

cologists wrote about the more strictly surgical diseases of women, which were, and will ever be, relegated to specialists. But Bennet as early as 1843 in French, and 1845 in English, published his work on *Inflammation of the Uterus*, of which the last edition was issued in 1861. In it he contended that inflammation of the cervical canal is the main factor in female diseases; that from it come ulceration, displacement, leucorrhœa, menstrual derangement, and ovarian disorder; and that the inflammation, being limited to the cervical canal, can readily be dislodged by strong caustics. Written with dogmatic zeal, advising a definite treatment to a reachable and a seeable object—a treatment which the humblest yeoman of the profession could carry out—few books of modern times have exerted so great and so widespread an influence. That riddle of the Sphinx—the cause of woman's ill-health—had been read and interpreted! The profession was taken fairly by storm; the effect was as electric as the appeal of Maria Theresa to Hungarian nobles. From Arctic to Antarctic oceans, from the Mississippi to the Volga, countless speculums of varied form leaped from their bags and flashed in sunlight boreal, tropical, and meridional. Cauterics actual or potential, applied to actual or potential uterine sores, became the order, in fact, the ruling passion of the day. In the general enthusiasm it was soon forgotten that every mucous membrane secretes, and that it must of course give evidence of its own secretion, just as every nose contains its mucus. Hence, every examined womb, being found to contain mucus, was, as it were, invalidated—that is to say, it was put on the speculum list. Naturally, then, not a womb being found healthy from the speculum standpoint, this much abused organ was charged with being the cause of almost all the ills that female flesh is heir to, and it was treated—that is to say, maltreated—for every imaginable disorder that could not be referred off-hand to some other organ. Bennet, the medical Frankenstein, had evoked a monster which could not be curbed, and for five and thirty years the speculum ran riot.

But in this age of unrestful progress, at every turn of the hour-glass of time, some cherished creed, some accepted dogma, is proved a heresy, and Bennet's cervical theory fared but

little better. A wholesome reaction set in. As experience grew, it was found that pelvic inflammations and strictures of the cervical canal came from this treatment. This discovery led to the abandonment of the more heroic caustics. Then, again, it gradually dawned upon truth-seekers that far more than inflammation, passive congestion of the womb and of its annexes, together with resulting structural changes, that uterine displacements and injuries, and that ovarian and tubal lesions played important rôles in the female economy. In keeping with this knowledge is the far more rational and beneficial treatment of the present day.

Still, granting that the treatment of actual, visible, and tangible uterine disease leaves little for improvement, the whole truth has not been reached—for truth evolves slowly and does not, like Aaron's rod, bud and blossom in a night. The ball-and-chain of tradition still drags at the heel of this branch of science, and the medical mind, in close touch here with the lay mind, tends to give the reproductive organs undue importance—to attribute, in fact, altogether too much to their influence. By a very large number of practitioners, even by specialists working in other fields of medicine, these organs are too often wrongfully made a scape-goat for headaches and nape-aches, for spine-aches and back-aches, for weakness of vision, for aural disturbances, for sore-throat and weak lungs, for irritable heart, and also for a host of so-called uterine symptoms. Yet these very symptoms may be due wholly to nerve-exhaustion, or malnutrition of nerve-centres, and not to reflex action, or to direct action, from some real or some supposed uterine disorder. I say this advisedly, because I too have thus erred, and because hardly a day passes without my seeing cases of supposed uterine disease which have been so treated for months—even for years—when the whole trouble, or the most of it, lies—not in the reproductive organs, but—in the nerve-ganglia. This abuse of uterine treatment, through a mistaken diagnosis, is, in my opinion, the great medical error of the day.

Once I was asked by a medical friend to see an exceedingly bad and acute case of pruritus vulvæ. Very naturally attributing it to uterine disease, he discovered a small cervical tear, and I was called to decide the question of repairing