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POISONING BY CYANIDE, AND ITS ANTIDOTES.

THE melancholy record which we publish on another page of the death of a young lady, the daughter of a photographer, by means of cyanide of potassium, gives a painful weight to the recommendations we have often urged upon our readers to banish this deadly and unnecessary salt from their premises; and it also impresses the urgency and importance of some knowledge amongst photographers and all members of their families of the remedial treatment to be applied immediately in any case of the accidental or intentional swallowing of this fatally active poison.

We would anxiously avoid, in dwelling on this question, saying any words which may add to the deep sorrow of the bereaved family of one of our readers, but the circumstances so touchingly and significantly point a moral to all photographers, that we may not let them pass without reiterating our caution and advice, and again stating the remedies which may be of avail. An accomplished and intelligent young lady, in a moment of aberration, or under some inscrutable impulse the nature of which we seek not here to penetrate, swallows a poisonous dose of cyanide, to which she had access in her father's dark room, and in half an hour was a corpse. Notwithstanding the fatal character of the poison, there are circumstances recorded in the narrative of the case which reaches us, which seem to suggest that had a knowledge of the antidote been familiar (as it is desirable it should be wherever the poison is used), the life might in this case have been saved. Whether any antidote was administered at all after the arrival of medical assistance is not stated. The local newspaper report of the inquest records the use of the stomach-pump; and we may with propriety assume that whatever could be done remedially was done by the medical man called in. Possibly an antidote was administered; possibly the medical man saw it was too late. But in any case, it should be borne in mind that promptness in administering an antidote is of all-exceeding importance, as the rapidity with which the fatal conditions supervene is the most terrible element in the case. Let it always be remembered that the ordinary iron developing solution, just as it is found in the dark room, is an antidote to cyanide, and, if swallowed immediately, would often save life.

In the sad case in question, the ordinary rapidity of symptoms was marvellously absent, arising from the fact that the cyanide had been swallowed in a solid state, and not in solution; and its poisonous action would not commence until it began to dissolve. When taken in solution, tetanic spasms and firm clenching of the teeth so rapidly follow that the administration of remedies becomes difficult or impossible; but here the young lady was able to describe to her sister what she had done, repeatedly ex-

pressing regret; and, so far as we can glean, upwards of half an hour must have elapsed before she died. If a knowledge of the antidote had been perfectly familiar, and a solution of sulphate of iron had been at once administered, the cyanide would have been converted into harmless Prussian blue as quickly as it was dissolved. We again repeat, we would not say anything which could imply blame or cause pain to the survivors; we simply wish to urge upon all our readers who keep this dangerous salt on their shelves the importance of rendering everyone familiar with the iron developer as its antidote, and to have in some accessible part of their establishment instructions for treatment always at hand.

The amount of the poison taken in this case is unknown. As little as three grains of pure cyanide of potassium will sometimes form a fatal dose, five grains generally being sufficient to cause death. The medical evidence, as we have it recorded, is a little perplexing. It is stated that from subsequent analysis the conclusion was attained that the young lady had taken sufficient of the poison to kill several people; and it is further added that the poison was doubtless taken as a solid lump, and hence it did not act so rapidly as usual. A solid lump of cyanide weighing five grains forms a pill quite as large as could be easily swallowed, especially with the rough broken edges a piece of cyanide usually possesses, and we can scarcely suppose that two or more pieces would be swallowed in succession. There are cases on record of recovering from cyanide and hydrocyanic acid poisoning, in one of which, as related by Dr. Taylor, the patient had swallowed a dose of the acid equal to six grains of cyanide. Perceiving his mistake, he at once swallowed an ounce of aromatic spirits of ammonia with a little water. In a few minutes afterwards sulphate of iron was administered, and cold effusion applied, and, by perseverance with this treatment, he eventually recovered.

A ready-mixed iron developing solution is always at hand, and should be administered at once, either as it is, or with a little ammonia or carbonate of soda added to neutralize free acid. If it be an old solution, so much the better, as, for the most exact effect of the remedy, a portion of a persalt of iron is necessary. This should be followed by stimulants—such as *sal volatile*, and cold effusion applied to the spine. All this may be safely done before a medical man arrives. He, of course, would always be sent for at once; but as promptness determines the issue of life or death, every member of a photographer's family and establishment should know that a solution of sulphate of iron—such as that used for development—should be administered without a moment's delay.

Every photographer knows that if the iron developer, in the course of his manipulations, comes into contact with cyanide of potassium, a decomposition ensues in which