

HOÀNG-NÀN.

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I THINK it may be interesting to your readers to know that the Director of the Pharmacie Centrale de France, 7, Rue de Jouy, Paris, has made the following statement concerning a Chinese plant called Hoàng-nàn, the wonderful properties of which cannot be too widely known. He says: "In reply to your letter, we beg to say that Hoàng-nàn, a very dangerous product, is a plant indigenous to Tonkin; that it has been brought to Europe by the missionaries, and that, reduced to powder, it is highly recommended as a remedy for hydrophobia, leprosy, and certain diseases of the skin. The powder is given in doses varying from 15 centigrammes to 2.50 grammes, the variation being due to the fact that the bark is not always free from suberous matter, which is inert. We keep Hoàng-nàn powder, which we sell at 100 francs the kilogramme (2.2055 lbs. avoirdupois)." In support of this I may quote the following extracts from *The Illustrated Catholic Missions* of last October; "The ingredients entering into the composition of the medicine are: Alum (Phén), 1.5; Realgar (Hùng Hoang), 1.5; Hoàng-nàn, 2.5. The last is the chief ingredient, and in default of the two others it can be employed alone."

"The medicine is prepared as follows: The mixture is first reduced to a powder, then moistened with vinegar, and formed into pills of little more than one centimètre diameter (inch 0.39371). When a person has been bitten by a rabid or poisonous animal, a dose of 3 to 4 grammes should be administered with a quarter of a glass of weak vinegar. The natural effects of Hoàng-nàn taken by a healthy person are: fatigue, general indisposition, vertigo, tingling of the hands and feet, involuntary movements of the jaws, etc. The absence of these symptoms is a certain sign of the presence of a poison neutralising the effects of the remedy. In such cases the treatment must be continued, and the dose increased every day until the poison is entirely destroyed—that is to say, until the above-described symptoms appear. When, as sometimes happens, the virus has not entered the system, two or at most three grammes of the remedy suffice to produce the symptoms described. If the medicine acts too violently, either owing to imprudent doses or on account of the absence of virus in the system, the evil effects may be counteracted by administering an infusion of liquorice-root. The medicine is said to be infallible if taken before the acute stage of hydrophobia, and rarely to fail even when the disease has assumed a violent rabid stage. But action must then be energetic. A very strong dose must be at once administered, and increased until the patient begins to foam at the mouth, and experience the symptoms already detailed. The Hoàng-nàn is a shrub that bears, it is said, some resemblance to the ivy. The bark is covered with a reddish dust, containing a subtle poison, wherein lies the remedial virtue of the plant. It is this dust alone that is employed for medicinal purposes. The shrub is found in the mountains, especially on calcareous ground. Its principal homes are the highlands of Ngan-Ca in the province of Nghe-an and those of Than-hoa."

"Shrubs of an inferior quality are also found in many other provinces of the Annamite kingdom. We may add that hoàng-nàn is used also as a cure for snake-bites. The dose is stronger in proportion to the poisonous character of the bite."

"Tonkinese doctors, it appears, enumerate thirty-six kinds of leprosy. The two most frequently met with attack chiefly the hands and feet; the one acts without suppuration, but gradually causes the loss of the fingers and toes; the other produces frightful sores, especially on the extremities. When these are consumed and only shapeless stumps remain, the ulcers spread over the body, presenting a loathsome sight, and emitting an insupportable odour. It is this latter kind of leprosy, widely spread throughout the East, which we have now chiefly in view."

"The disease is undoubtedly hereditary. It begins to show itself in children generally at the age of puberty, and its first symptoms are usually swellings upon the wrists. Strange to say, it may happen that for several generations the boys alone are attacked, whilst the girls escape, or *vice versa*. But leprosy is not only hereditary, it is also contagious, and to this fact may be attributed the large number of lepers in Tonkin. Rightly or wrongly, the Tonkinese maintain that the malady is communicated most

readily at the moment when a leper is dying; and they even affirm that the disease can be contracted by walking in the early morning dew across a leper's grave. Yet, in spite of its contagious character there are persons, such as near relatives, who pass their whole life among lepers without contracting the disease; whilst, on the other hand, others, by merely touching a leper once or by sitting a few moments by the side of a diseased person, have caught the malady."

"For the treatment of leprosy Hoàng-nàn is prepared in the same manner as for use in cases of hydrophobia, with this difference, however, that not only the red dust, but also the substratum which it covers, and which adheres to the ligneous portion of the bark, can also be employed. It is not necessary to reduce the material to an impalpable powder, and the pills can be formed by moistening the substance with vinegar, to which a little gluten has been added to effect cohesion. The pills are administered with vinegar. Taken with arack (rice spirit) or any form of alcohol they are deadly. Moreover, during the course of treatment, and for some time afterwards, there must be total abstinence from any spirituous liquor; beef, and in general all heating food, should for the time be avoided."

"The direction for the use of the pills is as follows: Begin with half a pill in the morning and half a pill at night; on the following day give one pill in the morning and one in the evening, and so on, daily increasing each dose by one pill until a maximum of five or six pills per dose is attained. The medicine may then be discontinued for about ten days. The morning and evening doses are then recommenced as on the first occasion, an effort being made to reach a rather higher maximum than before; but it is not prudent to continue these stronger doses for more than seven or eight days in succession, especially if the patient be not very robust. When the leprosy sores cicatrise and leave only a small red spot, about ten Hoàng-nàn pills should be made into a poultice and applied to the spot, and renewed every day for three days."

"Although as a cure for leprosy Hoàng-nàn may be less important in our temperate countries, where the disease is seldom found, yet its remedial powers in cases of cancerous and ulcerous affections, etc., should commend it to the attention of European doctors."

If the virtue of the Chinese plant be such that it is a reliable cure for hydrophobia, for snake-bites, for leprosy, and for cancerous and ulcerous affections, or even for one alone of these scourges, it will be received as an angel of mercy by suffering humanity; but before receiving it at its full value, it is most desirable that it should run the gauntlet of a strict medical examination.

UNIVERSITY INTELLIGENCE.

GLASGOW.

At a meeting of the Glasgow University Court, held on March 20th, the following gentlemen were appointed Examiners in Medicine:—W. D. Halliburton, M.D., B.Sc., M.R.C.P.Lond., with special reference to Physiology; David Norman, M.D., F.F.P.S.Glas., with special reference to Pathology; George A. Gibson, M.D., D.Sc.Edin., with special reference to Medicine and Clinical Medicine; William James Fleming, M.D.Glas., with special reference to Surgery and Clinical Surgery. The term of office is in each case four years.

The preliminary examinations in general education for degrees in Medicine and Science began on March 27th, and continue till to-day. The same examinations are being held simultaneously in the Glasgow University and in the University College of North Wales, Bangor. The total number of candidates is 462.

A COSTLY DRUG.—Ginseng is a root obtained in Manchuria, and much prized by the Chinese as a cure for most of the ills to which human flesh is heir. Its supposed efficacy is, perhaps, partly due to its great scarcity and consequent high price. A recent issue of the *Pekin Gazette* contains a report from the military governor of Kirin, in Manchuria, stating that he has forwarded for the use of the Emperor by special messenger eight large and sixteen small ginseng, weighing altogether 9.4 ounces. The total cost is given at 1,560 taels, or about £400, being at the rate of about £45 an ounce.