

## Practical Points.

### Hot Oil for Sterilising Instruments.

According to Conradi, in the *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, hot oil is the most certain means of destroying all germ life on instruments and catheters; it is much more effectual than boiling water. The vessel holding the oil is heated to 200 C. (392 Fahr.) or over, and then set in a vessel of cold water to cool, and the instruments are soon ready for use, without the possibility of harm, while the hands are lubricated with the oil, but not rendered slippery. As the boiling point of oil is above 300 C., there is no loss of oil below this and the supply can be used over and over again for the purpose.

### Sun-Baths Dangerous.

Under the heading of German Science, the *Westminster Gazette*, reports the following interesting opinion: Prof. Grawitz, of Charlottenburg, warns against the present craze for sun-baths, which he declares often have very injurious results. Although light-treatment may prove beneficial for particular ailments, there is no evidence whatever to show that it is beneficial upon the whole organism. Polar expeditions and other experiences prove that the absence of sunlight for whole months causes no harm to the organism; and for thousands of years civilised man has been accustomed to exclude all light from the greater part of the body. When the unaccustomed body is exposed to strong sunlight bad results often ensue. Inflammation of the skin is only a minor evil, but light baths affect the heart injuriously in more than one way, and sometimes cause collapse. The temperature is unduly raised; headaches are suffered from, and there results a general excitation of the nervous system.

### The Prevention of Typhoid Fever.

An interesting article by C. W. G. Rohrer in the *Maryland Medical Journal* is thus summarised: (1) Typhoid fever is both infectious and contagious. The old dogma that typhoid fever is infectious but not contagious has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. (2) Two-thirds of the cases of typhoid fever are due to infected water supplies, one-sixth of the cases are due to infected milk, and the remaining one-sixth to flies, direct contact, and other means of contagion. (3) In the United States 50,000 persons annually are massacred by typhoid fever. In the State of Maryland alone nearly 500 deaths each year are due to typhoid fever. (4) Every case of typhoid fever comes from a pre-existing case of typhoid fever; hence complete and thorough disinfection of all excreta is the first step toward prevention. By so doing we strike at the fountain head of the disease. (5) "Food, fingers, and flies" offers an alliterative explanation of much of the hitherto unaccounted-for typhoid fever—the so-called prosodemic typhoid. (6) When typhoid fever is raging there is safety in boiled water, pasteurised milk, and cooked vegetables and

fruit. Pasteurised milk is heated to 160 degs. Fahr., kept at that temperature for ten or fifteen minutes, and then quickly cooled.

## Legal Matters.

### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

It is a well-accepted axiom that doctors differ, and apparently legal authorities differ also. As we reported recently, a former patient of the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children was awarded £25 damages on account of an injury received through a burn on the leg by a hot-water bottle while under the influence of an anaesthetic. South of the Tweed a patient has failed to establish the responsibility of the Governing Body of a hospital under similar circumstances. He was placed under an anaesthetic at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and alleged that while under its influence one of his arms was burned by a hot-water bottle, and the other compressed against the side of the operating table, so that both became paralysed. He therefore brought an action for damages against the Governors of the hospital. Mr. Justice Grantham, by whom the case was heard, held that negligence on the part of the surgeon had not been proved, and even if this had been done the Governors were not responsible for his actions. He therefore entered judgment for the defendants without submitting the case to the jury. An appeal was lodged and heard in the Appeal Court by the Master of the Rolls and Lords Justice Farwell and Kennedy, who dismissed the appeal with costs.

Lord Justice Farwell, who delivered judgment, said it was now settled that a public body was liable for the negligence of its servants in the same way as private individuals. In the present case were any of the persons present at the examination servants of the defendants? The surgeon and anaesthetist were not. They were all professional men employed by the defendants to exercise their profession to the best of their abilities according to their own discretion, and were not under the orders, or bound to obey the directions of, the defendants. The three nurses and the two carriers stood on a somewhat different footing, and he would assume they were servants of the defendants, but though they were servants of the defendants for general purposes they were not for the purposes of operation and examination by the medical officers. As soon as the doors of the operating theatre closed they were under the sole direction of the operating surgeon until the procedure had been completely finished. Nor was the contract of the hospital one by which it undertook to nurse during the operation. It merely undertook to supply nurses and others in whose selection it would take due care. In the course of his remarks the learned Judge quoted the cases of *Glavin v. Rhode Island Hospital* and *Hall v. Lees*.

Nothing could be more unsatisfactory to the nurse than this judgment. It supposes her to be the chattel of two masters. She claims free will.

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