separate arsenic from its combinations with other metals.—*Bulletin of the Royal Academy of Medicine, meeting of the 14th of December, 1841.* T. R. B.

87. *Nicotine*.—*Paris Academy of Sciences*, February 7th, 1842.—M. BARRAL read an extract of a memoir on some experiments made by him on tobacco, and on the extraction of *nicotine*, a substance discovered by Vauquelin in 1809. M. Barral had succeeded in obtaining this substance in a state of purity and had analyzed it. He found it to be a powerful alkali, under the form of a liquid, with a very low equivalent, and therefore capable of great saturation, as compared with other vegetable alkalies. It was also a very energetic poison, and taken in feeble doses, was found to produce almost instantaneous death.—*Athenæum*, February 19, 1842. T. R. B.

88. *Ergot*.—Some recent notices concerning this substance, deserve a brief summary. Mr. Quekett, who has already investigated the cause of its formation, and who, from numerous observations, attributed it to the grain becoming infested with a parasitic fungus, but left the question in doubt, as to the method by which this singular formation probably originates, is now of opinion, from several experiments made by him, that “the absorption of the sporules of the fungus, by the fibres of the root of the germinating grain, will be found to be the true cause of this singular production, and that when they arrive at the grain, they convert it into the body known as the *Ergot*.”

By exposing wheat and barley, as well as rye to the influence of this fungus, the latter was affected, and the two former not. It is particularly liable to this disease, and that it becomes so, arises either from constitutional properties or its anatomical peculiarities.

M. Bonjean of Chambéry has investigated the nature of *ergot*. He is of opinion, that if gathered on the first day of its formation, it is not so poisonous as when taken on the sixth—that a heat of 212° Fah. also injures its poisonous properties, as does also fermentation. He has discovered two active principles in it. One is the oil of *ergot*, of an acrid flavour, yellowish colour, soluble in cold ether and boiling alcohol. It possesses poisonous properties in a high degree. The author considers that twelve grammes of this oil are equivalent to thirty-two grammes of the *ergot* of rye. A high heat, however, destroys these violent properties, and converts it into a resin. It is better therefore to prepare it with cold ether. The second is the aqueous extract which is obtained by treating the powder, deprived of its oil or not, with water. It is brown, of a thick consistence and musty smell. It is soluble in water, and can be formed into mixtures, syrups and pills. It is not at all poisonous, but possesses *anti-hemorrhagic properties*.—*London Medical Gazette*, October 1841, and January, 1842. T. R. B.

89. *Suicide from Asphyxia by choking, from the introduction of a firm plug into the fauces*.—Mary Ann Palmer, a female in good health, aged 29 years, was found dead in her sleeping apartment. The cavities of the head, chest and abdomen were examined, and the medical certificate was that she had died of (simple) apoplexy. The body was received by Dr. HANDYSIDE, Lecturer on Surgery at Edinburgh, for public dissection, in accordance with the provisions of the Anatomy Act.

Dr. Handyside noticed the appearance of the brain, but found nothing adequate to account for death. Twenty-six days after receiving the body, he had occasion to demonstrate the muscular structure of the pharynx, and for this purpose, introduced his finger into the back part of the mouth, in order to stuff that cavity with hair. But he found that space already pre-occupied by a dense foreign substance, apparently round in form, and impacted between the root of the tongue and the soft parts, so very firmly, as to have cut off the supply of air to the lungs, by forcibly closing the mouth, and posterior nares.

He dislodged this body with considerable difficulty, and found it to consist of portions of soft cotton, called spindle ends. These were recognized by the par-