

VI. *A Discourse of the Viper, and some other Poysons, Wrote by Sr. Theodorc de Mayerne, after Discoursing with Mr. Pontæus. Communicated by Sir Theodore de Vaux, M. D. and S. R. S.*

THE Venom of a Viper in it self is not Mortal to a Robust and Sound Body; and tho very unhappy and mischievous accidents attend it; as a great Tumour, Tension and Weight of the Part, Humidity and Variety of Colours, Phrensies, Convulsions and Vomiting; yet in Eight or Ten days at most these accidents are over, although the Patient may be very ill, yet he recovers again; whilst the Poyson having run through divers parts of the body; at last it always throws it self into the *Scrotum*, swelling it extreamly, causes a great heat and quantity of Urine, very hot and sharp, by which it is discharged; this evacuation being the ordinary and most certain *Crisis* of the Disease: It is observable that the perspiration being obstructed by the Poyson, a Man bit by a Viper and swelled up, in three or four days shall weigh almost as much more then he did before.

A sickly Person under an ill habit of Body, or fearful, dies Infallibly, and in short time by this Venom without speedy help.

In the extream Nervous Parts, near the Pulse and Tongue, the bites are dangerous, and accidents very painful.

Fresh Vipers that have not bit, but have the bladders of the Gums full of Venom, are the most Mischievous.

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Mountebanks to impose upon the People, either make their Vipers bite before they bring them out ; or with a Needle scratch the Gums, and press out the Poyson.

They make us believe that a bite on the left breast near the heart, is more mortal than elsewhere, but this is a cheat, it causing only a great swelling on all that side of the body, on the Neck and Face, which afterwards falls down (as was said) into the Scrotum, and is evacuated by Urine.

For these great and painful swellings, the Remedy is to drink the Decoction of *Marrubium*, or the powder taken inwardly, and a fomentation with the decoction, applying the rest on the place. *Aristolochia* is also a strong and powerful Antidote against the Viper ; so that if one be bit on the Tongue, he need only take a slice of this Root, heat it and apply it, and it goes away.

Pontæus a Chymical Mountebank, a Native of *England*, and an Apothecary by Trade, from whom I had the above mentioned Observations, was one day accidentally bit by a fresh Viper on his right wrist ; he thought it would have killed him ; one of the greatest pains he suffered was almost an insupportable Tension of the palm of his hand.

He composed his Antidote of Extract of Juniper berries, drawn with a decoction of roots of round *Aristolochia*, of *Succisa*, *Marrubium Album*, flower of Brimstone and of white Vitriol.

For Poyson not Corrosive, such as those of Animals and Vegetables, and even for the Plague it self ; (which he believes he can cure by the same Remedy), He makes use of no Vitriol. But if the Poyson be sublimate, which of it self excites Vomiting, he adds Vitriol, not in a proportion to Vomit as a Drachme, but only a scruple or half a dram, the Vomiting being assisted by the Corrosive Poyson it self.

To encrease the Value of this Antidote with the People, when the Experiment is made on Dogs; to that Dog which they would have dy of the bite of the Viper, he gives with the Antidote a quarter of a *Nux Vomica* not powdred, only cut in bits, and the next day the Dog dies. If it were powdered the Dog would dye in half an hour.

He says *Nux Vomica* is so called by contraries, for it never Vomits but shuts up the Stomach, and contracts the Nerves by its poyson.

To preserve the Dogs alive, you must give them with the Antidote or any thing else, three or four grains of sublimate, which immediately sets them a Vomiting, and so saves them alive.

He offers to take all sorts of Poysons, even Corrosives after an ordinary meal, and for a tryal of Skill he refuses them not on an empty Stomach.

He much esteems *Morfus Diaboli*, *Succifa* or *Devills-bit*, against all sorts of Poysons; he laughs at the Poyson of a Toad, which he says has none at all, no more then a Frog, and affirms he has eat several without any mischief.

His Sugar or Remedy for Worms in Children, is fifteen grains of *Mercurius dulcis* with five grains of Scammony, and two or three times as much Sugar, made up in Lozenges.

He says, That this Dose which in *France* purges grown Persons, does nothing in *England* on those above fifteen years old, and ought to be augmented.

His *Mercurius dulcis* is made without Vitriol, which tho good is yet Corrosive, he takes only ashes with decrepitated Salt.

The manner of the acting of the Vipers Poyson is thus: In about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, a Syncope or Swooning seizes them with Tremblings and Convulsions, tingling of the Ears, and frequently Deafness for a moment; next as it

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were a white Sail comes before their eyes, which soon vanishes : On the place of the bite a swelling rises at first of the bigness of a Pea, which grows as big as a Bean or a Nut,, and increasing enlarges it self over the Neighbouring parts, to a very considerable Tumour and Streching of the flesh, which grows *œdematous*, and by little and little falls into the Scrotum, and leaves the part black, blew, and yellow.

It makes as it were bags in the skin, which feel heavy when you walk as if filled with Quicksilver.

Do what you will the Poyson will have its course, and is usually three days before it comes to the heighth, and as long abating.

For these great swellings and stretching of the parts, a Fomentation and Cataplasm is made with *Marrubium*, *Tapsus barbatus* and Agrimony.

The Gall of the Viper is no ways Venemous, and *Ponreus* says, he usually gives it without any ill effect or trouble, but its bitterness; all the Poyson is in a Liquor in the Gums, which is yellow like Oyl, of which you may easily disarm the Viper.

The Viper is the most Venemous of Serpents, the *Asp* is but a species of the Viper. The *Napellus* is a very dangerous Poyson, acting by its Acrimony, but you must take a great quantity of it; it burns the throat extremely as does Alum, but it is cured by the Antidote.

Crude Antimony does nothing if attacked by the Antidote.

The most mischievous of all Poysons is Opium, of which having given an excessive quantity to his Servant, at first he had Convulsions, then strange Vomiting, not able to let any thing go down into his Stomach, a sleepiness followed: all which time they kept him awake as much as possible. At last all of a sudden he grew well, and called for Victuals.

Succisa, or Devils bit, is excellent for Poysons, especially the Plague; and it is observable, that it is so powerful a Sudorifick, that laying the sick Person whether of the Plague or other malignant Fever, on a Bed of that herb, moderately hot, he shall sweat till they take him off, and much more if he drinks of the decoction or juice of the herb, which in Summer they take all, and in Winter of the root only.

He says, That for the Dropsy after all other things, one of the best Remedies in the World, is to take *Morsus Diaboli* and put it over the fire in a dry Kettle, that it may wet it only with its own juice, and of this to apply a quantity to the Belly and Reins of the Patient, covering him up warm, and so provoke sweat; which will come away in great quantity, and may be maintained according to the strength of the Patient, and Exigency of the Case.

VII. An Account of BOOKS, *Viz.*

An Account of several late Voyages and Discoveries to the South and North towards the Streights of Magellan, the South Seas, the vast Tracts of Land beyond Hollandia Nova, &c. Also towards Nova Zembla, Greenland or Spitsberg, Groynland or Engronland, &c. By Sir John Narborough, Capt. Jasmen Tasman, Capt. John Wood, and Frederick Marten of Hamburgh. To which are annexed a large Introduction and Supplement. The whole Illustrated with Charts and Figures. London: Printed for Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford, Printers to the Royal Society, at the Prince's Arms in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1694. In Octavo.

ABOUT 14 Months ago these Booksellers published a Curious Collection of Travels into the *Levant*, and other adjacent Countries, By *Rawolf, Belon, Greaves, &c.*
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