

acetic acid, the components of the tar. The solution has the colour of Madeira wine, and a sharp empyreumatic taste.

Medical properties and uses. — Tar water is stimulant and diuretic; but to produce the latter effect, its operation requires to be aided by bodily exercise. It may prove useful in scurvy, and some cutaneous diseases; but the reputation which it obtained on the faith of the judgment of the worthy Bishop of Cloyne¹ has long since been lost, and it is now scarcely ever employed. From Oj to Oij may be taken in the course of a day.

MUCILAGINES.

MUCILAGES.

MUCILAGES, correctly speaking, are simple solutions of gum or mucus in water; but the term mucilage, in pharmaceutical language, implies also any solution of a thick and adhesive nature, resembling in its appearance the solutions of gum.

MUCILAGO ACACIÆ.² Lond. *Mucilage of Acacia.*

“Take of acacia gum, in powder, *four ounces*; boiling water, *half a pint*. Rub the gum with the water, gradually added, until it forms a mucilage.”

MUCILAGO ACACIÆ ARABICÆ. Edin. *Mucilage of Gum Arabic.*

“Take of gum arabic, in powder, *one part*; boiling water, *two parts*. Digest with occasional agitation, until the gum be dissolved; then strain the mucilage through linen.”

MUCILAGO GUMMI ARABICI. Dub. *Mucilage of Gum Arabic.*

“Take of gum arabic, in coarse powder, *four ounces*; boiling water, *eight pints*. Digest with frequent agitation, until the gum be dissolved; then strain the mucilage through linen.”

The straining through linen is very necessary, as the gum is often mixed with small pieces of wood and other impurities. The mucilage thus obtained is viscid, thick, and adhesive; semipellucid, and nearly colourless, if the gum be good. It has a faint, peculiar odour, is insipid, and may be kept without altering for a considerable time; but at length it becomes sour, and acetic acid is formed. The strong acids act on it as they do on gum; but when diluted, they do not alter mucilage. Alcohol converts it into a white curd; but proof spirit

¹ Berkley's *Siris*—passim.

² This appellation is certainly exceptionable. It is a mucilage of gum of the *Acacia vera*. The Edinburgh name is liable to nearly the same objection, except that the specific name of the plant is used, whereas *Acacia* is the name of the genus. Mucilage de Gomme arabique (F.) Schlieim de Arabische Gummi (G.) Mucilagine de Gomma arabica (I.)

produces scarcely any alteration; no change is produced by spirit of nitric ether; but sulphuric ether and compound spirit of ether precipitate a thick, white, tenacious curd. Tincture of muriate of iron, even when diluted, converts mucilage into a brownish or orange-coloured, insoluble jelly; and acetate of lead gives a copious, dense, flaky precipitate; while no change is produced by the solutions of the following metallic substances: superacetate of lead, green sulphate of iron, sulphate of zinc, oxymuriate of mercury, and tartarized antimony; nor by the alkalies or neutral salts. Mucilage, like gum, serves to combine resins and oils with water, for which purpose, and to give tenacity to pills, it is much employed in pharmacy.

Medical properties and uses. — The properties of mucilage are the same as those of gum. (See *Part ii.*) It is the usual basis of demulcent mixtures for allaying the tickling which excites cough in catarrh and phthisis; and combined with opium and other narcotics, it is useful in diarrhœa, dysentery, calculous affections, and ardor urinæ. The dose of mucilage may be from fʒss. to fʒj. frequently repeated.

Official preparations. *Mistura Guaiaci. L. Potio Carbonatis Calcis. E.*

MUCILAGO ASTRAGALI TRAGACANTHÆ.
Edin. *Mucilage of Tragacanth.*¹

“Take of gum tragacanth, in powder, *two drachms*; boiling water, *eight ounces*. Macerate for twenty-four hours, and triturate the gum carefully, that it may be dissolved; then strain the mucilage through linen.”

MUCILAGO GUMMI TRAGACANTHÆ. Dub. *Mucilage of Gum Tragacanth.*

“Take of gum tragacanth, in powder, *two drachms*; water, *eight fluid ounces*. Macerate in a covered vessel until the gum be dissolved; then strain the mucilage through linen.”

Tragacanth treated in this manner forms a thick, soft, very viscid mucilage, but the diffusion in the water is not uniform; nor does it become so even when boiled. It may be used in the same cases as mucilage of gum arabic. It has been recommended by M. Blaire, a French surgeon, as a remedy in burns. He directs linen rags, or bibulous paper soaked in the mucilage, to be applied over the affected part, which must be also kept moist with the mucilage for some days.² It is chiefly employed for making pills and troches.

MUCILAGO AMYLI. Lond. Edin. Dub. *Mucilage of Starch.*

¹ Mucilage de gomme Adraganthe (*E.*) Schleim de Traganth (*G.*) Mucilage di gomma Adragante (*I.*)

² Vide *London Med. Repository*, vol. iii. p. 257.

"Take of starch, *three drachms*; water, *a pint*. Rub the starch, gradually adding the water to it; then boil till a mucilage be produced."

Starch thus treated forms a strong, insipid, inodorous, opaline-coloured, gelatinous mucilage. In cases of phthisis, hectic fever, and abrasions of the stomach, it is given as a demulcent by the mouth; but it is more generally, and more advantageously exhibited in the form of enema in diarrhœa, dysentery, and abrasions of the rectum. It is the common vehicle for exhibiting opium in the form of enema.

DECOCTA.

DECOCTIONS.

THESE are aqueous solutions of the active principles of vegetables obtained by boiling. They are intended to afford more powerful remedies than can be obtained by the simple infusion of the same substances in cold or even in boiling water; but although by the operation of boiling the solvent power of the water is increased, and a greater quantity of the soluble parts of any vegetable body is consequently taken up by it, yet it does not always follow, that the medicinal virtues of decoctions are greater than those of infusions. On the contrary, if the active principles of a plant be volatile, or if they consist chiefly of extractive matter, this form of preparation often renders the remedy altogether inert, either by dissipating the volatile matters, or by favouring the oxidizement of the extractive, which in a continued temperature of 212° attracts the oxygen of the atmosphere so rapidly, that it is soon converted into a soluble insipid inert matter, and precipitated in the fluid. This is the case with some substances, which are nevertheless ordered to be prepared in this form by the Colleges, and which we shall particularly notice in treating of the individual decoctions.

For making decoctions, the substances employed must be divided, if in the dry state, by pulverization, or, if fresh, by slicing, so as to expose an extended surface to the action of the water; which is thus enabled to take up their soluble principles in a shorter space of time, a circumstance, for the reasons already stated, of much importance in the preparation of decoctions. By covering the vessel in which they are made, the action of the air is prevented from af-