

XXVII. *Extract of a Letter from Mr. Benjamin Gale, a Physician in New England, to John Huxham, M. D. F. R. S. concerning the successful Application of Salt to Wounds made by the Biting of Rattle Snakes; dated at Killingworth in Connecticut, 20 August, 1764.*

Read June 13, 1765. **I** Have been disappointed in procuring a rattle snake, to make experiments in expelling the poison, particularly the efficacy of sea salt; but have now the satisfaction to acquaint you, that having desired Mr. Porter, an eminent surgeon, and a gentleman of worth and probity, to make enquiry, whether the efficacy of sea salt could be properly attested; he this day informs me, that a person was wounded by that serpent, about the beginning of this month, just above his shoe. The teeth of the serpent, upon examination by the probe, he found to have entered near half an inch. The person bitten immediately made a strong ligature above the wound, and in less than two hours came to Mr. Porter's. The leg and foot below the ligature were much swelled, and the patient grievously affected with a nausea. Mr. Porter made immediately a deep scarification, rubbed it well with salt, applied a doffel of

of lint moistened over the salt and scarification, and dismissed his patient, who the next morning returned. The ligature was continued, nevertheless the tumefaction was greatly abated; the dressing before applied was renewed, and the person recovered without any further application. This perhaps, together with the former instance \*, may serve to establish the truth of its efficacy.

\* This was a person, under the care of Mr. Strong, a surgeon in New England, who in the year 1761 was bitten by a rattle snake in the left foot, between the great toe and the next. He immediately perceived a sickness at the stomach, which continued some time. Scarifications were directly made, by cutting the skin, pulled up by an awl, formed into a hook for that purpose. The first application was fine sea salt, which was plentifully sprinkled and rubbed in and about the wound and scarification. These were done in the space of about two minutes after the wound was made. Then a pultice made of burdock-root pounded, and mixt with a large portion of sea salt, was applied to the wound, and another of blood-root was bound about his leg a little below the knee. In the mean time, the patient took inwardly saffron and water, in which was steeped the bark of white ash, which caused him to vomit. The consequence of the wound was a tumefaction, which was greatest in the foot, but extended to the knee, where it ended. After these applications, nothing remarkable was observed in the wound. They were continued for two days, and the patient perfectly cured. Mr. Strong supposed the salt to be the principal ingredient, which effected the cure.