

The principal peculiarities observed in this case were the extreme faintness, and the absence of sickness, not indicating great irritation of any part of the alimentary canal, but more evidently pointing out some disorder of the nervous system. This man suffered for some time from gastric derangement, but ultimately his recovery was complete.

CASE 2.—A child, about three years of age, took by mistake a considerable quantity of arsenic, which had been mixed with oat-meal, for the purpose of destroying rats. The ordinary symptoms of poisoning by this drug soon developed themselves, and were very acute, but gave way in a short time on the administration of the antidote.

CASE 3.—Rachael S—, aged thirty-one, went to Wolverhampton, a distance of six miles, on the morning of the seventh of last month, on a visit to her sister. She had been in a very low, desponding state of mind for some time, and had more than once threatened self-destruction. On the afternoon of the same day she bought from a druggist's shop two pennyworth of arsenic and one of essence of bergamot; she took them to her sister's, and having mixed them together with a little water in a cup, drank off the mixture, and threw the cup away. In about half an hour the usual symptoms began to appear, and continued, the vomiting and diarrhoea excessive, till about eleven o'clock the next morning, when she told her friends what she had done. My father was immediately called in, but she was then in a dying state; we administered the antidote, and used other means which we thought advisable, but it was too late; she died about three hours after we first saw her. On opening the stomach after death, we found one solid lump of arsenic which weighed fifteen grains, besides several smaller ones. This is rather remarkable, considering that she had vomited almost incessantly for so many hours. That the hydrated peroxide of iron did not produce the desired effect in this case, is no argument against its powers as an antidote, for the state of the patient when we first saw her was hopeless.

The next eight cases occurred on the evening of the 21st of last month. A neighbour of the parties who took the poison, being sadly troubled by rats, had obtained a quantity of arsenic for the purpose of destroying them, and had made up about half an ounce of it into three cakes, with two biscuits and a little flour, and put these cakes in the cellar. One of the children going into the cellar, saw them, and not knowing their contents, eat part of one, and then distributed them among four of her playmates and three women, the mothers of the children. The women described the taste as being very much like gingerbread. They were all affected in a short time with the usual symptoms of poisoning with arsenic, the severity of the symptoms being in proportion to the respective quantity which each had taken. Two of the children were exceedingly ill, one, a boy three years of age, was seized ten minutes after taking the poison, and the symptoms were so acute for some time as to lead us to expect a fatal result. In each of these cases the hydrated peroxide of iron was plentifully administered, and with the happiest effect. It seemed to act as a charm, affording almost immediate relief. They all perfectly recovered.

I have given these cases as briefly as possible, not wishing to take up much space. The efficacy of this antidote has been proved, not only by experience in the human subject, but by experiments on animals. Pereira says, "1st. That it renders the poison insoluble. 2ndly. That experiments on animals have shewn its efficacy; and 3rdly. That in poisoning in the human subject it has proved successful." These arguments, well substantiated as they are, should seem quite convincing to any unprejudiced individual, it therefore becomes a duty incumbent on every medical practitioner, when called to cases of poisoning by arsenic, to give this remedy a fair trial, for if not a certain antidote, it is at all events the best we possess.

Great Bridge, Nov. 12, 1844.

MIDWIVES' SURGERY.

By M. O'SHEA, Esq. Surgeon, Lambeth.

HAVING given "Midwives' Midwifery" in the late numbers of THE LANCET, perhaps you would permit me, through the same medium, to call Sir James Graham's attention to Midwives' Surgery; and I cannot help thinking, if it had been practised at an early period on the learned baronet, he would not have been so flippant on the introduction of his quack bill; nor would he think—

"Doubtless the pleasure is as great,
In being cheated, as to cheat."

Few have so many opportunities of witnessing the awful effects produced by quackery, as those engaged in the administration of medical relief to the poor; and this circumstance proves that the registration clause would be useless towards checking its progress, for at present none but qualified practitioners hold parochial

appointments, and yet, from the laxity of the laws in relation to medical practice, the poor are exposed to the most fatal imposture.

I can only account for the tendency in the public to submit to imposition, by the circumstance of uneducated minds, incapable of understanding the abstruse doctrines of medical science, having a greater affinity for false arguments, and, thus predisposed, becoming the dupes of all the ridiculous absurdities which every quack has at his fingers' ends.

I may, without impugning the knowledge of society, safely say that, in medical literature, at least, the number of non-professional adepts are few, and this is a reason why they need protection, not to be exposed to hordes of manslaying empirics. The midwives' surgery to which I have alluded, occurred in the practice of one Mrs. Brown, quite an eminent person in her circle; and since the College declared its intention of raising (?) operative surgery, to the exclusion of that "degrading" branch of medical science which embraces in its practice the treatment of every female all over the globe, this Mrs. Brown thought she might vie with some of the "fellows" of Lincoln's-inn-fields—for there is no restriction on the practice of surgery. Accordingly, being of opinion that the frænum linguæ of an innocent in Captain's Walk required to be divided, she, with scissors in hand, on operation bent, completely divided the tongue, horizontally, so that the babe now has literally got two tongues, but whether it will speak two languages, or even one, or lisp the praises of dear Sir James, futurity alone will tell.

Was there no danger in this operation? How did the ranine arteries escape? I must be so uncharitable as to explain, that her hand being a little tremulous, and her head a little gified, she directed the scissors so high as to dip right into the substance of the tongue, leaving the ranine arteries and veins on a plane inferior to the incision. The wound, for obvious reasons, has never since united. Certainly she is not the *only* emulator of operative surgery, for a Mrs. Saunders, another wise dame, made a similar attack on another child, as soon as I had left the room, considering it a very great oversight in me to leave her *alone* in the performance of the operation, on the improper performance of which it is not now my intention to enlarge, as the medical public know it already, it having engaged the attention of a Petit; but I mention these facts as a few of the many that have come under my observation; and I cannot help pointing to a far greater evil. Already the principle of Sir James Graham's Bill is being put in practice: there is a small establishment in this neighbourhood which was once carried on by a reputed surgeon; the widow now keeps the doctor's shop, and the *practice* is conducted with the assistance of a druggist's boy, to whose tender mercies the lives of many are exposed. During the past week I was called to see one of the victims of this creature's ignorance and avarice in the person of M. Y—, of Union-court, labouring under an acute attack of peritonitis; a worse case I never met. And what were the remedies? absolutely nothing but laudanum, in which the unfortunate patient had persisted for two days, and for which she paid the last shilling in her purse, not wishing to throw herself on the parish as long as she could. Here is a fellow-creature in the jaws of death, satisfied that she had procured from the *doctor's shop* the remedy best suited to her case. How can Sir James Graham contemplate such a state of things? Her intellect stupified with opium—her life in imminent danger—and as to an hereafter, her soul all but summoned before her Maker, without any previous notion of the awful change that was likely to take place, having perfect confidence in this Grahamite doctor. Fortunately for the termination of this case, the prompt application of the usual treatment proved successful; but instances such as this cry aloud, in the name of humanity and religion, to stop such a course of legislation as would consign the body to the grave, the soul to an eternity. I could elucidate my position with other facts, such as fractures mistaken for sprains, concussion of the brain considered as drunkenness; but I hope these will suffice, as I am unwilling to trespass upon your pages.

Lambeth, October 5, 1844.

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNALS.

STATISTICS OF OBSTETRIC PRACTICE.

In the last number of the *Dublin Journal* we find a communication from Professor Murphy, which contains several points deserving attention. We shall refer to them in the order of their occurrence.

1. *Menstruation*.—Dr. Murphy has ascertained the *age* at which this function commenced in 559 individuals. This inquiry has been already pursued in 450 instances by Mr. Robertson, and in 1160 by Dr. Lee. A total of 2169 cases shews,