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AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

The Medical properties of the Asclepias Syriaca

SUBMITTED TO THE

**PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
AND MEDICAL FACULTY**

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Medicine.

BY

Richard W. Cain

OF

Georgia

1859

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The medical properties of the *Asclepias Syriaca*.

In submitting this imperfect dissertation upon the medical properties of the Silk weed I shall speak of it as a valuable remedy in the treatment of three forms of disease only.

First as a remedy in the treatment of scabies or itch, Secondly as an anti-periodic, Third and lastly as an Emmenagogue and it is chiefly as such that I wish to press its claims. In presenting what I have to say in reference to the medical properties of this weed I shall give only what it has done in my own hands without stopping to give what it has done for others. By reference to the last edition of the U.S. Dispensatory you have about all recorded that has been claimed for it as a remedial agent in the treatment of disease so far as my reading has extended. My attention was first directed to it as an

anti-periodic by an article published in the
March no of the Nashville Journal for 1857 written
by Dr B. S. Coatham of Mt., and it is since
that time that I have employed the medicine
to any extent yet it was used extensively in
the section of country where I was raised
as a domestic remedy in the treatment of itch
and to it as such I first call attention.

It is not necessary for me to spend time
in this connection consequently I shall be as
brief as possible.

First I consider it the most pleasant safe
sure and speedy remedy that I have ever
used in this affection, indeed I have never
known it fail, and perhaps I have treated
fifty cases with it under almost all
circumstances, from its earliest appearance
up to four years standing and that to with
only two applications of the remedy, for I

has never known it to require a third application. Bathe the whole surface of the body well, with a strong decoction of the root twice in forty eight hours, say at bed times. If the skin is denuded at any place it may inflame but an application of Sweet Cream will relieve it.

At the expiration of four or five days, strip and wash well with warm Soap Suds, Strip and Lau your beads and have Clean Sheets my word for it your iteh will be cured.

Secondly as an Anti-ptic

Not having been regularly in the practice my experience is limited yet a sufficient no. of cases have been treated to warrant me in claiming for the remedy a very high regard.

I have treated some half dozen cases

and will only give three of them in detail, stating however that it has failed in no case when I have used it.

Soon after the appearance of the article above referred to, I dug a quantity of the root piece off. The bark was carefully dried in the shade, this I think was in April or May of 1807.

At ten o'clock, P.M., June 20th I was called to see a man who had simple intermittent fever of the tertian variety. I pulverised a quantity of the bark and with the addition of flour and simple Syrup made twenty four pills six grs each, directed him to take two of them every four hours until bedtime at night then take four as the chill was expected early next morning, June 21, The pills were taken as directed & he had no return of chills.

I should have stated above that Miss
M had taken a no of domestic remedies
also three or four doses of quinine.

The quinine had the effect to stop the
chills for a time but they had invariably
returned

Now I do not claim that the Seltz
wasa is superior to quinine by no means
but it did in this case what quinine
had failed to do as it did in the
following case.

Case. Second

A man about fifteen years old came to
the office of my preceptor in August 187
while I was reading there laboring under
intermitting fever called for fifteen grs
quinine which I sold him

On the fourth day he came back called
for the same amount and so on until I

had told him forty five or fifty gr he
had not asked for advice but at his
last call stated that the chills were
about to wear him out and indeed it
looked so for he was very much restless
with a yellowish green cast of the skin
I had about half dozen of the roots
of the *Asclepias Syriaca* in the office perhaps
six inches in length I directed him to put
them in a quart of good whiskey let it
stand twenty four hours then take a
common sized drink of it three times
per day, he did as directed had no
return of chills.

Case 5 - Aug, 15 at seven o'clock P.M. I
was called to see Mr. N. native of Ala,
who was attacked with remittent fever
quotidian variety - It is unnecessary to detail
the symptoms as all are familiar with them.

I directed him to take twenty four gr. blue
mass followed by one gr. epsom salt, next
morning also two of the anti-ferriac pills
same night and begin next morning to take
two of the pills every two hours until
two in the evening then take four of them
The chill was expected at 4, P.M., but he
had no chill and gradually got up without
any other treatment

This is all that I have to say in reference
to the anti-ferriac properties of this weed
and think it worth a further trial.

I have seen no bad effect from it if the
dose is very large it may vomit or purge or
do both.

I now proceed to speak of the asclepias
Syriaca as an Emmenagogue for such I
consider it to be and one of the most
valuable that we possess

Here again I confess that my experience is limited perhaps too much so for me to set up the claims for it that I do. Notwithstanding I have only treated three cases with it I consider them good testimony as far as they go and believe the remedy worthy a further and more scientific investigation than I have been able to give it.

If further investigation should prove what I claim for it to be true, (viz) that it is possessed of emmenagogue properties I claim nothing to myself.

The discovery was made (if indeed it is one) in treating the first case of intermittent fever above recorded in this article, and was incidental.

Some time in December of 1857 I was consulted by Mrs. N— in regard to her

daughter aged fourteen years. There had been
an effort on the part of the system to
bring on menstruation for two or three months
without effect. and the young lady's health was
somewhat impaired

In this conversation she stated that Miss
M the lady above referred to had been
the subject of irregular and painful
menstruation from their first appearance
(some six or seven years) up to the time
that I had given her the anti-piscaria
pills but since that time she had been
perfectly regular in her monthly periods
and without pain

I directed her to give her daughter
the pills as follows one pill three times
per day up to the expected period or
the first symptoms of a returning period
then give her four of them and then

discontinue until the usual time had elapsed
(three or four days) and then resume them
if the menses were not produced
but the menses were produced and
in proper quantity

Some time after this from exposure
in a shower of rain during a monthly
period both of the young ladies above
referred to had suppression of the menses
with its usual effects

Having the pills at hand they were
administered as before directed with
the same good effect

This and last case that I shall
report is one of considerable interest
and the testimony given by this witness
I consider conclusive, clearly proving
the emmenagogue properties of the *Colletes
Syracae*.

Miss M Native of Ala aged sixteen years
has suppression of the menses of four years
standing caused by an over heat together
with inflammation of the eyes ulceration
of the cornea &c.

She came to Georgia in January of last
year 1868, in search of an eye doctor.
Now I do not claim to be an eye
doctor, but thought it clear that the
disease of the eyes was a secondary
affection and by reproducing this
secretion the eyes would be improved
if not cured and accordingly set to
work in that direction

After using several of the best remedies
that I was in possession of (or rather
recommended in the books and particularly
one used by my preceptor for a no of
years and with the best effect in case

I have given it myself with entire
satisfaction but they all failed in this
instance I then commenced with the
anti-periodic pills giving one pill three times
per day to be continued until symptoms of
the monthly period were felt then take four
of them together with warm foot and hip
bath. The pills were taken as directed foot and
hip bath left out menses came on second day
in normal quantity. The pills were continued as
before for the next month at which time profuse
diarrhea came on and consequently no secretion of the
menses. Pills continued as before but discontinued
on the first symptoms of menstruation. She died as
directed had a fine flow of the menstrual fluid
She left for Ala her health fine eyes much improv-
ed I learn by a letter from her a short time since
that her health is fine menstruation regular
and eyes very much improved