

XLVIII. *An Account of a Case, in which
Green Hemlock was applied: In a Letter
to the Rt. Hon. Hugh Lord Willoughby of
Parham, V. P. of the R. S. by Mr. Josiah
Colebrook, F. R. S.*

My Lord,

Read Dec. 15, 1763. **I** Take the liberty, from the friendship you are pleased to honour me with, to address the enclosed case to your Lordship, and hope you will think it worth communicating to the Royal Society. It is a bare relation of matters of fact, most of them within my own knowledge, the others attested by persons whose veracity I can depend on. As the hemlock taken in this manner gave great relief to this poor woman, labouring under the most dreadful disease human nature is liable to; it may be attended with the same success to other persons, in the same circumstances.

I am well assured your Lordship rejoices at every opportunity of doing good to mankind, by communicating any beneficial discoveries of your own, or your friends; among whom you will excuse my vanity in placing myself, who am,

with the greatest respect,

your Lordship's

most humble Servant,

J. Colebrook.

A N N

A N N James of the parish of Boughton Monchelsey in Kent, aged 55 years, a married woman, had for some years complained of a pain, and hard lump in each breast. In September 1762 she asked my advice about them : upon examining them I found a very hard schirrus in each breast : that in the left breast, had the mamillary glands indurated and knobbed like ramifications toward the axilla, a little adhesion to the pectoral muscle ; was as big as a turkey's egg, and she was under daily apprehensions, that it would break. That in the right breast was not near so large, or had ramifications nor adhered like the other. She complained of most excruciating stabbing pains in both breasts, which prevented her having any rest in the night, and made her so very miserable all day, whether she lay down, stood, sat, or walked, that she was unable, not only to go out to work, but even to do any thing for her family at home, not even to make her own bed ; and she had totally lost her appetite : her usual employ was spinning, washing, brewing, and what we in London call the business of a chairwoman. The breasts were but little discoloured, but the pains she described, and the ramifications attending the schirrus, in the left breast, induced me to pronounce it a cancer.

I advised her to take the green hemlock, viz. *cicuta major vulgaris caule maculoso* ; mince it with parsley (to disguise the taste) and eat it with bread and butter twice or three times in a day, the third part of a leaf, or one of the three divisions, which are in each leaf, at a time ; that her constant drink

5

should

should be lime water and milk; that she should take as many millepedes every day, as her stomach would bear, or she could get, that her body should be kept open by Rhubarb, or Magnesia, as occasion required; that she should have an issue in her arm, and lose six or eight ounces of blood once in six or eight weeks, if her pains continued.

A good lady in the neighbourhood, whose humanity is only to be equalled by her good sense, generously promised to see, that she pursued this regimen, and from time to time give me an account of the success.

I desired a leaf might be weighed, that I might ascertain the quantity of each dose, and found she took fifteen grains of the green plant three times in a day: finding it agree with her stomach, and that it eased her pains, though it caused a tingling to her fingers ends: she increased the quantity. In the beginning of November she had a very large menstrual discharge, which had not happened to her for many years before; the schirrus was much lessened, and her pains were considerably abated.

About the end of November she found her breast more swelled, and the pain more acute than it had been for six weeks before, had a restlessness, giddiness in her head, and weight over her eyes; the discharge of the issue stopped, and a violent humour came all round the orifice. As I had desired a little blood might be taken away, if occasion required it, she was bled about the last day of November, on which she fainted away, and afterwards had fainting fits two or three times in a day, great sickness at her stomach, and sometimes bled at the nose. On these
symptoms

symptoms coming on, notwithstanding she had taken somewhat purgative twice in a week, from her first beginning to take the hemlock, it was thought proper to suspend the taking the hemlock for some days.

I then ordered her an infusion of the cortex Peruvianus an ounce, in powder, to a quart of spring water, to let it stand three or four days, shaking it every day; and then that she should take three spoonfuls, twice in a day; that she should repeat the hemlock in the same quantity she took at the first; that she should not again exceed that quantity on any account; and that she should continue the lime-water and the millepedes.

About the latter end of December she had a regular appearance of her menses, but very moderate; her pains were very much abated, and the schirrus much less, though she often complained of a swimming in her head, and a restlessness in the night. From this time, viz. the end of December, she continued mending in all respects so much, that I heard nothing of her 'till March 1763; when Mrs. Savage (the lady under whose inspection she took the hemlock) came to London, and told me, that Ann James was surprizingly recovered; that her cancer was much lessened, that she could use her arms, work for herself and family, and that her pains were so much abated, that she was quite happy.

In September last I was at Boughton, saw her, and examined her breasts: the schirrus in her left breast was not half so big as when I saw it before; the ramifications were all gone, and it did not at

all adhere to the pectoral muscle ; her appetite was good, and she was able to do her business as usual, and had that day I saw her been brewing : she said she sometimes felt some of those stabbing pains she before complained of, but they were not frequent nor very severe.

The beginning of this November I had a farther account of her from Sir Thomas Ryder, who lives in that neighbourhood, and whom I desired to be so kind as to inform me of her present state of health : he with his usual benevolence (than whom no man hath more) sent for the woman, and had the following account from herself ;

That the lump in her breast, which she expected would break, is not half so big as it was, and continued decreasing ; that she hath great spirits ; and, from being one of the most miserable of the human species, she now enjoys ease and happiness, and can, without any great pain, do all her usual business, as washing, brewing, baking, and needle-work, except spinning, that motion still giving her great pain : she continues to take half a drachm of dry hemlock twice in a day, but takes the green, when she can get it, in larger quantities. Sir Thomas adds, that she looks very well for a woman of her age.

From the happy success of the hemlock in this instance, it were to be wished it might be tried in some other similar case, and that the weight of the plant taken in one day (whether green or dry) might be particularly ascertained, which was too often in this case taken by guess ; and as the extract

tract recommended by Dr. Stork in his ingenious treatise hath not, upon trial in England, been attended with the same success it had at Vienna, I should prefer the herb itself to any preparation of it.

XLIX. *An Account of a remarkable Meteor : In a Letter to the Reverend Thomas Birch, D. D. Secret. of R. S. from Mr. Samuel Dunn.*

Reverend Sir,

Chelsea, Dec. 9th, 1763.

Read Dec. 15,
1763.

IN the Months of September and October last, on many different days, but always in the afternoon, when the Sun was nearly of the same height above the horizon, I was amused with the appearance of a kind of meteor, which I do not know that it hath been before taken notice of by others. As it appeared under nearly the same circumstances at other times, and therefore may contribute towards the better understanding the theory of a parhelion, I shall give the description of this meteor, as it appeared the 6th of October last, at five o'clock afternoon. A kind of mock Sun appeared of equal altitude with the real Sun about $22\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ southerly therefrom. A little