

moisture. Care should therefore be taken to keep their skins entire, so as to exclude the atmospheric oxygen and humidity. It is well known that the sugar in ripe grapes undergoes no change while the skin is entire, but the moment this is pricked, the grapes begin to ferment, and speedily spoil. No plan is therefore more to be deprecated than that of slicing and mashing potatoes. They should be placed in an atmosphere kept by chemical means in a state of extreme dryness, which may be easily and cheaply effected by piling them upon a bed of brush-wood, dry turf, or straw, interspersing through the pile unslaked lime coarsely bruised, and covering the pile thoroughly at the sides and on the top from the external elements. Since unslaked lime absorbs greedily one-third of its weight of moisture, it will bring the air in the spaces between the tubers into a perfectly arid state—a condition in which no decomposition of the substance can possibly take place. On the same principle, highly-polished steel articles may be kept for any length of time without tarnishing in our humid climate, provided a basin with lumps of unslaked lime be enclosed in the case or chest containing them. Slaked lime, on the contrary, being saturated with water, has no power of desiccation, but acts only by its causticity in favouring the destruction of all vegetable and animal matter.

Charlotte-street, Bedford-square, Dec. 9th, 1845.

CASE OF POISONING WITH THE BICHLORIDE OF MERCURY.

By WILLIAM BIRD HERAPATH, M.B. Lond., Bristol.

THE following case of poisoning by the bichloride of mercury in solution, presents many interesting peculiarities. It occurred recently in the practice of my partner, Mr. S. Bryant, and myself; we watched it closely throughout, but, from peculiar circumstances, were unable to render the patient all the assistance we wished:—

SUMMARY OF THE CASE.

1st day.—An attenuated epileptic patient swallowed a fluid containing a scruple of bichloride of mercury in solution. Vomiting came on in two minutes afterwards, and diarrhoea in fifteen, which continued during an hour. Stomach-pump used, and albumen injected.

2nd.—Diarrhoea continued; vomiting ceased; system rallied from the shock.

3rd.—Diarrhoea ceased; suppression of urine, and ptalism came on.

4th.—Ptalism and suppression continued.

5th.—Diarrhoea, dysentery, and tenesmus came on; great prostration and violent pain; sloughing of the gums, lips, and tongue.

6th.—Rallied; tenesmus continued; febrile excitement came on in the evening.

7th.—Excitement of the vascular system continued.

8th.—Excitement passed off; coma came on; convulsions followed. Jactitation and trembling ensued.

9th.—Coma increased; convulsions more frequent; prostration; congestion of the lungs; respiration became embarrassed.

10th.—Death occurred early.

Autopsy.—Œsophagus healthy; stomach inflamed; mucous membrane injected and extensively softened; some blood effused; vascularity of small intestines; caecal extremity of ilium almost gangrenous; caecum most highly inflamed, gangrenous, and sloughing; sigmoid flexure of colon and rectum also ulcerated, sloughing, and much inflamed; lungs congested, lobular pneumonia of the left.

REVIEWS.

Medical and Physiological Problems. By WILLIAM GRIFFIN, M.D., and DANIEL GRIFFIN, M.D. Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper. 1845. pp. 356.

THIS volume, the work of two physicians practising in Limerick, is certainly a highly respectable performance. It is gratifying to see two such men, living in a remote city, animated by a sincere love of the profession of medicine, and seeking above all things to arrive at true conclusions, combining their thoughtful experiences into a record which may be useful to others walking in the same path, but with feebler steps than their own. The severer edge of criticism is disarmed by a contemplation of the difficulties attending the attempt to advance medical science under such disadvantageous circumstances; for these essays do not seek merely to

follow, but to lead, in the points on which they dwell. The work contains thirteen essays or problems, some of which are physiological and some practical. Of these, Dr. W. Griffin is the author of principles of treatment in enteritis; diagnosis between nervous and inflammatory affections; diagnosis of abdominal inflammations; spinal irritation; sudden death in jaundice; crowing inspiration; consciousness; therapeutic effects of opium; treatment of hæmoptysis; treatment of rheumatism. Dr. D. Griffin is the author of papers on bleeding in diseases of the brain; and on the law of visible direction in optics; while the two gentlemen are joint authors of the last paper, on the application of mathematics to the science of medicine. We may observe, that the principal writer, Dr. W. Griffin, appears the most practical, Dr. D. Griffin the most speculative; and, we may remark, that we prefer the diagnostic and therapeutic papers to the rest. When either is writing on clinical points or things passing under his own observation and reflection, there is much that is valuable, but when they pass to the later knowledge and hypotheses of the day, the misfortune of their provincial position becomes apparent. Evidently their minds are of sufficient calibre to grasp all we know, but in some instances they are wanting in new material to work upon.

In the paper on enteric inflammation, the claims of opium are strongly enforced. This medicine is put in opposition to purgative medicines in this disease—vascular depletion being practised in either case. Those who advocate the purgative treatment rely on the diminution of the abdominal and general circulation by the increased secretions and the removal of faeces, as more than sufficient to counterbalance the irritation of the purgative itself; those who support the opiate treatment, consider the repose of the intestine under its influence to be more than a compensation for the irritation caused by faecal accumulation. Another item in the calculation is, that opium, by diminishing suffering, obviates, in some measure, the extremely depressing influence of abdominal pain on the heart's action—a point worth considering in all painful diseases of the bowels. Dr. W. Griffin is decidedly in favour of the opiate treatment in the majority of cases.

In the remarks on the diagnosis of nervous and inflammatory diseases of the thorax and abdomen, Dr. W. Griffin strongly insists on the importance of examining the spinal column. He maintains, that in neuralgic pains simulating pleuritis, peritonitis, &c., there is evident tenderness of that portion of the spinal column corresponding to the disturbed organ, while this is wanting in inflammatory cases. He even goes so far as to say that this “is almost the only single symptom upon which a young practitioner can rely without danger.” Extended experience on the part of other physicians will be required to verify this sanguine assertion.

The paper on bloodletting in diseases of the brain condemns large bleedings because of the uncertain symptomatology of cerebral affections, and particularly where extensive disease exists, because they injure the reparative processes, and in severely painful affections, as such cases generally terminate in exhaustion. These remarks are, of course, intended to apply to apoplectic and epileptic cases rather than acute inflammation.

The remarks on sudden deaths in jaundice refer to the super-vention of fatal coma in this disease. The question is argued, whether, in such cases, the hepatic or the cerebral affection is the idiopathic disease. The author leans to the conclusion, that the brain becomes affected, owing to the accumulation of azote and carbon in the blood. The cerebral affection in jaundice certainly bears some resemblance to that occurring in suppression of the renal secretion, from the presence of urea in the blood, except that in jaundice the brain is only occasionally affected. Four cases are given, two of them ending fatally, the other two recovering; these were treated by active purgation.

In the paper on optics, Dr. D. Griffin contends strongly against the theory of the law of visible direction supported by Sir David Brewster, and upholds his opinion by a very cogent train of reasoning and calculation. Other eminent scientific observers have made objection to the common theory, and there can be no doubt but that the point at present remains a *questio vexata* in optics.