

Practical Points.

Swabs for Abdominal Operations.

At a recent meeting of the Association of Registered Medical Women, Miss Thorne, F.R.C.S.I., showed a new steriliser for swabs for abdominal operations. The drum of the steriliser contains two trays with a separate compartment for each swab, so that the surgeon can easily see both before and after the operation, that each compartment is filled, and the number of swabs correct.

A new Surgical Sponge.

Messrs. Down Brothers, 21, St. Thomas' Street, S.E., have brought out a new sponge, which is the invention of a nurse, Mrs. George, of Oxford. It is made of ordinary knitting cotton, and very absorptive. It can be readily cleansed and re-sterilised, and has thus the advantage of cheapness. It is dyed a purple colour, with the object of making it conspicuous, and thus less likely to be overlooked in abdominal operations than an ordinary sponge or a gauze pad.

The Machinery of the Brain and How it is Affected by Alcohol.

Mr. Theodore Nield, addressing hospital nurses at Manchester, said that his object was to tell his audience what scientists had to say on the use of alcohol. He first gave a description, assisted by diagrams, of the construction and functions of the various parts of the brain and the nervous system, and then gave the result of a number of experiments which had been made by pathologists with a view of testing the effect upon the brain of alcohol. These experiments, it was pointed out, went, without any exceptions, to show that alcohol had a paralysing effect upon the organs of the brain, and made all the mental processes slower. It was contended that the consumption of alcoholic drinks diminished the working capacity of a man, and made his labour of less value.

The Hot Mustard Foot Bath.

Dr. De Lancey Rochester, in a recent paper before the Buffalo Academy of Medicine, gave the following method of administering the hot mustard foot bath. The patient, in a nude condition, lies between blankets with his knees flexed, his feet in the tub, which has been introduced under the upper blanket, the long axis of the tub in the line of the patient's body and legs; another blanket passes from under the tub up over the end and over the knees of the patient; two to five blankets, or a fewer number of blankets and a rubber sheet, are then placed over the patient, extending from the neck of the patient over the foot of the bed and tucked in around the foot-tub and side of the patient. The tub at first is filled half-full of hot water in which a heaping tablespoonful of mustard has been dissolved; from time to time during the bath, more hot water is added, care being taken that the water is poured against the side of the tub and stirred in by the hand of the nurse, in order to avoid burning the patient's feet. The bath is kept up from thirty to forty-five minutes, according to the amount of sweating produced. During the administration of the bath,

cloths wrung out of ice water are kept constantly on the head of the patient, and plenty of cold water is given to the patient to drink.

Sugar in Treatment of Pulmonary Phthisis.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association*, in a synopsis of an article in *Riforma Medica*, says:—"This communication from the hospital at Verona extols the benefit to be derived from sugar as a means of superfeeding tuberculous subjects. From 100 to 500 grammes of sugar were added to the daily diet, averaging from five to twelve grammes per kilogram. Even on as little as from 100 to 200 grammes a day the patients frequently gained from 16 to 30 lb. or more in two or three months. In many instances the gain was greater than the amount of sugar ingested. It was especially effectual in the febrile form, or those with slight evening temperature. It was generally relished and well tolerated by the patients, and no dyspeptic disturbances or intestinal fermentations were ever noticed that could be attributed to the sugar. The taste was disguised in coffee, milk, or with some bitter tincture, as preferred or not. It is indicated for all patients who are unable to take cod-liver oil, and it will be found a desirable food and remedy in many cases of tuberculosis."

Examination of Fæces.

An interesting paper on this subject by Dr. Ira S. Wile in the *New York and Philadelphia Medical Journal*, has many points of interest to nurses. The frequency of movements is in direct relation to the amount of solids and fluids ingested. Constipation may result from fasting, diarrhoea from increased ingestion of liquids. The amount of fæces depends on the quality as well as the quantity of food—that is, on the amount of food unassimilated. Vegetable diet yields the largest quantity. In diarrhoea the increased amount is due to lack of absorption of fluids. The normal bright brown to blackish brown colour is due to stercobilin and results from intermixture and interaction of bile and undigested food. That drugs have been given in large enough doses may often be known by the colour of the stools. Black is produced by iron, manganese, bismuth; blue by long-continued iodides; green by calomel; yellow by santonin, senna, rhubarb; red by hæmatoxylin; violet by beta naphthol, salol. Blood and pus have a mild, stale odour. An ammoniacal odour usually arises from urine, suggesting a fistula along the urinary tract. In hæmorrhage the nearer the anus the site of the bleeding the brighter the blood will appear in the stool. Discovering minute amounts of blood in the fæces is of the utmost importance in the early diagnosis of cancer of the stomach or intestine. A purulent stool should be watched, for whenever there is pus in the pelvis an ulceration into the intestine may occur. Gall-stones are quite common. Many cases of inexplicable dyspepsia are solved by examination of the stools. Mix thoroughly with water; strain through fine wire netting or several layers of cheesecloth, wash residue, and strain again, then examine carefully. In obscure cases of anæmia, nervous depression, intestinal catarrh, &c., careful examination may show the round or oval eggs of the parasite causing the disturbance.

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