

son selling it might be liable to a verdict of manslaughter. The jury returned a verdict as follows:—"That the deceased died from inflammation of the bowels, caused by taking decoction of savine; and the jury cannot separate without expressing a strong opinion that great blame is attached to herbalists and others indiscriminately vending such articles."—*Prov. Med. Jour.*

*Experimental Researches on the Woorara Poison.*—M. BERNARD read the following as the results of experiments performed by himself and M. Pelouze on the woorara poison, prepared by the tribes inhabiting the districts of Upper Orinoco, Rio-Negro, and the Amazon:—"The woorara is a watery extract prepared from a plant of the *Strychnos* family. The poison acts instantaneously when introduced into the blood-vessels. A weak solution injected into the jugular veins of dogs caused sudden death, without producing cries or convulsive movements in the animal; the animal is, as it were, struck dead, and every trace of life vanishes as quickly as a flash of lightning. When introduced into a wound beneath the skin the poison acts more slowly, varying with the dose and the size or species of animal. *Ceteris paribus* birds die most speedily, then mammifera, then reptiles. In every case the signs of poisoning are similar,—the animal will move about as usual for a brief interval, and then lie down and die without a cry or a struggle. Immediately after death the nerves of the animals are as inert and insensible to stimulation as if the animal had been long dead and cold. The blood is black, and does not readily coagulate nor redden on exposure to the air.

The poisonous effects of woorara present a close analogy with those of the bite of the viper, and, like that venom, is innocuous when taken into the digestive tube. That its properties are not then destroyed by digestion was made evident from the experiment of inserting some gastric juice into a wound, forty-eight hours after the poison had been taken into the stomach: the usual poisonous effects were manifested. Thus the strange spectacle was exhibited of an animal carrying in its stomach a substance which in no way interrupted digestion, but which, if taken from its

stomach, is capable of inflicting death upon itself or any other animal.

This fact was explained by the discovery that the woorara is not absorbed from the alimentary mucous membrane. So long as the mucous membrane retains its integrity the woorara solution does not pass through the endosmometer. Other mucous membranes present the same results with the woorara; those of the bladder, nasal fossae, and eyes, were experimented upon. The pulmonary mucous membrane presented the only exception. A few drops of the solution introduced into the air-passages produced the same morbid effects, and the same rapidity of death ensues as if it had been inserted beneath the skin. This exception is referred by M. Bernard to the circumstance that the mucous membrane of the lungs has not the same mucous secretion as is supplied to the other mucous membranes.—*London Med. Gazette.*

*On the Diffusion of Iodine—Götre—Researches on the Constitution of certain Waters.*—M. CHATIN, who has been for some time past engaged with investigations on the existence of iodine in cresses and other fresh water vegetables, has presented another long communication to the Academy, having for its object to show the general diffusion of iodine throughout various departments of nature, and especially in fresh water and the plants which vegetate therein. M. Chatin has ascertained the presence of iodine in aquatic plants, not only of European growth, but in those of Asia, Africa, America, and New Holland, shewing the general diffusion of this body on the surface of the earth. He also finds that the ashes of vegetables which grow out of contact with water do not contain iodine. Hence M. Chatin derives the inference, that the state of the globe at different epochs may be deduced from an analysis of the ashes of the vegetables then produced. Thus, for instance, coal rich in iodine would be the produce of vegetables which flourished whilst the waters covered the surface of the earth: anthracite, containing a less proportion of iodine than coal, would show that its formation was derived from an admixture of terrestrial plants with the great cryptogamous plants of the coal formation, and therefore at a period subsequent to