

## MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

ABSTRACT of Mr. A. Taylor's paper, in *Guy's Hospital Reports*. Vol. 7, part 1.—Continued from No. 5, page 227.

[The cases we considered in the last number of this Journal were all of poisoning by arsenic—the remaining cases are very varied, chiefly of poisoning also, and possessing considerable interest.]

Case 10.—Aphyxia produced by the application of the deutonitrate (or acid pernitrate) of mercury to the throat.

Was admitted into a provincial hospital with syphilitic sore throat. Her general appearance was that of a healthy person; she was not emaciated. This solution (made according to Beasley's formula,) was applied to her throat by means of lint wrapped round a stick—almost immediately symptoms of aphyxia came on. These appeared so urgent that tracheotomy was considered indispensable. The patient died under the operation, after respiring faintly two or three times through the opening in the trachea, three-quarters of an hour after the application of the deutonitrate.

Post Mortem appearances.—“The mouth was in a healthy state, but the posterior part of the fauces presented a yellowish white appearance, the surface being uneven and indurated, having a leathery feel; there was no slough nor excavated ulcer; there was no disease of the larynx, but the epiglottis was corrugated, and presented the same appearance as the back part of the throat; the upper part of the trachea appeared healthy, but there was increased vascularity in the lower part below the incision. The lungs were of a dark colour and much congested, &c.”

These parts were transmitted to Mr. Taylor, and his opinion was requested concerning them.

“Answers, 1. Death was caused by asphyxia, probably from a spasmodic closure of the glottis.

“2. The asphyxia was caused by the application of the acid pernitrate (deutonitrate) of mercury to the throat, whereby the parts situated at the upper part of the larynx became implicated, leading to the spasmodic closure of the rima glottidis. There is no evidence that it was caused by disease.

“REMARKS.—I have never heard of syphilitic sore throat leading to an attack of asphyxia from spasm of the glottis; while strong escharotics or corrosives, like the deutonitrate of mercury, applied to the fauces, may easily cause a fatal attack of this kind. In asphyxia, depending on long standing disease, there are always warning symptoms; in asphyxia from accident, death is always sudden, without any preliminary attacks indicative of threatened suffocation.

“The fact that symptoms of asphyxia immediately followed the application of so powerful an escharotic, applied in a loose manner to the throat, fully justifies the inference that the asphyxia was caused by the deutonitrate, and not by the disease. I should refer the corrugation of the epiglottis to the local action of this corrosive liquid.”

Beasley's solution is pronounced to be highly dangerous and unsafe to apply to the throat or fauces in a concentrated form. The formula for making this—the *Liquor hydrargyri deutonitratis*, is—Quick silver one ounce; nitric acid (132) two ounces—dissolve and evaporate to eighteen drachms: (all by weight.)