

PERISCOPIC DEPARTMENT.

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

POISONING WITH PHOSPHORUS—ATTEMPT AT POISONING WITH MATCHES
MADE WITH THE RED OR AMORPHOUS PHOSPHORUS—RECOVERY—
RENEWED ATTEMPT WITH THE ORDINARY LUCIFER MATCHES—DEATH
—AUTOPSY—ANALYSIS.

Emily B., aged 26, a domestic servant, suffering from wounded vanity and affection, determined to poison herself. Some years previously she had read an account of two travellers who had been poisoned by coffee prepared in a pot in which a packet of lucifer matches had been inadvertently left, and she determined to take the hint. She soon made the attempt, but to her annoyance she suffered no inconvenience, in consequence of the matches she bought being prepared with red or amorphous phosphorus. For some time she relinquished her design; but she ultimately, on the 17th March, bought two sous worth of ordinary matches, coloured blue at one extremity, igniting easily on gentle friction. She took about four ounces of coffee, added more than three cups of boiling water, and made three cups of very strong coffee. Of this she drank one cup at once. She then added to the two remaining cups of coffee other two cups of boiling water, filtered the whole, and thus obtained a bottleful of pretty strong coffee. She took the phosphorized ends of all the matches and placed them at the bottom of the coffee pot, and allowed them to infuse for an hour and a half. She again reheated the whole almost to ebullition, and swallowed two cups of this infusion of phosphorized coffee. She said that this infusion, though warm and well sweetened, had a disagreeable taste of lucifer matches; but yet could be swallowed without repugnance. Immediately afterwards, she took a cup of ordinary coffee and retired to her bed, where she rested nearly an hour, only sensible of a slight degree of lassitude and headache which came on immediately.

Meanwhile, the police were informed of what had occurred, and a doctor was quickly called, who lost no time in sending her to the Hospital Lariboisière, where she was placed under the care of Doctor Pidoux. The house-physician at once gave her an emetic of tartrate of antimony. An hour had only elapsed since she swallowed the poison. She vomited nearly half a pint of a clear glairy fluid, at the bottom of which lay a black pulpy matter, and two pieces of non-digested meat. The vomited matters had a strong alliaceous odour, and in them were observed particles of the blue colouring matter of the matches. Later in the evening, after taking a copious drink of water, she vomited a glairy fluid without any deposit, and free of any odour of phosphorus.

On the 18th March, at the morning visit, her features were unaltered, the tongue was slightly coated. She complained of having had a metallic taste in her mouth all the morning, and of an odour of lucifer matches which continued to annoy her. Since the previous evening she suffered much from discharges, which troubled her by their penetrating odour of phosphorus. The vomited matters also left in the throat a peculiar burning sensation. She said, that neither at the time of swallowing the poison nor since, had she felt any pain in the stomach. She complained only of a little heaviness. The bowels had not been moved since the evening. There was no fever. The face was slightly pale, the heat of the skin moderate, and the pulse was very slow (54); the respiration normal.

Her mind was quite calm. She mentioned that she had long ago determined on committing suicide, and that she only regretted that for the second time she had failed in her purpose. She declared that, as soon as she was well, she would throw herself from the tower of St. Jacques. For a considerable time she had been in the habit of collecting the newspaper accounts of suicides and poisonings, to enable her to make up her mind as to the particular method she would choose. She was surprised that in the present instance she had not suffered more. She was, nevertheless, a girl of good intelligence, who gave