

Medical Matters.

THE IODINE METHOD OF STERILISING THE SKIN.

Mr. Philip Turner, F.R.C.S., Assistant Surgeon, and Mr. H. C. Catto, M.R.C.S., Assistant Bacteriologist to Guy's Hospital, have contributed an interesting article on the above subject to the *Lancet*, in which they say in part:—"The iodine method of preparing the skin before operation has now been widely adopted, and undoubtedly gives excellent results. Whether the skin is really sterilised by this means can only be determined by bacteriological examination. One of us (P. T.) has employed this method for over two years. At first tincture of iodine was used only as a final application immediately before the incision, the skin having been prepared and compressed in the orthodox manner on the previous day. For about the past 12 months, however, the preliminary compressing has been omitted, the solution of iodine being the only antiseptic used in the preparation of the patient's skin. In certain of the present series of cases the B.P. tincture (2½ per cent.) has been employed for this purpose, and in others the following solution: iodine, grms. 30; potass. iodid., grms. 40; aq. dest., 500 c.c. Before using this is diluted with an equal volume of methylated spirit, so that the strength of the solution is 3 per cent.

"There is some difference of opinion as to whether preliminary shaving of the skin is desirable. Personally, I think it is better to do so, at any rate in adults, when the incision is to be made in the groin, the abdomen, or where much hair is present." In thirty-two cases bacteriologically investigated, "the skin was shaved, and it is interesting to note that of the three cases that were not sterile one was very indifferently shaved, while in another a hair about half an inch long was attached to the minute piece of skin sent for bacteriological examination. It is here necessary to emphasise the fact, which has been insisted upon by other writers, that for the satisfactory action of the iodine it is essential that the skin shall be dry. Shaving should thus be carried out with a sharp razor without lathering the skin or, if soap and water are used, the skin must be subsequently dried with a pad or towel and then washed over with ether and again dried before the iodine solution is applied.

"In acute cases the whole process is carried out on the operating table after the patient has been anaesthetised. In ordinary cases, to avoid a mess in the theatre, the preparation

is carried out in the ward. The iodised area is then covered with a pad or towel. Before commencing the operation a second application of the iodine solution is made, the skin being now in a thoroughly dry condition."

SPOTTED FEVER.

The *Morning Post* correspondent at Athens reports that "spotted fever" has been prevalent in that city for the past two months. The disease attacks all classes indiscriminately, but communities such as schools, garrisons, etc., are especially subject to its ravages. In spite of all the efforts of the sanitary authorities the disease is increasing alarmingly. The provinces are pretty generally attacked and the islands are now losing their immunity. The schools have been closed for some weeks and still remain so, and each tram is disinfected. The very severe and rigorous cold which has been felt in Greece this winter has aided the propagation of the disease, and the general insanitariness of Greek towns and the uncleanly habits of the lower classes are all factors in its rapid progress.

EUGENICS AND ALCOHOL

Dr. C. W. Saleeby, in a letter explanatory of a lecture given by him, addressed to a contemporary, points out that "temperance societies often describe as a sin what in many cases is really a symptom of nervous degeneracy; and the law similarly treats it, i.e., the inebriety of the defective-minded, as a crime."

He adds, "I am now satisfied, especially in the light of the physiological advances of the last decade, that alcohol is a necessity for none, either in health or disease, and that the balance of its activity in the living organism is always mortal, occasional appearances notwithstanding. As regards the feeble-minded inebriate, my teaching, as for many years past, but with much more variety and certainty of warrant, is that these persons should be treated as all the feeble-minded should be, as patients, not criminals, and as demanding life-long care apart from the rest of the community, certainly without the use of alcohol in any form; this primarily in their own interest, secondly in our interest, and thirdly in that of the future, since the children of these persons are like unto them. Indeed, there is no better illustration of the thesis which I have for long been attempting to impress upon social reformers of all parties—that the association between parenthood and alcoholism is disastrous in all respects, and that the wise motto for all who wish England well is 'Protect parenthood from alcohol.'"

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