CLAMPS IN GASTRO-ENTEROSTOMY.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

SIR,—I am glad that Mr. Sinclair White has raised the question of the use of clamps in gastro-enterostomy. I have never used them, but I have always thought that their use was almost universal. I consider their use is objectionable in haemorrhage; and secondly, because any application of a clamp, however temporary it may be, must damage the vitality of the stomach and jejunal walls at the point where the anastomosis is to take place.

The supposed uses of clamps are (1) to prevent the escape of gastric contents; (2) to facilitate the holding of the parts together during suturing; and (3) to prevent haemorrhage. Gastric contents are not infective and only cause trouble if the wound; all that can happen is that gastric contents flow over the stomach and jejunum, which produces no trouble if the parts are well washed with normal saline solution. I have not found that the healing of the abdominal wound has been interfered with.

With regard to haemorrhage, I have had little trouble. No clamp is required ligature on the duodenum, and only three or four vessels in the stomach will require to be ligatured. The short time occupied in ligaturing these vessels is amply repaid by the knowledge that reactionary bleeding will not occur. I am sure that Mr. R. W. Murray need have no hesitation in dispensing with the use of clamps.

I have no personal experience of the operation without clamps, but I have the privilege of communicating your correspondents, but from what I have observed in Continental clinics it has seemed to me that the operation without clamps is less simple and clean—even in the hands of dexterous surgeons—than with the operation with their aid. I do not pretend to say that one way is better than another, but I do believe that the use of clamps need not be followed by this grave complication.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

London, W., Feb. 7th, 1910.

L. A. BIDWELL.

THE ACTIONS OF PITUITARY EXTRACTS.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

SIR,—Your leading article in your issue of Feb. 5th on the Action of Pituitary Extracts based on Dr. A. Delilie's monograph is sure to be much appreciated at the present time. I would like, however, to make some demur to the somewhat surprising recommendation of Dr. Delilie that an extract of the whole gland should be used. This advice is quite contrary to what would be expected from a consideration of all published reports of recent laboratory work that have come under my notice, and experiments I have been making myself during the past few weeks. In a letter to me some time ago he said that the work suggested by him is not the one best calculated to bring out the fullest information as to the clinical value—whatever it may prove to be—of this interesting body. It seems to me most desirable that physicians or surgeons wishing to test the value of pituitary extracts should not confuse results by using the whole gland, but should deliberately test, in suitable cases, the effects produced by the use of extracts of either the anterior or the posterior lobe, so that the results obtained may be accurately ascribed to whichever part of the pituitary is responsible; if subsequently it should be found that increased benefit followed the administration of the whole gland, then, of course, it should be used. My own experiments have been quite simple and for the moment have been confined mainly to noting the effects produced on the blood pressure of anesthetized rabbits with cut vagi. In order to avoid error I have personally removed the pituitary body from the heads of sheep and oxen and then carefully and cleanly separated the posterior from the anterior lobes and heptal glands and have been supplied with them by others to publish their experiences of this complication. Both surgeons attribute the accident to the use of clamps, and this certainly seems to be the case in the two instances recorded. Mr. Sinclair White advocates the ligation of bleeding points before suturing, and I shall, henceforward, certainly take Mr. Sinclair White's advice the next time I perform this operation and do it without using clamps.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Exeter, Feb. 7th, 1910.

RUSSELL COOMBE.