while a scrofulous root would cure scrofula. The blood-root, with its red juice, would naturally be good for the blood, while the yellow juice of the celandine would as naturally point it out as an infallible cure for jaundice. Liverwort and eye-bright would have their due effect on the organ depicted in their shape. Baldness could, of course, be cured by the grease of the hairy bear, and the hair of the dog that bit you has passed into a proverb. And so we pass on, in natural sequence, to the electric belt and the various patented and unpatented medicines of the present day. The poor physician was further handicapped by the fact that sanitation and regulation of diet were regarded as contrary to religion. The taking of medicine was looked upon as an impious attempt to thwart the purpose of God. Medical knowledge had one final court of appeal, one fixed limit—the ignorance of Galen. Even in the last century Simpson's use for the first time of anæsthetics in obstetrics was held to violate the Divine command: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." It is indeed difficult to realise that in the time of Napoleon most internal evils were laid at the door of "the itch," a prevalent disease in the higher classes, for which no cure was known at the time. The great Hahnemann is reported to have expressed his opinion that two-thirds of all diseases "are the itch struck in."

previous page next page