

known preparation, and there is an ointment made from aconitine the alkaloid.

Aconite is a cardiac sedative and a diaphoretic. It is given in fever, dropsy, and whooping-cough. It is useful in cases of neuralgia, as it soothes the nerves; it is also given in cases of phthisis, and in ordinary cases of pneumonia. For external use it is employed to relieve pain, as in rheumatism or neuralgia.

Indeed, it is a favourite domestic remedy for local pains. The liniment is the preparation employed as a rule, being better known than the ointment.

The liniment is frequently prescribed with other ingredients in a prescription, such as the one known by the name of A. B. C. liniment, which contains the three things—aconite, belladonna, and chloroform—the official liniment being in each case used. It forms a most valuable application.

In cases of poisoning from aconite or its preparations the stomach pump must be used, and emetics administered. Tincture of digitalis given as a hypodermic injection is one of the best antidotes. Ammonia or ether or alcohol may be given. The patient must be kept warm, which is a most important point, and in a recumbent position.

Artificial respiration should be resorted to. Hypodermic injections of strychnine or of atropine are sometimes recommended. In aconite poisoning the great danger consists in the failure of the heart's action.

Ergot of Rye and its Preparations.

The sclerotium of *Claviceps purpurea*, originating in the ovary of *Secale cereale*, *i.e.*, common rye. It comes under the Fungi order. It is chiefly obtained in Spain and Southern Russia.

By the time the ergot is collected there is no rye left. It disappears as the ergot develops.

The life-history of the ergot is interesting. Rye is attacked by the spores of *Claviceps purpurea*, which, as it were, eat it away, leaving in its place a dark brown mass formed from the spores, called the sclerotium. This brown substance is ergot of rye. When it falls off the following spring, it sends up its fructification, called stroma, out of which fructification escape the spores, which in their turn attack more rye.

There are other forms of ergot, but only "ergot of rye" is official for medicinal use.

It is from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, very narrow, dark purplish-brown externally, though sometimes it looks more black, internally a pinkish-white. It has an unpleasant odour with a most disagreeable taste, rancid and oily.

It should be kept in a dry bottle sprinkled with chloroform. It is very liable to be attacked by mites. Ergot contains several uncrystallisable substances, namely, an alkaloid ergotine (1 to 2 per cent fatty oil), ecboline, and sphocelinic acid. The active principle of ergot has been the subject of

much discussion of late years. When the last new Pharmacopœia was published, an alteration in its preparation was made. There is a tincture, called ammoniated tincture of ergot, of which half to one fluid drachm can be given.

There is an infusion, dose half to two fluid ounces; although it is the average dose of the official infusions, yet it ranks as one of the two poisonous ones, the other being infusion of digitalis. There is a liquid extract, dose 10 to 30 minims. Also a hypodermic injection, often still called hypodermic injection of ergotin, as in the old Pharmacopœia that was its correct name.

It is now prepared quite differently. It is made with extract of ergot and distilled water, and phenol is used as a preservative. The water is ordered to be sterilised for this preparation, as in all hypodermic injections.

It should be freshly prepared when required. Its dose is 3 to 10 minims by subcutaneous injection.

There is an extract of ergot which replaces the old preparation called ergotin. The dose is 10 to 8 grains.

The preparation of this extract is very tedious. Many doubt whether the change was in any way an improvement.

Ergotine is the substance commonly known by the name Bonjean's-ergotine. Although ergot is a poison, yet it is better known as an abortive drug.

It is often used to produce contraction of the uterus in cases of hæmorrhage, as it is a great uterine stimulant. Ergot and its preparation are little used except in connection with the above work.

In cases of poisoning from ergot, emetics and purgatives such as castor-oil should be given. The patient must be kept warm.

Aconite antagonises the action of ergot. A few minims of the tincture may be given, or sulphate of atropine tablet containing about $\frac{1}{16}$ of a grain. If there is much pain, morphia may be administered.

In the many deaths that take place from poison, it is very seldom one occurs from an overdose of ergot. It is also almost unheard of in connection with suicide.

Legal Matters.

Beatrice Ashwood, a nurse-attendant, was sentenced at Tottenham Police Court last week to four months' imprisonment for stealing £140 belonging to an invalid lady named Molesworth, whom she was engaged to nurse. Ashwood, it was stated, took the money from a drawer and absconded. The police have recovered about £53 of the total sum.

As there is no system of State Registration of Trained Nurses in force in this country, it is impossible to know whether Beatrice Ashwood possesses any nursing qualifications.

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