

that thereafter she carried under her fig-leaf apron an imperfect fourchette.

After labor even in uncomplicated instances, surfaces of greater or less extent, denuded of epithelium, always have and always will exist; therefore, even in the midst of the most favorable surroundings figuratively speaking, the arm is scratched and ready to receive the vaccine virus; and it is no wonder that so many lives have been lost through this dire disease.

Hippocrates refers in no obscure way to its fatal tendency and the literature on the subject from his time to the present invests the matter with the greatest importance.

About twenty years ago a table of statistics as to the mortality of childbirth was carefully compiled; and, although, thanks to the influence of Lister and others, the rate had been considerably lowered, still there occurred annually in England and Wales about three thousand deaths from the different varieties of lying-in complications, two-fifths of which were set down as pyaemia, puerperal peritonitis and the other febrile and inflammatory conditions which, being so often observed to have an interchangeable character, for the sake of convenience may rationally be embraced in the generic term puerperal fever.

Perhaps in the whole range of scientific medicine there is no subject that has had so many zealous advocates of opposing theories in reference to its pathology and treatment; but, from the days of Ramsbotham and Gooch down to the present, all seem agreed as to the formidable character of the disease when once the first symptoms are pronounced.

In a very large proportion of instances remedial agents can accomplish little more than the mitigation of suffering, and if preventive measures have been neglected there is not much consolation for the attendant in the reflection that if the stable door had been locked a little sooner the steed would not have been stolen.

The pertinent question then presents itself, what can we do to obviate this wide-spread, and often needless loss of life in the high tide of its usefulness and responsibility?

Whether it be the manifestation of other forms of common disease in the peculiar physical conditions of the puerperal state, the type being modified by these conditions; or a specific disease *ab*

*initio*, it matters not; nor are we much concerned about the adverse opinions held by eminent obstetricians as to its claims for classification in the inflammatory affections on the one hand or the febrile on the other; we only know that out of nothing, nothing comes; the mind naturally reverts from effect to causation; and a careful investigation of the avenues through which enter the specific causes of the disease, will, in this instance, best conduce to the success of preventive measures.

I do not hope to advance anything new on the subject nor to put the matter in any better light than we can see it portrayed in our every day text-books; but where so much is at stake a reiteration of threadbare facts will perhaps serve to deepen impressions that are apt to be effaced by the multitude of other cares that crowd into a physician's life.

Therefore I shall enumerate as briefly as possible these causative factors, premising with a short reference to theories held in the past.

Ritgen considered it dependant on a metastasis, not of the milk, but of the blood destined to form that secretion from the breasts to the peritoneum; and this doctrine was, I presume, the origin of the crude notions on the subject that obtain amongst so many old women to-day.

Legallois thought it arose solely from the absorption of pus from the endometrium. Cruvelhier and the great Sir James Simpson likened the intrauterine surface after delivery to a stump after amputation, and as early as 1774, Kirkland contended that the disease was produced by the absorption of putrid materials from within the uterus.

All seem pretty well agreed that in every form of puerperal fever there has been absorption from a raw surface usually, exceptionally through the lungs, and that septic changes are the result. Whether these changes are the direct effect of the micro-organisms upon the tissues and fluids with which they come in contact, or whether they produce a virus in the process of nutritive activity, or whether, as is probable, both suppositions are correct, must be decided by future investigations; but of one thing, Lusk says, there is no reasonable doubt, viz.: That the connection between sepsis and bacteria is constant and vital.

Waldeyer, Orth and Von Recklinghausen found the lymphatics of the uterus filled with pus-like