

Alfred Crosby Pope



Alfred Crosby Pope (1830-1908)

1904 - Observations on the therapeutic uses of the tincture of *Ailanthus*

"Homoeopathy enables us to utilize accidental cases of poisoning for therapeutic purposes, as no other therapeutic method of enquiry will do - a poisoning is a proving, and when carefully studied one of the best kind. The *Ailanthus glandulosus* is a tree, a native of China, attaining a height of 30 to 60 feet, of rapid growth, and by reason of this and its graceful foliage, and also that it is avoided by caterpillars and insects, is rendered attractive as an ornament for streets and parks. Hence it has been largely planted in the streets and parks of New York, Brooklyn, and other cities in the United States; but on the other hand, so much illness has arisen during the flowering season that many of them have been cut down. In this country its seeds have ripened at Reading, and also at Belton Park, Lord Brownlow's place, near Grantham.

Its activity is chiefly, though not exclusively, developed during the flowering season. The tincture should be prepared from the fresh plant, the dried root and bark being, if not absolutely inert, far less powerful than the juice of the fresh, well developed flowers and bark.

Our knowledge of the pathogenetic properties of the *ailanthus* was, in the first place, accidentally obtained, and the provings, which have since been made, have confirmed and somewhat extended our knowledge of its action. A full record of these provings is given in Allen's *Encyclopaedia of Pure Materia Medica* and also in the *Encyclopaedia of Drug Pathogenesis*; in addition, there is a very excellent study of the pathogenesis, and the sphere of utility of the drug in disease, by Dr. Dyce Brown, in the *Monthly Homoeopathy Review*, vol. xxi.

The history of the adoption of this drug into the practice of medicine is a striking proof of the value of a therapeutic principle in putting to a useful purpose cases of accidental poisoning, as the results which have arisen from its use in practice are proofs of the homoeopathic principle.

A daughter of the late Dr. Wells, of Brooklyn, and a young friend, had been amusing themselves one evening by stripping the outside bark of the young and tender shoots of the *ailanthus*, and then after writing letters on the stalks with the point of a pin, these were rubbed on them by the end of the finger. This process was many times repeated, and by it the juice of the stalk conveyed to the buccal membrane in considerable quantities. The following is Dr. Well's account of the illness of his child which followed, from *The American Homoeopathic Review*, vol. iv., p. 385.

"A girl, fifteen years of age, rose in the morning, feeling slightly ill, dressed and went immediately to the breakfast-table. She could take no food; the sight of it made her feel so much worse she immediately left the table and went to her room. She was seized suddenly with violent vomiting; severe headache; intolerance of light; dizziness; hot, red face; inability to sit up; rapid small pulse; drowsy, at the same time very restless; great anxiety; two hours after the first attack, the drowsiness had become insensibility, with constant muttering delirium; did not recognize the members of her family; she was now covered, in patches, with an eruption of miliary rash, with efflorescence between the points of the rash, all of a dark, almost a livid, color; the patches between the points of the eruption were of a dingy, dull opaque appearance; the eruption was more profuse on the fore-head and face than elsewhere, and especially on the fore-head. The whole aspect of the eruption, and the whole condition of the patient, were so just like those so many times seen in cases of this variety of Scarlet Fever, that the case was unhesitatingly recognized as an example of it, and in its most violent and hopeless form. The pulse was now small, and so rapid as hardly to be counted; the surface had become cold and dry; the livid color of the skin, when pressed out by the finger, returned very slowly; the whole was a most complete picture of torpor, and seemingly a perfect instance of that manifestation of it which immediately precedes dissolution in these rapidly fatal cases of Scarlet Fever. There was apparently no prospect of the patient's living more than a few hours.

Such cases in the practice of the writer had always gone to a fatal termination, and this had been more rapid in its progress than any he had seen. The patient being his own child, he had opportunity for most carefully watching the case. In about three hours from the first appearance of the eruption the livid color began to lose something of its dark hue; the restlessness and anxiety diminished; the pulse became more distinct and less frequent; consciousness partially returned; the eruption became a brighter red; and the whole train of symptoms so similar to this pernicious form of the fever gradually gave place to a train of phenomena scarcely less remarkable, but not at all like those of any variety of Scarlet Fever. Both the experimenters were made ill, with similar symptoms, but the symptoms were much less violent in the patient's friend. It is a singular fact that this patient has been attacked by a similar miliary rash each year since this poisoning, at the season of the blossoming of the Ailanthus, and is always now more or less ill each year from this cause. This case is here in part presented to the reader for what it is worth. That it was the result of the Ailanthus poison is sustained by the fact that the juice of the green stalks was introduced into the mouths of the two girls, that they both, soon after, sickened, suffering from similar symptoms, differing chiefly in degree of severity rather than in kind; and in the case of my patient showing subsequently a train of symptoms precisely like those witnessed in the case of a lad who was poisoned by eating the seeds of this tree."

In a letter which I had from Dr. Wells, he informed me that the train of phenomena to which the primary symptoms gave place were of the nature of a series of rigors followed by burning fever, attacks of which continued for a fortnight. The following were the characteristic symptoms: -

"During the chill there was great hunger, with a distressing sense of general emptiness. Any food taken was speedily vomited. Intolerable pain was felt in the back of the neck, the upper part of the back, and in the right hip-joint. During the hot stage there was urgent thirst with delirium, and a strong desire for brandy. The chill was always preceded by a miliary eruption, most copiously developed in the forehead and face."

Dr. Wells, in introducing this case as one calculated to teach us something in the treatment of scarlatina, very cautiously says, that it gives us some reason to believe that it may be found valuable in cases characterised by symptoms of intoxication of the brain. Dr. Wells drew this inference solely from the fact of the close similarity of the symptoms of his child and those of what is termed malignant scarlatina. But for his knowledge of the law of similars, this accidental poisoning would have taught him nothing, save that ailanthus juice was very deleterious, and beyond having given him a knowledge of the symptoms by which the injury it effected might be recognized, this poisoning would have been useless, and would only have added an interesting curiosity to the many already collected in toxicological works. But guided by this law, Dr. Wells was able to suggest its use in scarlatina of a type in the treatment of which we were well-nigh powerless. Believing that the unintentional proving made by Miss Wells and her friend were of great importance, I introduced them, with a few comments, in the notice of English physicians in the *Monthly Homoeopathic Review* of 1867.

Though my own practice has so far not afforded me an opportunity of testing the powers of ailanthus in cases of scarlatina presenting symptoms similar to those appearing in Miss Wells, other physicians have had such opportunities, and have successfully employed it. Of these one of the earliest was Dr. Chalmers, of Sheffield, at that time practising at Thornhill in Dumfriesshire, and engaged in an experimental investigation of homoeopathy. An epidemic of scarlatina raged in the village and its neighbourhood. The type of the disease was adynamic throughout, and the mortality great. Dr. Chalmers wrote to me at this time to the effect that in the malignant form of this disease he was much disappointed with the medicines he had used. In reply, I told him that I doubted the existence of any true *simile* to the true malignant scarlatina unless it were ailanthus. I sent him a copy of my paper, and some tincture which the

late Messrs. Turner, of Fleet Street, had obtained from New York. Up to that time Dr. Chalmers had lost nearly every, indeed if I remember aright, every case of the truly malignant type that had come under his notice. Subsequently to this he met with seven cases of this character; all were treated with *ailanthus*, and all recovered. One swallow does not make a summer, neither do seven. But prior to the use of *ailanthus* it must be remembered that Dr. Chalmers had lost *all* such cases, while subsequently to his using it, everyone he met with recovered. That is a fact sufficiently striking to render one disposed to put the same remedy to the test in similar cases. The late Dr. Madden mentioned to me that he had seen several cases apparently saved by it - one which he saw in consultation appeared utterly hopeless, but rallied promptly and recovered well after its use. The late Dr. Fisher, of Sidney, too, has had large and gratifying experience of its use.

Dr. Chalmers published a very interesting report of his cases in the *Monthly Homoeopathic Review*, Dec., 1868. From them I will select the following:

"CASE 3. - A. S., aet. 2 years and 5 months. August 30, 1868. One of two ill; rather a delicate child, and prone to bronchial attacks. She has been fretful and uneasy for two days; at night, feverish and restless. Eruption appeared on the face last night, and on the body and extremities this morning; she had a very bad night, and was threatened with convulsions; and there are still very bad twitchings of the muscles, particularly of the right side. Eruption is dark coloured, scanty, and patchy. The mother tells me it has disappeared from places where she saw it. Skin is hot and dry; pulse very frequent, weak, and irregular. She is quite incoherent, and does not appear to know anyone or comprehend anything; breathing quick and irregular; eyes suffused and congested, and when she is roused, have a wild, startled look; glands of neck are swollen and apparently tender; swallows with freedom, and greedily, but the stomach rejects everything almost immediately. It is impossible to see the mouth or throat, she is so restless and uncontrollable.

To have *ailanthus glandulosa* 1x, gtt. ss every hour. A light poultice for the throat. Milk for diet.

Vespere. - She has had seven doses of the *ailanthus*, is much calmer, and has slept a good deal at intervals, but is still stupid and unmanageable. Skin generally covered with eruption, which is bright and normal-looking; muscular twitchings abated; vomiting has not occurred for several hours; bowels have moved three times; pulse is more marked, but still very frequent and feeble; expression still stupid.

Continue *ailanthus* 1x, gtt. ss every second hour.

31st. - Passed a very restless night, and refused to take anything - medicine, milk, or water - until early morning; pulse not so frequent, rather more vigorous, but still weak and shaky; skin is moist, and eruption general and well coloured, but mixed with miliary points over the body; the nose bled a little this morning, supposed to have been caused by a knock during her extreme restlessness; she appears to be more conscious; the eyes more natural in expression; she is swallowing well, and took now a dose of the *ailanthus* and a little milk; twitching of muscles quite gone; no vomiting; bowels rather relaxed.

Continue *ailanthus* every fourth hour. Milk as before.

Sept. 2nd. - From this date improvement was continuous; the eruption gradually disappearing; the glandular swelling rapidly diminished; a discharge of blood and pus took place from the nose to-day, and some fissures were noticed around the angles of the mouth.

She was ordered *mercurius vivus* 3 twice daily, and in a few days was quite convalescent. her complete recovery took place rapidly and completely."

During the year 1870, Cambridge was inundated with scarlatina, chiefly of a very malignant type. From several cases which had come under his care, the late Dr. Newton arrived at the conclusion that "Ailanthus, in a low dilution, is capable of antidoting the virulence of scarlatina maligna, when the poison acts on the nervous system."

One case narrated by Dr. Newton (*Monthly Homoeopathic Review*, vol. xv, p. 207) is both striking and instructive. Summoned at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, he found his patient, a girl of 13 years of age, delirious and insensible, a state of things which had been inaugurated with violent greenish slimy vomiting. The pupils were widely dilated, and the pulse was small and quick, the skin of the face and forehead was of a dark mahogany colour, but the rest of the surface was free from all eruptions, except petechiae on the back. The mother told me that the whole body was yesterday of a bright scarlet hue, and she was quite unable to account for the alarming change. A drop of ailanthus was ordered every two hours. After taking four such doses the stupor was removed, and the character of the rash totally changed, it was now a brilliant scarlet, and her recovery was satisfactory.

Five or six years prior to the appearance of the case reported by Dr. Wells, Dr. Allen, of New York, published the net results of a series of experiments upon himself and three friends in the *North American Journal of Homoeopathy*, vol. vii., p. 385. In these all the symptoms characterising the case of Dr. Well's daughter were present, and in addition tenderness and enlargement of the submaxillary and parotid glands, together with a series of pulmonary symptoms, to which I shall refer presently.

In *The Monthly Homoeopathic Review*, vol. xxiv, p. 467, Mr. S. H. Blake gives very full details of a case of malignant scarlatina with glandular enlargement, in which ailanthus was strikingly useful. When visiting the boy, who was two years old, Mr. Blake found that a very scanty rash had appeared on the face and neck. This disappeared and the throat was enormously swollen, on the left side so much so that the line of the jaw seemed almost on the level with the neck, the swelling being continuous and uniform, as if the whole of that side of the neck were infiltrated. It was of a dusky colour, and when pressed on was doughy, and the skin was easily made to pucker over the swollen part. The great swelling pressing on the fauces, and the struggles of the child to get free, made it impossible to get a proper view of the pharynx; such as could be had revealed a greyish-white exudation about the left tonsil, but the shreds which came away on the handle of the spoon were pultaceous and soft. Two drops of ailanthus were added to three ounces of water, and a teaspoonful was given every two hours. Thirty hours later, and through a dark and rugged aperture formed by sloughing in the middle of the neck, copious yellow pus free from foetor was discharged. A large slough separated in the course of five or six days, and recovery was rapid and complete.

So severe an illness, such a thorough condition of toxaemia in so young a child, is rarely if ever recovered from, and one can scarcely doubt that but for the medicine given this one would not have done so.

In another case to which Mr. Blake refers as having come under his care, after having been abandoned as hopeless by the medical attendant and two consulting physicians, he says, "The symptoms, which at once began to abate under ailanthus, were especially delirium, sleeplessness, refusal of food, enlarged cervical glands, and discharge from the ears." The patient, it should be added, when first seen by Mr. Blake, had been delirious for twenty-one days, and presented the usual array of typhoid symptoms superadded to those of scarlet fever.

It is thus in malignant scarlet fever that this medicine is especially useful, to which it is so strikingly homoeopathic. The characteristic symptoms of the cases of scarlatina in which it is indicated are the commencement of the fever with severe headache, rapidly followed by vomiting, delirium, unconsciousness, and convulsions; an imperfectly developed and soon suppressed dusky, livid and patchy eruption; the tonsillary swelling is somewhat considerable

and livid in color, and the glands of the neck may be enlarged. The tongue and lips are more or less livid; the pulse is rapid, weak, and thready; and there is often diarrhoea. In such cases as these half-drop doses of the 1st dec. may be prescribed with hope and confidence. Some have reported to me their want of success in prescribing it in scarlatina, but I have generally found on enquiry that the cases in which these medical men had given it were cases in which the symptoms did not indicate it; they were rather cases requiring stramonium or rhus, or even belladonna, than ailanthus. It is only of service in the class of cases I have described.

Further experiments (*Cyclopaedia of Drug Pathogenesis*, vol. i) have shown that with the patchy, livid, miliary eruption there are conjunctival and nasal irritation, with cough, dyspnoea, and diarrhoea. These symptoms, taken in connection with the cerebral oppression, prostration, and feeble circulation, indicate ailanthus as a hopeful medicine in an epidemic of malignant measles, where the eruption is livid, scanty, and retrocedes suddenly.

It is also one of several medicines adapted to individual cases of the *genus* diphtheria. One prover notes "great accumulation of matter, part of which is easily expectorated, while a portion is with much difficulty detached in flakes." In cases of diphtheria where the false membrane is feebly organised, but the nervous prostration excessive, where the brunt of the disease is cerebral rather than faucial, and where there is some miliary eruption, ailanthus will be a useful medical to trust to.

These experiments also show that ailanthus produces great mental depression, indifference to anything and everything, with sometimes great restlessness and anxiety, with considerable confusion and mental weakness. The experimenter is unable to concentrate his thoughts, and has to read a passage several times before he can comprehend it, even in an imperfect way. He will add up, for example, columns of figures, and does so with difficulty and often incorrectly. Memory is enfeebled. At the same time we find him suffering from vertigo on moving, with nausea and retching - he walks straight with difficulty, and sees objects as if they were moving up and down. He has also a dull, heavy, pressure pain in the forehead, which indisposes him to or incapacitates him for mental labor. At the same time there is a marked feeling of tightness or constriction of the chest, with oppression and pain below the hypochondria; by some provers it is described as like a stricture below the ribs. Further, numbness is felt down the left side from the scapula to the hip, and pain in the region of the scapula preventing movement of the right arm is experienced. Numbness down the left arm to the fingers, which feel asleep, occurs in others. In other cases there is tingling, pricking feeling all down the left arm, and one prover describes an "electrical thrill" extending to the ends of the fingers. Similar symptoms are noted as occurring in the lower extremities. The limbs feel as though they were asleep, with numbness of the left leg and tingling, pricking pain in the foot and toes; a feeling of uneasiness and aching restlessness in the limbs, heaviness of the extremities, pain in the right foot prevents walking; a severe pain in the left foot, a kind of tension in walking. Finally, the sleep is disturbed and unrefreshing at night, while during the day there is marked heaviness and drowsiness increased by taking a glass of wine. All these symptoms reflect a condition of cerebral oppression. They correspond closely to the cerebral condition present in some fevers, especially those of a typhoid or malignant type; the hyperaemia with drowsiness, headache, and low delirium. In relieving this state ailanthus has been found useful.

They also resemble a cerebral congestion which appears to be the precursor of an apoplexy in feeble and organically diseased persons. As Dr. Dyce Brown in his essay on the drug says, "they point not so much to acute congestion, as to an oppressed brain, with a state of passive or venous, rather than an active or arterial congestion, and they indicate ailanthus in the dull, heavy, confused state of brain which forewarns an apoplexy." Mr. S. H. Blake records three cases of headache of this type in the *Monthly Homoeopathic Review*, vol. xxv, p. 284. One of

these patients was a man sixty years of age, who had suffered from a cerebral lesion for several years.

"At times he has had severe headaches, localised and associated with cerebral disease. With the paroxysms of headache there have also been neuralgic pains in various parts. At the time when these symptoms had passed away he suffered from a troublesome drowsiness throughout the day; notwithstanding that he slept well at night. There was also a dull, confused state of mind and marked mental depression at times. The drowsiness had lasted for several weeks, but ailanthus cured it in a week, making the head feel much better at the same time."

In another instance, a woman sixty-five years of age, also one where the health had been enfeebled by long continued cardiac degeneration and dilatation, Mr Blake says:

"She was also subject to cerebral congestion, with dull headache, general and occipital. This headache has been repeatedly relieved by a copious nose-bleed during the attack. On one occasion nose-bleeding occurred, and relieved the vertex headache to a considerable extent, but there was left afterwards a dull, stupefied, and very drowsy state, continuing even during the day, with dull sub-occipital pain. Ailanthus 1st cent. cured this state of the head in twelve hours, giving great relief and making the head feel lighter and clearer, but it left the occipital pain, for which gelsemium was given with success."

It is in headaches of this type, depending upon passive hyperaemia arising from either a toxic degenerated condition of the blood, and not such as are due to brain fag, that ailanthus has proved an efficient remedy, and it is precisely to these kinds of congestive headaches that it is homoeopathic.

Probably, as Dr. Dyce Brown has also suggested, it will prove of service in some cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis. The peculiar cord-like tightness around the body to which it gives rise, the low type of fever it excites, and the miliary eruption it produces, all point to it as a medicine the pathogenesis of which ought to be studied in healing a disease of this kind.

In nearly all clinical illustrations of the action of ailanthus which have been recorded, it has been used in the first decimal or first centesimal dilution."

MONKTON, NEAR RAMSGATE.

Dec. 10th, 1903.

(Alfred C. Pope, M. D., Observations on the therapeutic uses of the tincture of Ailanthus, The Monthly Homoeopathic Review vol. 48 (1904), p. 12-21)