

The characteristic symptoms of the Irritants are extreme nausea, vomiting, heat and spasmodic pains of the stomach and bowels, sense of heat and constriction about the mouth and throat, and sometimes ulceration of the tongue, fauces, &c. These are generally followed by violent purging, and excruciating pains, the skin turning cold and flabby, the pulse at first hard and quick, but gradually becoming irregular and feeble, and the countenance distorted and anxious. Cold sweats, the appearance of spots upon the skin, and convulsions, are also generally the harbingers of death. These symptoms are all peculiar to poisoning by arsenic, without exception, and more or less to all the other irritants above mentioned. One of the most unmistakable characteristics of death by this class of poisons is acute inflammation of the stomach, a symptom which is said to be peculiar to no known disease naturally incident to the human body.

The operation of the narcotics is essentially different from that of the irritants. The first characteristics are more especially affections of the brain, such as giddiness, vertigo, headache, obscurity of sight, stupor, followed by loss of power of the voluntary muscles, convulsions, paralysis, and at last complete coma. These symptoms, however, differ considerably under different circumstances and in different persons, and present many complicated difficulties in bringing them home to their proper source.

Of the narcotic-acrids, strychnia is at once the most virulent and the most common. Since its discovery, forty years ago, it has been made to do terrible service in the hands of the more refined class of poisoners. Its effects are confined to the ganglionic system of nerves and the spinal chord; it destroys life by exciting, what are termed, tetanic spasms, accompanied not unfrequently by lock-jaw, the intellect generally remaining, however, entirely unaffected. It constitutes the vicious principle of nearly all poisonous plants, such as ratsbane, Upas-poison, (the Upas tree of Java) urari—the poison plant of Guiana, &c. The latter is supposed to be that from which the American Indians prepared the poison for their arrows, it having the peculiar property of destroying life almost immediately when applied to a wound, although it may be taken into the stomach in considerable quantities without any immediate effects.

Strychnia has no doubt been found exceedingly convenient to poisoners, both from the difficulty of detection by analysis, and the very minute quantity required to cause death. Such is the virulency of this poison that death has been known to ensue from a woman's grating cheese with a file which