

maintain that the vegetable alkalis, such as strychnia, brucia, &c., may not always be detected in the human system by analysis, there are other eminent chemists who assert that the minutest quantity is to be traced infallibly by certain tests, supporting their statements by a long series of practical experiments. A very short time, however, will no doubt effectually close up this loop-hole of escape. There is no reason why investigation should not render organic poison as amenable to test as any of the rest.

In judging of cases of poisoning by the symptoms exhibited during illness there are many serious difficulties to be encountered. Poisoning of all kinds and degrees is counterfeited by so many diseases incident to the human body, that however suspicions may be aroused, it is almost impossible for any one but an experienced practitioner to arrive at a certain and positive conclusion upon this evidence alone. Cholera, apoplexy, epilepsy, diseases of the heart, colic, spasms, violent inflammations, and so forth, are all accompanied by symptoms peculiar to poisoning of one kind or other. Apoplexy and poisoning by opium are almost precisely similar in their effect upon the system. Epilepsy is almost entirely analogous to poisoning by prussic acid and strychnia; and in both instances it is generally the case, in the post mortem examination, that no signs of disease can be found. The irritant poisons are much more readily detected by the symptoms of illness than the narcotic. But still, in the case of the most common of the irritant poisons—arsenic, there are several diseases whose effects are closely allied in their nature, Asiatic cholera more particularly.

Poisons are generally divided into three classes—irritants, narcotics, and narcotic-acrids—some add a fourth class, termed Putrifiants or Septics. Of the former the most common are :

Arsenic, Antimonial poisons, Lead poisons, Oxalic acid, Mineral acids, Mercurial compounds, Alkalis, Nitre, Ammonia and its salts, Vegetable acids, Poison of serpents, Cantharides, &c.

Of the narcotic poisons the chief are,

Opium, All poisonous gases, and hydrocyanic (prussic) acid.

The narcotic-acrids include the vegetable alkalis, and the chief of the organic poisons such as,

Strychnia, Upas, Poisonous fungi, Tobacco, Hemlock, Nightshade, and Alcohol.