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## Original Communications.

### ACETATE OF LEAD, IN LARGE DOSES, IN POST-PARTUM AND OTHER HÆMORRHAGES.\*

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It is now nearly fifty years since a discovery was made by my preceptor, the late Dr. John Stephenson, of Montreal, which was regarded by him, and, as I think, very justly, as a very important therapeutic fact. About the year 1830 Dr. Stephenson was consulted by a man who was troubled with a varicocele. With but meagre expectation of doing his patient any good, he gave him a dose of epsom salts as a purgative, and two drachms of the acetate of lead to be used as a lotion on the scrotum. He did not again see the man for some weeks. Meeting him one day on the street he enquired how he had got on. The man replied he was cured. Dr. Stephenson was rather sceptical as to this favourable issue, and questioned him as to the effects of the two drugs. He replied that he used the large powder as a lotion, and dissolved and swallowed the other. It was very sweet, he said, but it purged him well. Dr. Stephenson afterwards examined the scrotum, and found that the varicocele had really disappeared. He was a man of sharp perception and rapid conclusion. He had twice nearly lost a lady from post-partum hæmorrhage, though using all the suppressive means then in favour. He resolved to try, in her next confinement, should hæmorrhage recur, the effect of a large dose of the acetate; but not to wait till it had set in. He gave it some time before the emptying of the uterus; and to his high satisfaction the organ contracted promptly, and no hæmorrhage took place. In every subsequent labour of this lady he took the

same precaution, and it was followed by a like result. Throughout his obstetric practice, which was pretty large, he treated every severe case of post-partum hæmorrhage with the acetate, generally in drachm doses, repeated if deemed necessary. Not in any instance did the slightest evil follow.

Shortly after his first test of its anti-hæmorrhagic action, a servant man of the late Professor Holmes was seized with a formidable hæmoptysis. He was placed in the Montreal General Hospital. The hæmorrhage resisted all the remedies prescribed by the attending physician. A consultation of the Hospital Staff was called. Dr. Stephenson related his experience of the efficacy of the acetate, and proposed it in this emergency, but none of his colleagues would venture on his large doses, for they had all been taught, and as in duty bound they all believed, that it was an irritant poison. The patient, however, was bleeding to death, and they yielded, but at the same time told Dr. Stephenson he must take the entire responsibility on himself, which he most readily and fearlessly did. I do not remember the total quantity of the acetate which was given to this patient, but I know it was large, several drachms in the course of a few hours. The man's life was saved. Some years after I saw him in Dr. Stephenson's office. The Doctor sounded his chest, and showed us that one lung was sealed up.

Dr. Stephenson, in his midwifery lectures, strenuously inculcated the theory of the anti-hæmorrhagic action of the acetate, and its perfect harmlessness in large doses. I have been a faithful disciple, both in my general practice, and as a teacher of obstetrics, and I am aware that a number of my fellow students, and nearly all my pupils, have realized the same valuable results as Dr. Stephenson and myself. I could corroborate this statement by many witnesses, some of whom now hear me. I think I may safely appeal to one of my fellow students, whose testimony will command the warm respect of this entire Association, need I say that that I mean our venerable and most sincerely esteemed Secretary? Alas! he is, I believe, all that now remains to me, in this city, of my contemporaries; you will not, therefore, wonder that I both esteem and love him.

I never but once saw the slightest sign of the evil constitutional results of the acetate, and that one exception occurred in a case of hæmoptysis, in which my consuing friend would not consent to

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