

IV.—NOTE ON THE BARK OF *RHAMNUS PURSHIANA*  
(CASCARA SAGRADA) IN THE TREATMENT OF HABITUAL  
CONSTIPATION.

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THE plants of the Rhamnaceæ or Buckthorn order have long been used in medicine. The juice of the fruit of the *Rhamnus catharticus*—a well-known native species—is officinal in the British Pharmacopœia, and in the form of syrup is used as a pleasant cathartic. More recently the bark of the *Rhamnus Frangula*, the Black Alder—another British species—has been recommended as a purgative. It has long been used in Germany for this purpose, and is officinal in the German and other European Pharmacopœias, and also in the Pharmacopœia of the United States of America. Other species of *Rhamnus* have also been used as purgatives in various countries; but of all the species of *Rhamnus* yet employed medicinally, there appears to be none equal to that recently introduced into medical practice in America, I refer to the *Rhamnus Purshiana*, the *Cascara sagrada* (sacred bark) of some writers. This species is a native of California and Oregon, and possibly is also indigenous to other parts of the Pacific coast. It is a small tree about twenty feet in height. The bark of this tree has long been known to the native Indians as a purgative, and as an excellent remedy in various forms of dyspepsia. It is said that the Spanish residents of the Pacific coast learned its virtues from these native Indians, and have long used it extensively as a popular remedy.

A few years ago, a Dr J. H. Bundy, an “eclectic” practitioner at Calusa, California, having learned its virtues from these Spanish residents, used it extensively in his practice, and found it a medicine of great value.

The enterprising firm of American publishers and chemists, Parke, Davies, & Co. of Detroit, who have done so much for the introduction of new medicines, brought this new drug under the notice of the medical profession. It is now extensively used, not only in America, but also in this country, and I believe will soon be officinal in all our Pharmacopœias.

The bark has been carefully analysed, and is found to contain several resins, besides a neutral crystallizable body, tannic acid, etc. One of these resins is brown, of a bitter taste, and is coloured purple-red by a solution of caustic potash. Another is red, and nearly tasteless, and coloured brown by a solution of caustic potash. And a third resin is yellow, tasteless, and coloured bright red-brown by sulphuric acid. These resins constitute about ten per cent. of the weight of the bark, and probably are its active constituents.

When this medicine was first brought before the profession by Parke, Davies, & Co., it was in the form of a fluid extract, which undoubtedly contained the active principle or principles of the bark. The results of using this fluid extract conclusively proved this, for it was found to be a medicine exceedingly efficacious in the treatment of habitual constipation and various forms of dyspepsia, especially connected with affections of the liver. This preparation, however, was very bitter, and in consequence some objected to its use. With the view of remedying this defect, Parke, Davies, & Co. introduced a modified form of this extract, mixed with various aromatics, under the name of "Cascara Cordial," which is at once pleasant to the taste, and at the same time equally efficacious in the treatment of disease. This cascara cordial is now extensively used not only in America, but also on this side of the Atlantic, and having prescribed it extensively for two years to my patients, I have come to the conclusion that we possess no medicine equal to this in the treatment of habitual constipation, and for dyspepsia connected with a sluggish condition of the liver. This preparation is now regularly kept by the druggists in this city, and is at once pleasant to the taste and most efficacious as a remedial agent. The dose for an adult is twenty to thirty minims, two or three times a day. It is a safe remedy even for the youngest children, and, of course, given in such cases in proportionally small doses.

Its use should be continued for a considerable time, and the dose gradually diminished until the patient is restored to perfect health.

Its advantages may be summed up as follows:—1. It is pleasant to the taste; 2. It is safe even to young children; and, 3. It is an exceedingly efficacious, if not the most efficacious remedy known to us for habitual constipation.

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## V.—ON THE RETENTION OF HAIR IN THE AXILLA.

By A. WYNDHAM MARTIN.

THE different views held on this subject render the question one of great interest to the student of science. The only reference to the subject made by Darwin, in the *Descent of Man*, is the following:—

"That the hair is chiefly retained in the male sex on the chest and face, and in both sexes at the junction of all four limbs with the trunk favours this inference—on the assumption that the hair was lost before man became erect, for the parts which now retain most hair would then have been most protected from the heat of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Descent of Man*, 2nd edition, p. 57.