

IVY POISONING AND ITS TREATMENT.

Nine years ago the writer was severely poisoned by handling *Rhus toxicodendron* and though he has since taken great care when in its vicinity few seasons have passed in which he has escaped. In his own case many remedies have been tried, that which has proved most efficacious being lead acetate and alcohol. In a paper published in *Rhodora*, (Vol. IV., pp. 43-45). Dr. Franz Pfoff gives the results of a very thorough study of *Rhus toxicodendron* and *R. venenata*. He discovered that the active principal was an oil which he named "Toxicodendrol" which he found in all parts of the plant at all seasons. A sample of the oil kept in an open porcelain dish for over thirteen months proved to be as active as ever before. Dr. Pfoff also found lead acetate to be the best remedy, and as cases of ivy poisoning are very frequent here, his directions for removing the poison and keeping it from spreading may well be reprinted. He says:

"This can be done by vigorously washing the affected exposed parts with soap and water and a scrubbing brush; that is to say by mechanically removing the oil. As the active principle is very soluble in alcohol and gives with lead acetate a precipitate which is nearly insoluble in alcohol, other processes may be employed to remove the oil. The exposed parts may be washed repeatedly with fresh quantities of alcohol and a scrubbing brush. The poisonous oil may be thus removed in alcoholic solution of lead acetate; in this case the poisonous principle would be first transformed in its insoluble lead compound and then washed away with alcohol.

"The washing must be done thoroughly when alcohol is employed, as otherwise the alcohol might only serve to distribute the oil more widely over the skin. The finger nails should be cut short and also perfectly cleaned with the scrubbing brush. Oily preparations, or anything which dissolves the poisonous oil, if used, should be immediately removed, as they may only spread the poison, giving it a larger area on which to work.

"The treatment above outlined can not cure the already inflamed parts which must heal by the usual process of repair, but it does prevent the spreading of the inflammation and may serve to remove the poison before it has had time to produce its characteristic effects upon the skin."

In a later number of *Rhodora*, (Vol. IV, p. 106) Mr. L.E. Am-



midown, who describes himself as being very susceptible to ivy poison, tells of a preventive which makes it possible for him to visit localities in which it is abundant without being affected. He says: "I take with me a bottle filled with a strong solution of saleratus (the common kind used in cooking). When I come out of the swamp I wash my hands, face and neck—wherever it is possible that the poison has touched the skin—with the solution. Since doing so I have never been poisoned and can roam through the place at will. I take no needless risks and am always careful not to touch the dogwood (*Rhus venenata*) if I see it. However, it is so thick that it would be impossible to avoid it altogether."

Everywhere for nearly a mile along the east side of the Beaver Meadow the ground is covered with poison ivy, spoiling for many collectors one of the most interesting fields for botanical work in this vicinity. Rockcliffe, too, is a dangerous place to visit for those who are at all susceptible. With proper care and a prompt use of the remedies given above the danger of serious poisoning will be greatly lessened if not entirely removed.

J. M. M.

THE CONNECTICUT VS. THE KENTUCKY WARBLER.

A CORRECTION.

In the report on the sub-excursion of the club to Rockcliffe, May 5th, I am inadvertently made to report having seen a Kentucky warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*). While I would have been delighted to again meet this old acquaintance of mine from the south, I must state that it was the Connecticut warbler (*Geothlypis agilis*) I saw. This is a great rarity anywhere and has been reported for Ottawa only once before by Mr. J. Fleming, of Toronto, who saw it also at Rockcliffe. The song of this bird is very characteristic and cannot easily be mistaken for that of another. It begins with some very low notes, as though the bird was inhaling, then a few a little louder, exhaling, and then several loud, liquid, bubbling notes, in the pitch of the oven-bird or water-thrush. This song I heard May 2nd from a tree in the city, once on the same day at Britannia and May 5 at Rockcliffe, before I saw the bird plainly. So it may, after all, not be so rare here.

C. W. G. EIFRIG.



Macoun, James Melville. 1906. "Ivy Poisoning and its Treatment." *The Ottawa naturalist* 20(4), 77–78.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/18017>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/368953>

Holding Institution

MBLWHOI Library

Sponsored by

MBLWHOI Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.