

Foreign.

Extract from an Essay on the Bad Effects of the Incautious Use of Magnesia. By EVERARD BRANDE, Esq.

A LADY was recommended to take magnesia, in consequence of some very severe nephritic attacks, accompanied with the passage of gravel. She was desired to take a tea-spoonful every night; and Henry's calcined magnesia was preferred, as that always operated upon the bowels and "carried itself off," which other magnesia did not, but, on the contrary, felt heavy and uneasy in the stomach. The dose was gradually increased to two tea-spoonfuls, in order to produce effect upon the bowels, which this quantity never failed to do; the symptoms for which it was ordered were soon removed, but the plan was persevered in two years and a half, with little intermission or irregularity; so that as the average weight of a tea-spoonful is at least forty grains, and the average dose was a tea-spoonful and a half, it may be presumed that she took during the above period between nine and ten pounds troy.

In the course of the last autumn she suffered severely by a miscarriage, and shortly afterward by an attack of biliary calculi; subsequent to which she became sensible of a tenderness in the left side just above the groin, connected with a deep seated tumour, obscurely to be felt upon pressure, and subject to attacks of constipation, with painful spasmodic action of the bowels, tenesmus, and a highly irritable state of stomach; these attacks recurred every two or three weeks, varying in violence, but requiring the use of active remedies; during one of them, about the middle of last March, a large quantity of sand was voided by the rectum, attended with a peculiar acute and distressing pain in the seat of the tumour above mentioned. This was lost. The following day, however, the same kind of evacuation, happened again, and to the same extent, which being saved and measured, was found to amount to two pints. Another attack took place upon the 5th of April, when several irregular lumps of a soft light brown substance were voided, having the appearance of a large mass broken down, and when dry extremely friable: a part of each of these two last were subjected to a careful analysis, and found to consist entirely of sub-carbonate of magnesia concreted by the mucus of the bowels, in the proportion of about 40 per cent.

The use of magnesia was now given up, and that of an active purgative medicine enjoined, with some other necessary directions, and there is every appearance of returning health, although some slight attacks have recurred, and small portions of the same concretion still occasionally come away.

An instance, in many respects resembling this, has lately occurred in the practice of some gentlemen of eminence in this town, in which not only large quantities of a concretion of a similar description were voided, but upon examination after death, which took place perhaps six months after any magnesia had been taken, a collection, supposed to be from four to six pounds, was found embedded in the head of the colon, which was, of course, much distended. Some notes which were made of this case are, I fear, not to be found.—*Journal of Science and the Arts*, vol. i. p. 299.

PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

I.—**SYPHILIS** is occasionally observed in infants, and it becomes a question of some importance to ascertain, whether, in the event of the nurse not being the mother of the child, the disease has been communicated by the child or the nurse. The following paper, by *M. Cullerier*, which was read to the *Société de Médecine de Paris*, in January last, is drawn up expressly with the view of laying down rules, by which the fact may be determined. In translating it we have left out such of the cases as appeared the least important. The paper is intitled “*Observations sur la Contagion Syphilitique, dans les Rapports des Nourrices avec les Nourrissons.*”

“Symptoms of syphilis are often observed in infants many days, weeks, or months, and sometimes even years, after birth; and it frequently happens that the disease is communicated by an infant to the nurse by whom it is suckled. In the hospital *Des Veneriens* nurses are occasionally found who have been affected in this manner: but it is, also, not uncommon to see nurses who, either by their own misconduct, or that of their husbands, have communicated to their nursling the virus with which they are tainted. I am occasionally consulted, both by nurses and the parents of nursed children, regarding this disease, and to decide whether the infant or the nurse have communicated it. The following observations are intended for the government of those who may be required to decide in cases of this description, particularly when they are brought into a court of justice. I will commence with a case which is still pending in one of the civil tribunals of Paris.