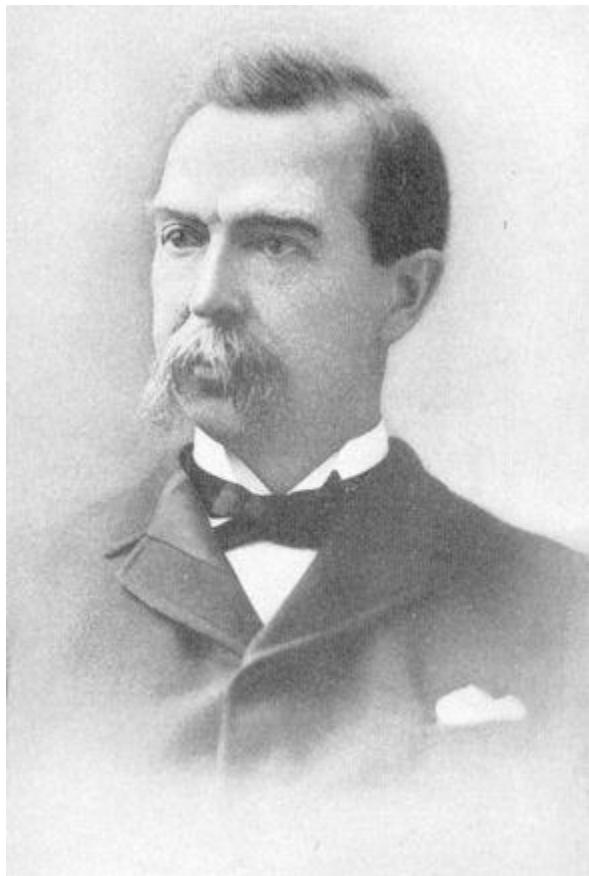


## **Timothy Field Allen**



Timothy Field Allen (1837-1902)

### **1872 - Senega in Paresis of the Oculo-motor Nerve**

"I have viewed Senega in a comparatively new light since August, 1867, when a gentleman from Indiana consulted me at the Ophthalmic Hospital about his eyes. He was thirty-three years old, slender, and had led a sedentary life. For years previous to that time he began to find a weakness about his eyes, a difficulty in seeing clearly, and his lids were inclined to droop. He was frequently obliged to pull them open with his fingers; then he began to see double. At first the right image was obliquely above the real one. He was not strong generally, but still not sick enough to complain. He than gave his eyes rest from reading, took good care of his general health, and improved somewhat. He continued better, with frequent relapses, till this summer (1867), when he "did" Mammoth Cave.<sup>[1]</sup> His double vision returned much worse than before, and persisted for several weeks, till he saw me. He walked into the room with his head thrown backward (occasionally shutting his left eye and holding his head straight). This position of the head he said relieved the confusion of vision which he experienced with his head in a natural position and eyes open. He complained of seeing double, and that this defect made his gait uncertain, since he was liable to make missteps on

account of being confused as to the height of a step, or, indeed, whether or not there was any step at all.

I gave the case a prolonged examination at my private office, and ascertained that he had paresis of the left oculo-motor nerve, with paralysis of the superior rectus muscle. His upper lid was very weak, and fell half over the eye. Convergence was very difficult, and the position of double images established the diagnosis. Farther than this, very little was to be found. His back was weak and his general muscular power deficient, but he suffered from no pain, and felt generally well. He was subject to "biliary headaches", but had not been very sick at any time.

There seemed very little clue to a remedy except the way in which he carried his head (of course he carried his head so with such a trouble). I found in the antipsoric part of Boenninghausen's Repertory, "vision, relieved by bending the head backward, *Senega*;" and in the proving as recorded in the Archiv, I found this symptom:

"On walking toward the setting sun, another smaller sun seemed to float beneath. On turning the eye outward, it changed into a compressed oval. On bending the head backward, or closing the eyes, it disappeared."

The explanation of this symptom is not clear to my mind even yet; but bending the head backward relieved double vision, and, besides, I found that *Senega* produced "weakness on reading, with lachrymation on long exertion".

"Vision becomes dim and flickering on reading; compels one to frequently wipe the eye, which aggravates."

"Flickering and weakness on continued reading or writing."

"Flickering on reading; the letters run together."

All of which might depend upon a muscular asthenopia.

In *Senega*, the "pupils are contracted and sluggish", which was not the case with my patient. This symptom, of two suns, is given in Jahr's Symptomen Codex; but Currie leaves it out of the English edition; and Hull, in following (as it seems) Currie rather than Jahr, does not give it.

I prescribed *Senega*<sup>200</sup>, a dose every twenty-four hours till some effect was perceived. Improvement began at once, and in a few days the double vision had nearly disappeared. I gave him some powders to take home with him as a reserve. In about a month I received a letter stating that he had been working hard in the office, and that his eyes were beginning to trouble him as before. I sent by mistake *Stramonium*, but he sent me word in a few days that "that was not the same medicine at all, for it did not act like the other." I then sent *Senega*, which set him right.

This summer he came to see me, and stated that he had been improving in general vigor for these past four years, and had no more "biliary headaches".

*Senega* formerly enjoyed a high reputation in various troubles of the eye, especially for organic diseases, but of late we hear little of it. The pathogenesis is marked on the eye, and I have used it with great satisfaction in blepharitis and catarrh of the conjunctiva (when indicated); but this is the only instance of cure of a paralysis by it that I know of."

(*Senega in Paresis of the Oculo-motor Nerve*, by T. F. Allen, M. D., Surgeon to the New York Ophthalmic Hospital, in: The Hahnemannian Monthly vol. 7 (1872), p. 106-108)

[1] A series of underground caverns in South-West Kentucky, noted for their remarkable onyx formations; since 1936 National Park