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A. H. WRIGHT, B.A., M.D. Tor., M.R.C.S. England.

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PUERPERAL ECLAMPSIA, WITH REPORT OF A CASE.\*

BY GEO. ACHESON, M.A., M.B. (TOR.).

Lecturer on Pathology and Director of the Microscopical Laboratory, Woman's Medical College, Toronto.

"An attack of puerperal convulsions is one of the most frightful accidents that can happen to a patient under labor," so says Ramsbotham; and, as it is a disease which should be interesting to the general practitioner, no less than to the specialist in obstetrics, both on account of its dangerous character, sudden nature of its symptoms, and not infrequent occurrence, I need offer no apology for bringing the subject before you; though it is not my intention to discuss it in all its bearings, but only to make a few remarks on its ætiology, pathology, and treatment, and to report a case which recently fell under my observation. I am very glad to know that the discussion is to be opened by a gentleman so well qualified to speak with authority on this subject, as Dr. A. H. Wright, and I hope he will be followed by many who have had extensive clinical experience; so that by a free interchange of views, especially on treatment, we may all learn much that will be valuable to ourselves and useful to our patients.

Lusk says, that one in eight of all deaths among pregnant women is due to eclampsia, and

that it occurs once in every 500 pregnancies. Other writers state its frequency variously at from once in 250 or 300, to once in 600 labors. Fatality to the mother, from being perhaps as high as seventy-five per cent., has in modern times fallen to twenty-five, or even less. The disease is most frequent in primiparæ and in twin pregnancies; illegitimate pregnancies would also seem to be more prone to its occurrence.

Without attempting to review the various theories that have been put forward from time to time regarding the pathology of this disease, I may say that I hold it to be due to an *auto-toxicæmia—uræmia* if you like that term better; and I think that the weight of modern authority inclines to this view. Carter's definition of uræmia explains very well what I mean; he says: "Uræmia may be defined as the altered condition of health caused by the accumulation within the body of poisonous products that should be eliminated by the kidneys." In a former paper, read by me before this Society, I discussed very fully the pathogenesis of uræmia in general, so that I need not here say more than that I believe the condition to be due to the toxic influence of various animal alkaloids, or leucomaines, and ptomaines, on the nerve centres. These toxa, produced either normally or under various abnormal conditions, should be removed from the blood by the kidneys, and when this excretion does not occur, or is incomplete, the nerve centres suffer, and the various phenomena of uræmia occur. Now, in the pregnant woman the conditions are somewhat different from those of the

\*Read before the Toronto Medical Society, Oct. 16th, 1890.