

amount or intensity of the poison absorbed, and the resisting power of the organism. Experience proves that smallpox, diphtheria or scarlatina may be sometimes so mild as to be scarcely recognisable, at other times so malignant as to destroy life in a few hours. Yet the nature of the poison is the same in both cases, and the mild case may spread the disease in a malignant form to others. So in like manner cases of septic wound-infection may vary greatly in intensity, though produced by the same poison, developing and propagating the same poison, and the danger of infection may be as great from the mild as from the severe. If we continue to regard all mild febrile disturbances as ephemeral fever, or milk fever, and only the severe cases as septic wound-infection, we can not expect to work out a rational treatment founded on a scientific basis. How often we notice in scarlatina epidemics that the first couple of cases in a ward or family are slight—the first mutterings of the storm—and then suddenly a child is stricken down with the malignant form. The infective agent, mild at first, seems to concentrate and gain intensity and power as it spreads. So in hospital practice we find that several cases of moderate fever, with, perhaps, a little parametritis, usually precede the general outbreak. If the true state of affairs is realised and the warning heeded, prompt measures may avert disaster. I believe the same thing holds good in private practice; careful observation would show that there have been moderate febrile symptoms among the patients attended by certain physicians or nurses before the onset of more general trouble in their practice.

*How, then, does septic wound-infection occur?* Through the numerous traumatisms in the genital tract which result from labor, micro-organisms, chiefly streptococci and staphylococci, either enter the system directly or else lodge in clots, shreds of membrane, fragments of adherent placental tissue; they multiply rapidly, generating poisonous matters which are readily absorbed and produce severe constitutional symptoms. The microbes are brought in contact with the open surfaces by the air or by means of the physician's and nurse's hands, foul instruments, utensils, clothing, sponges, dressings, etc. Traumatisms, shreds,