Convallaria Polygonatum.

Published by Dr Woodville Septr 1. 1790.

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The ſenſible qualities of this inſpiſſated juice are not remarkable either to the ſmell or to the taſte; it is inflammable, and diſſolves readily in watery or ſpirituous menſtrua. Elaterium is a very powerful cathartic, and was frequently employed as ſuch both by the Greek and Arabian phyſicians, and its uſe has ſince been much commended in hydropic caſes, particularly by Pauli,[b] Sydenham,[c] and Liſter.[d] It is undoubtedly the moſt violent purgative in the Materia Medica, and ought therefore to be adminiſtered with great caution, and only where the milder cathartics have proved ineffectual. The doſe is from half a grain to three grains: the moſt prudent and effectual way in which dropſies are now treated by this remedy, is by repeating it at ſhort intervals in ſmall doſes.

[b] Although S. Pauli employed this medicine with great ſucceſs, yet from the extreme violence of its operation, he thinks it ſhould not be uſed until the milder purgatives have failed.

[c] "Elaterium ſive fæcula Cucumeris agreſtis, potenter, in permodica quantitate vires ſuas exſerit, in conturbanda alvo, & fæcibus, cum ſeroſis & aquoſis humoribus copioſe egerendis," &c. Op. p. 488.

[d] We may alſo notice, that Liſter obſerves that the patients, by taking this medicine, became very hot, and found unuſual ſtrong pulſations at the extremities of their fingers. De Hydrope, in App. Op. Mortoni, p. 25.

CONVALLARIA POLYGONATUM. COMMON SOLOMON's SEAL.

SYNONYMA. Convallaria. *Pharm. Edinb.* Polygonatum latifolium flore majore odoro. *Bauh. Pin.* 303. Polygonatum floribus ex ſingularibus pediculis. *J. Bauh.* iii. *p.* 529. Polygonatum majus flore majore. *Park. Theat. p.* 696. Sweet-ſmelling Solomon's Seal. *Gerard. Emac.* 904. *Raii Synopſis, p.* 263. *Spec.* 2. *Raii Hiſtor. p.* 665. *Withering. Bot. Arrang. p.* 354. *Flor. Dan. Icon.* 337.

β Polygonatum Hellebori albi folio, caule purpuraſcente. *Raii Syn.* 263.

Claſs Hexandria. *Ord.* Monogynia. *L. Gen. Pl.* 425.

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Eſſ. Gen. Ch. *Cor.* ſexfida. *Bacca* maculoſa 3-locularis.

Sp. Ch. C. foliis alternis amplexicaulibus, caule ancipiti, pedunculis axillaribus ſubunifloris.

THE root is perennial, horizontal, white, fibrous, beſet with knobs, and ſaid [a] to be marked with circular depreſſions, reſembling the impreſſions of a ſeal; hence the name Solomon's Seal. The ſtalk is inclined, angular, ſmooth, and riſes about a foot in height: the leaves are oval, pointed, ribbed, ſmooth, above of a deep green colour, underneath glaucous, and at the baſe embrace the ſtem: the flowers are long, bell-ſhaped, white, or tinged with green; divided at the extremity into ſix ſhort ſegments, and hang from the ſame ſide of the ſtalk upon ſlender peduncles: the filaments are ſix, tapering, ſhort, and inſerted in the corolla: the antheræ are oblong and erect: the ſtyle is filiform, longer than the ſtamina, and crowned with a blunt triangular ſtigma: the germen is round, and when ripe becomes a black berry, divided into three cells, each containing a ſingle round ſeed. It grows in the rocky and woody parts of England, and flowers in May and June.

The root, which is the medicinal part of Solomon's Seal, is very generally, by writers on the Materia Medica, referred to the Convallaria multiflora of Linnæus, or the Polygonatum latifolium vulgare of C. Bauhin. It is of a mucilaginous [b] quality, and has long been commonly employed as a diſcutient poultice to various kinds of tumours, but more particularly to bruiſes, accompanied with extravaſation of blood in the cellular membrane:[c] it is alſo recommended as a coſmetic; and in Galen's time was uſed by women to remove pimples and freckles of the ſkin. Of its aſtringent effects, when taken internally, there can be no well grounded expectation. The berries, flowers, and leaves, are extremely acrid, and are ſaid to be of a poiſonous quality.[d]

[a] Theſe depreſſions are more peculiarly characteriſtic of the Convallaria multiflora.

[b] As a proof that theſe roots contain a conſiderable proportion of farinaceous matter, Bergius ſays, " Panem e radice recente, addita farina frumenti, annonæ caritate coxerunt ruſtici noſtrates, qui fuſcus fuit, & ſubglutinoſo ſapore." M. M. 271.

[c] " Cataplaſma e radice familiare remedium eſt in ſugillationibus, & in omni contuſione, ſanguinem grumoſum efficaciter diſcutiens." Rutty M. M. 403.

[d] Vide Haller Stirp. Helv. No. 1243. Geoff. M. M.

CARUM CARUI.

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