

Medical Matters.

A COMPLAISANT STOMACH.



It is a fact which is well authenticated in Natural History, that the ostrich can comfortably digest a dietary which appears to contain comparatively little nourishment, varying as it does in constitution from rubble stones to dried grass. It has, however, been thought that a diet composed of any similiar material would be inevitably followed in the human subject by ulceration of the stomach or intestines, and death. It is, however, certain that some persons can take metallic substances both sharp and irregular in shape, and yet survive. The writer was recently called to see a case, which has since been reported in the medical Press, in which an insane woman had frequently swallowed pins and needles, and similiar articles; and a needle so devoured was found, by palpatory examination, to be making its way through the abdominal wall, and was easily removed. A much more remarkable case has recently been published in which a girl, ten years of age, was admitted into a Hospital for violent vomiting and rapid emaciation, to the cause of which she gave no clue. In consequence of the fact that she vomited a garden nail nearly two inches in length, an exploratory incision was made into the abdomen, and the stomach being found to contain hard materials was opened. The foreign bodies, then removed from the organ, consisted of 93 brass and tin tacks, from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 1 in. long; 42 cast iron garden nails, each $1\frac{5}{8}$ in. long; twelve large nails, some of which were brass-headed; three collar studs; one safety pin; and one sewing needle. It was thought that further articles could be felt in the intestines, but as—and it is hardly surprising to learn the fact—the patient was almost moribund by the time the aforesaid hardware was removed, the wound was closed and she was put to bed. She recovered, after vomiting a small pin, three garden nails, two tacks, and a feather; and, thereafter, it is satisfactory to learn that the vomiting ceased. Within the next three weeks, she passed, *per rectum*, thirty garden nails, a piece of a needle, one stud, eight tacks, and a J pen. It was discovered that she had indulged in this dietary for at least eight months previously, so that some at any rate of the foreign bodies may have been in the intestinal tract for that length of time. Unfortunately, however, in the face of this brilliant example of modern surgery, it is announced that the patient has since resumed her previous anomalous dietary, and appears to be engaged in busily re-stocking her stomach with hardware

goods. There can be little doubt, of course, that she is suffering from a form of monomania.

KEROSENE VAPOUR AS AN ANÆSTHETIC.

It has often been said that the greatest discoveries have been made by accident, and it is possible that another proof of the aphorism may be added to a long previous list. A steamship with a cargo of kerosene oil, on a recent voyage, was discovered to have developed a leak in one of the tanks, and the hold of the ship was found, in consequence, to have become full of explosive vapour, so that it was impossible to approach it with an artificial light. Men were lowered into the tank to discover the exact position of the leak, and, if possible, to close it; but they were found to become asphyxiated, and, when drawn up, some appeared to be in a state of intoxication, while others were apparently unconscious, and others, again, were semi-unconscious and suffering from fits of laughing or crying. In other words, the vapour of kerosene appeared to act like that of nitrous oxide gas. One of the men, who was rather longer exposed to the action of the vapour than the others, remained unconscious for several hours, but ultimately recovered without any evil effect, and in none of the other cases did any untoward symptom manifest itself. It may be that these results were caused by the mere absence of oxygen in the air which these men respired, or it may prove that the vapour of kerosene oil is not only an explosive gas, but also a new and valuable anæsthetic. At any rate, the occurrence we have narrated is sufficient to draw attention to the possibility that in this vapour a new and more safe anæsthetic may be found than is supplied by chloroform or even by ether.

MEASLES AND LEPROSY.

A South African observer, who has been devoting considerable attention to leprosy, has expressed the opinion that its cure will be attained by the introduction into the system of those suffering from the disease, of some bacillus inimical to the growth of the germ of leprosy. This is perfectly possible, and would, indeed, coincide with the experience gained in the treatment of other diseases. But one might have expected from analogy that the germ in question would have proved to be derived, in some way, from leprosy itself. The observer in question, however, believes that there is a special bacillus in measles, either as the cause or the consequence of that disease, and that this will prove to be the antidote to leprosy. Facts have not yet been obtained in sufficient strength to prove the theory, but further explanations will, doubtless, soon be forthcoming, and will be awaited with the keenest interest.

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