

Tit Bits from the Editors.

Dr. EDWARD C. KIRK, in the October issue of the *Cosmos*, repeats his frequent warnings on the dangers of chloroform when used as an anæsthetic for tooth extraction :

It has been stated, and perhaps with some degree of scientific authority, that chloroform as an anæsthetic in dental practice is peculiarly dangerous by reason of the more or less upright position of the patient during dental operations, which brings the increased stress of gravity to bear upon a heart muscle weakened by chloroform ; a condition not so apt to occur in the case of larger operations where the patient is anæsthetized in a recumbent or prone position. We know of no comparative statistics on that point, nor that there has actually been shown to be a greater danger attending the use of chloroform in dental than in general surgical practice. But that is not the point of first importance. What has been shown by statistics and emphasized by carefully conducted experiments is that chloroform may suddenly bring about paralysis of the heart's function and fatal syncope. If cocaine had been shown to be as poisonous a drug in dental practice as chloroform, measured by the fatalities resulting from its use, it would have been generally abandoned by the dental profession. But for some unaccountable reason, ignorance, carelessness, habit or otherwise, the reports of fatal chloroform poisoning come regularly along, and the coroner's jury continues to exonerate the participants in the crime with the same inconsiderate disregard of their responsibility for the destruction of human life. The *Dental Record* (London), September issue, contains circumstantial accounts of two fatal cases of chloroform syncope as shown by the evidence brought out at the coroner's inquest in each case : one that of a young man, seventeen years of age, who had chloroform administered for the removal of "half a dozen stumps of teeth." Death occurred during the operation. "The coroner said this was the second case within a few days that he had held. It was a wonderful thing that there were not more deaths. The jury returned a verdict of death from misadventure."

In the same journal appears the report of another inquest in the case of a woman, twenty-nine years of age, who died while having three teeth extracted during chloroform narcosis. The report states, "There was nothing in the condition of the patient to suggest any danger whatever. She was apparently a strong woman." Death occurred suddenly during the operation. "The patient became blue in the face and ceased breathing, and to all intents and purposes was dead in three or four minutes." The physician who