

## SERUM AND SEPTICEMIA.\*

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Since Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes in America, and Semmelweis on the Continent, introduced ordinary cleanliness into lying-in hospitals, the mortality of child-bearing has gradually fallen, till the aseptic precautions now in vogue have reduced it to a fraction of one per cent. But in private practice the number of cases of sepsis is still very large, perhaps as large as thirty years ago; but the type seems to be less severe, due, no doubt, to the use of antiseptics. Bacon<sup>1</sup> estimated that of all women dying in Chicago between the ages of twenty and fifty in the year 1895, 7.3 per cent. died of puerperal septicemia.

The treatment of this condition is still the *bête noire* of the medical profession, and no sure advance has been made during the last quarter of a century. A simple enumeration of the various remedies which have been advocated would occupy several pages. Success from the method of treatment has often been reported, and perhaps it was due to the medicines administered; but in this disease, oftener than in any other, a most hopeless case will sometimes recover spontaneously. The mortality is very high, regardless of the treatment adopted. Death in a few days is the result in a large percentage of cases.

When antistreptococcic serum was introduced a few years ago, we hoped that we had entered a new era, when we would be able to slay this terrible dragon at will; but after a careful trial the serum has not fulfilled our expectations, and we are still without a specific. Nevertheless, when one meets a case of septicemia of streptococcic origin, this remedy suggests itself, and good results sometimes follow.

The following case is reported, because of the large amount of serum which was used in conjunction with the routine medical treatment.

*History of case.*—Mrs. M., aged 30, married nine years; one child seven years ago. When twelve years old she was struck by lightning, and was in poor health till her marriage; family history excellent; both parents still living; patient was born when her mother was forty-five years of age.

*Previous labor.*—In January, 1896, she was delivered by forceps of a large female child, breach presenting. The labor was most difficult, the cervix being lacerated, and the perineum torn through into the rectum. Both were repaired immediately.

\* Read at meeting of the Toronto Medical Society.

<sup>1</sup> Bacon: The Mortality from Puerperal Infection in Chicago. *Amer. Gyn. and Obst. Jour.*, 1896.