

NOTES ON A CASE OF POISONING THROUGH
EATING A PORTION OF THE "BRUGMANSIA."

BY DR. HARDY.

The case which I bring before you is one of poisoning through eating a portion of the common trumpet flower (*Brugmansia*) now shown to you.

This plant belongs to the order of *solanaciæ* and is therefore allied to a number of others which are recognised as poisons for example: stramonium, belladonna, tobacco, also potato and tomato. These latter being classed as poisons appear at first sight contradictory, but although the tuber of the potato is wholesome when cooked, the leaves and other parts of the plant are poisonous.

Stramonium and belladonna, although in common use as medicines, are highly dangerous if taken in improper doses.

The potato is a powerful narcotic and has been used in rheumatism, while henbane is in common use as a sedative in irritable conditions of the brain.

With these introductory remarks I will narrate the case in question :—

On Thursday last a child, aged 2, after having a good dinner and appearing in perfect health in all respects, ate a portion of a trumpet lily, which had been picked in the garden of a gentleman living in this town. Within a short time symptoms manifested themselves, and I was called in to what the messenger described as a case of convulsions.

On examining the child I was struck by certain peculiarities in the symptoms unlike those of ordinary convulsions. The child's face and greater portions of the body were red, the eyes staring and the pupils widely dilated, the head and shoulders bent back, and the position almost that usually seen in tetanus or lockjaw; the feet pointing inwards and the great toes drawn up and stiff, an appearance of fear in the face and starting at times as if afraid of falling off the nurse's knee and finally arms moving irregularly, power of co-ordination partly lost, and the hands picking at imaginary objects. I was struck by the resemblance to a case of poisoning in a child by drinking some belladonna liniment, which I attended some 8 or 10 years ago, and so questioned the mother as to whether any medicines of any kind had been lying about.

However, no such cause was to be found but she said the child had been eating the plant she produced, which is said to have a pleasant taste. Under prompt treatment the child improved and next day was nearly well, and on the following day apparently none the worse for its botanical experiments, but the parents have decided not to grow a trumpet lily in their garden, as they had intended doing. I have heard that a similar case occurred here some years ago, but have been unable to find out the particulars, or how the case terminated. My object in bringing forward this case, apart from the scientific interest, is, that although proverbially "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," still, the knowledge of the unsuspected dangers existing in our gardens is of interest to those of us, like myself, having children of an inquisitive turn of mind