

Medical Matters.

STERILISING CATGUT.



UNSATISFACTORY results so frequently follow the employment of catgut which has been improperly prepared, that it is very important for Nurses to understand the best methods of sterilising and storing this material. It is suggested by practical surgeons that the catgut is best bought in the form known as "bowlines," each one yard long, and rolled separately in bunches. The advantages claimed are that the material is much more easily dealt with in this form than when it is rolled on reels, and that in the latter case the deeper layers are perhaps not reached either by heat or any antiseptic solutions in which the catgut is kept. A process which is much recommended for sterilising catgut is as follows:—The bowlines are kept in pure ether for one week; then in a glass sterilised vessel in a solution of one in 4,000 of corrosive sublimate for another week; then they are placed in a bottle with a screw top and covered with absolute alcohol; the top is screwed down tightly, and the bottle is placed—on a folded towel—in a vessel of water which nearly covers it. This vessel is placed on a stove and the water is heated to the boiling point and maintained at that temperature for 15 minutes. It is asserted that there is no danger of explosion in this process, or, that if an explosion does occur, it will take place into the boiling water and thus no harm will be done. If the alcohol were allowed partly to evaporate, the same results would be obtained, and certainly the risk of explosion would be removed. The advantages of this process, which is chiefly used in the United States, are obvious. The ether removes the large amount of fat which is so often found surrounding the catgut; the corrosive sublimate completely disinfects the material and increases its toughness; boiling the catgut in alcohol removes all traces of the mercury salt, and any germs which the antiseptic may have destroyed, and, finally, provides a perfect fluid for storage. It is claimed for catgut prepared in this manner that it is not only absolutely sterile and that it can be kept so for years, but that it also acts more successfully, than when otherwise prepared, when used as a ligature or suture.

THE USE OF THE CATHETER.

An American surgeon has drawn attention to a fact which, if correct, is undoubtedly one of much importance. In many cases in which the bladder has been paralysed, especially after a confinement, and when, as a rule, the use of the catheter is necessary, the surgeon in question has found that, by the employment of a large warm-water enema, the need of the catheter has been obviated; the muscular wall of the bladder being thereby excited to act naturally by the contraction of the wall of the rectum. The matter is one of much practical importance, especially to District and Private Nurses, because, if the use of the enema is always as effectual as is claimed, they could frequently abstain from troubling a doctor, who, perhaps, might live many miles away.

DELIRIUM TREMENS.

The use of Hydro-Bromate of Hyoscine in the treatment of patients suffering from delirium tremens has recently been attended with the greatest success; and it is reported that it not only gives immediate relief and quiet sleep, even in the worst and most violent cases, but that its use is followed by a complete distaste for alcoholic stimulants. An American contemporary states that a certain patient, "who for two years averaged 25 drinks a day," since taking $\frac{1}{100}$ of a grain of this drug every evening "cannot bear even to look at liquor." This statement, if correct, and it is quite possibly so—seeing that the drug is a combination of two powerful nerve sedatives—means that an invaluable aid in the movement for curing habitual drunkards has been gained. Hitherto, treatment designed to effect this end has been chiefly of a moral nature, and perhaps the employment of medical treatment has been therefore too much neglected. But it is a well-known fact that one drug can cause either intolerance or tolerance of another, and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that one might be found—even if the hydro-bromate is not the one—which would cause a confirmed drunkard to feel an absolute repulsion to alcohol. The worst of it is that there have been so many vaunted cures for alcoholism, and each has, in its turn, been "boomed" by quacks, has failed, and has fallen into disrepute, that most medical men are rather chary of advocating any special drug for the treatment of these patients.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)