

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE ELECTRICAL TREATMENT OF FIBROIDS.*

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The present age in gynaecology and abdominal surgery, especially, may be called the extreme surgical age : and, as a result of the wonderful advances and the great lowering of the death-rate of surgical operations, owing to the application of the principles of asepsis, surgical enthusiasm has reached its highest point. One must have a great deal of courage indeed, to advocate any other method of treatment than surgical operation, especially at a meeting where the surgical element so greatly preponderates : nevertheless, the writer believes that the majority of women, with fibroid tumors, can be relieved of their pain and bleeding, by means of the constant electrical current. If employed within certain limits, it is absolutely devoid of danger ; while the application of the treatment should be almost devoid of pain. On the other hand, the surgical treatment, even under the very best of conditions, has, so far, always been accompanied with a mortality rate. There are fewer deaths than there were when Freund lost seventy-five per cent. of his cases of abdominal hysterectomy, but still the death rate remains, so that the electrical treatment, with no death rate, had this great advantage over the surgical treatment. The electrical treatment, also, leaves the ovaries and the tubes in no worse condition, but, on the contrary, in a rather better condition than they were before : while the surgical treatment is nearly always accompanied by the removal of the ovaries. With married women, and indeed with all women, the loss of the ovaries was no small affair. The temptation to operate was very great. The patient's fate was sealed one way or the other, when the operation was concluded, and whether she lived or died, the surgeon received a great deal of praise for having the courage to perform

the operation. Also the remuneration was sometimes very considerable. With the electrical treatment, on the contrary, it was tedious, required sometimes as many as fifty or one hundred applications, and there were occasional relapses. This application took up a good deal of time, but this objection may be lessened by devoting two afternoons a week, exclusively to this treatment ; in which case a considerable number of applications may be administered in a few hours, the patients being prepared in an adjoining room, by a nurse or an assistant.

The physician who cures the patient with electricity does not receive the same credit for his good work as the one who cures her by surgical means, so the temptation is very great to operate ; but he could show fifty or sixty women who had remained well since several years, who had been treated by electricity. A great many well-known gynaecologists have used the Apostoli method for fibroids with good success, but have refrained from publishing their cases, for fear of injuring their surgical reputation. This is a fact known positively to the writer.

One of the objections to electricity which has been raised is unjust, and that is that it causes adhesions. The writer referred to several cases which had been cured of their symptoms, but were subsequently operated on, for other reasons, and in which no adhesions whatever were found after as many as one hundred strong applications of the galvanic current.

Another case which he referred to demonstrated the truth of Apostoli's dictum that when the application of this method causes febrile reaction, the tubes are badly diseased. In this case, which had been treated for fibroid, it had every appearance of being one, could not endure the Apostoli method, and was operated on by the writer, who then found that the large pear-shaped mass in the centre of the abdomen was made up of two large sausage-shaped tubes filled with pus, and two ovaries the size of oranges, and the uterus, all glued together and covered with lymph. These were separated from each other and removed, all except the uterus, which, not being much enlarged, was left. This patient made a perfect recovery.

He was very much opposed to galvano-puncture, which was, he considered, a dangerous proceeding,

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