

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

ABSTRACT of Mr. A. Taylor's paper, in *Guy's Hospital Reports*; Vol. 7, part 1.
Continued from No. 6, page 272.

Case 19.—This case is so very curious and important, that we copy it at full length.

"Suspected Irritant Poisoning—Death from Natural Causes—Ammonio-phosphate of Magnesia found in the stomach, and Antimony in the Tissues.

On the 25th of May, 1850, I was consulted on the following case:

A youth, æt. 16, had been suffering for many months from a tumour in the cheek, for which he applied to a surgeon, who punctured it from the inside, and let out a spoonful of glairy fluid. At this time, the boy was considered by his friends and the surgeon who operated, to be in a good state of health. The opening was made into the tumour on the morning of Friday, May 10th; and on the following Monday, May 13th, the boy walked a distance of several miles, and was again seen by the surgeon. He was then going on well. Some aperient pills were prescribed for him, and he was ordered to attend again on the Wednesday morning, the 15th. He accordingly went on that day at 10 o'clock: he was then quite well, and he left the surgery to walk home, a distance of three miles; but before he got out of the town, he was taken very sick, and was obliged to go into a cottage, where he complained of excessive thirst, and drank large quantities of water. He was conveyed home in a cart, and the surgeon, who had attended him in his illness, was sent for by his friends. He was then rapidly sinking; and he died on the Thursday morning, May 16th, the thirst continuing until the last.

A post-mortem examination was made by another medical man, by order of the coroner; and although this took place eight days after death, the body was still very fresh. The stomach presented an unusual appearance, having its mucous membrane covered with a fine white crystalline powder. Of the state of the viscera, with the exception of the portions sent to me, I have no information. Considering the suddenness of the death, and the powder found in the stomach, a suspicion arose in the neighbourhood that the youth had died from improper treatment; and this suspicion was supposed to be strengthened by the fact, that the surgeon, who attended him, had used some injection, in the treatment of the tumour, on the morning on which the boy was taken ill.

These particulars were communicated to me only after the examination and analysis had been made, and the report sent in. Certain portions of the viscera were forwarded to me, with the general inquiry, whether they contained any poison; and if so, whether this was in sufficient quantity to account for the sudden death of the deceased.

APPEARANCES.—*The Stomach.* This organ was very rugose, and presented a general diffused redness over the whole of the lining membrane, but especially at the two ends. This redness had not the character of inflammation during life, but it might have arisen from causes operating after death, as the cavity of the organ had been laid open. The whole surface was covered with a fine white powder, evidently crystalline, which, when examined by a lens, was mixed with some particles of a yellow-coloured substance. This crystalline powder closely adhered to the mucous membrane, but it was readily separated by agitation in distilled water. The quantity thus spread over the whole stomach was not less than two grains.