

quotations. We shall find the great teachers always sound and clear in their utterances. I shall only refer to our own Ramsbottom who comes in with Sir James Y. Simpson at the end of the first period. His great work* made its appearance in 1841. He considers the application of the forceps such an important operation that he strongly recommends consultation, "even though a neighbouring, probably a rival, and perhaps not very friendly practitioner" may have to be called in. And he frequently exclaims: "Cautiously and tenderly must this iron instrument be used! . . . We must remember that one injudicious thrust, one forcible attempt at introduction, one violent effort in extraction, may bruise, may lacerate, may destroy."

The typical injury of parturition during this period was vesico-vaginal fistula, but there can be no doubt that the not infrequent use of perforating instruments and the crotchet produced bruises and lacerations which, in pre-antiseptic days, must have conduced considerably to the maternal mortality. The mistaken practice, also, of "stretching the birth," which I am afraid is by no means a thing of the past, was so prevalent that it must have done infinite injury. By causing minute necroses or lowering the vitality of the tissues it must have opened up the way to bacterial invasion with all its consequences.

Laceration of the perineum must have been occasionally inevitable in former generations as in our time. But special attention appears to have been given to its prevention. Denman indeed refers to its prevention as "the principal object of our attention in natural labours."

With the *second period* commencing with the discovery of anæsthetics, and ending with the general introduction of antiseptics, I have at present comparatively little concern. The obstetrician of that quarter of the century, of whom we may take as a type the late Dr. Mathews Duncan, was much concerned with the mechanism of labour, and this is the only period, if any exists, in the history of obstetrics when the warnings against meddling midwifery by the teachers ceased to be as clear and emphatic as they had been in former times. With the beginning of this period, we have the work of Marion Sims marking an epoch in the history of gynæcology. He and his contemporary imitators and his successors were long busy repairing the characteristic ancient injury of vesico-vaginal fistula, for they had the accumulated misery of a whole generation of women to cure or ameliorate. With the end of the period comes

* Principles and Practice of Obstetric Medicine and Surgery.