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## ON THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF CHLOROFORM DURING LABOR.

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As, at the present time, the subject of chloroform inhalation is again *sub judice*, I feel it incumbent upon me to raise my voice against its employment in midwifery, and to lay before my professional brethren my reasons for the adoption of such a course, which I sincerely trust shall have some weight with the unprejudiced, and which may, perchance, call the more serious attention of some, if not of all, of those now too deeply wedded to its use, to the dangerous, and too often fatal results consequent thereon; in which, if I but even partially succeed, I shall consider myself well repaid.

From experience, repeated observation, and the published, as also the otherwise expressed opinions of those who agree, as well as of those who disagree with me upon the subject, I am firmly convinced that chloroform, when inhaled during labor, very fruitfully predisposes to hæmorrhage, puerperal inflammation, chest affections, and to other diseases detrimental to health and life, which it aggravates if given during their presence. It also lays the foundation of diseases to arise at a more distant period, and thus increases the mortality in childhood, and subsequent thereto. I have known puerperal inflammation frequently to have followed its inhalation, and too often with a fatal result; in fact, some years since, when it was more fashionable, and was given with a more lavish hand, a great mortality obtained amongst the patients of some few men who administered it—so much so that a popular outcry was raised against its employment. In the majority of those cases, puerperal fever was the cause of death, which, when thus raised, being, as I firmly believe, always infectious or otherwise communicable, became epidemicised, after which even those who wisely refused the drug, "charmed it never so sweetly," were thus inadvertently, and, in some instances, hopelessly poisoned.

In support of these positions, I shall first refer to the several published Reports of the Dublin Lying-in Hospital. We find, on reference thereto, during the masterships of Drs. Collins and Johnson, when chloroform was not inhaled, that the mortality was much less than during that of Dr. Shekleton, when this pernicious drug was used—as thus:—In the first report are recorded out of 16,414 deliveries but 164 deaths, or 1 in 100; in the second, out of 6,634 deliveries but 65 deaths, or 1 in 102; whereas in the third, 13,748 deliveries are given, and 163 deaths, or 1 in 84!! But of these last cases 13,406 of them were not chloroformed, of which only 133 died, or 1 in 100, but of the remaining 342, who took the drug, 30 died, or 1 in 11!!! If, again, we examine the reported cases of chloroform administration by Simpson and Denham, we shall find that of 345 cases mentioned by the form-

er, 5 died, or 1 in 49; and of 56 by the latter, 5 died, or 1 in 11!! And, by adding all these recorded cases together, we have a mortality on the whole of 1 in 16!!! By again consulting those reports, we perceive that in Dr. Collins's mastership there occurred 97 cases of post partum inflammation, or 1 in 169; in Dr. Johnson's, 62 cases, or 1 in 107; but in Dr. Shekleton's, 150 cases, or 1 in 91. Of those 150 cases, 20 followed upon chloroform inhalation, or 1 in 17!!! and in the remaining 130 cases, in which it was not employed, the average mortality was only 1 in 103. In Denham's report we find 4 cases, or 1 in 14; which, with all the recorded cases, strikes an average of 1 death for every 16½ persons who took chloroform!!!

We also find that during Dr. Collins's mastership, puerperal convulsions proved fatal in the proportion of 1 in 6; whereas in that of Dr. Shekleton, when under chloroform, it amounted to 1 in 3!! and in Denham's cases to 2 in 3!!! or, on the whole, to 1 in 2½!!!

It appears that, during Dr. Shekleton's tenure of office, post partum hæmorrhage occurred but once in every 257 cases when chloroform was not used; yet after its inhalation this complication was present in 1 of every 49 cases. In Dr. Denham's report it was present in 1 of every 19 cases; making, on the whole an average occurrence of 1 case of flooding in every 39½ cases that had taken chloroform.

With respect to the mortality after perforation, the report of Drs. Hardy and McClinton shows 1 fatal case in every 6, and that of Drs. Sinclair and Johnston 1 in every 5; but if we go a little below the surface in the latter report, and examine into 89 cases of perforation, all of equal severity and danger, we shall discover that of the 29 cases in which chloroform was inhaled 9 died, or 1 in 3½; puerperal inflammation occurred 10 times, or 1 in every 3 cases; and hæmorrhage followed in 3 cases, or 1 in every 10; whereas, of the 70 cases in which this drug was not employed, only 6 women died or 1 in every 12; puerperal inflammation arose on 7 in 3 cases, or 1 in every 23; and in no case did hæmorrhage occur.

Many have testified to the fact that uterine action has been lessened, and even caused to cease, by anaesthetics; as also that their effect on some is not commensurate with the quantity of the drug employed—as thus: a very large amount not having any effect upon some, whereas the inhalation of a very small dose, even of a few drops, has produced almost deep coma in others. Dr. Denham says:—"In some, if left to nature, the labor would probably have been completed in a somewhat shorter space of time. The advantages to be gained by chloroform in some cases will not be found an adequate compensation for the loss of power sustained in the muscles of animal and organic life; and, were we to continue its use, I do believe that the patients would remain undelivered