

be partial, involving only the anterior lip of the cervix; under the former circumstance, the spasmodic action may be complete, and in the majority of cases, will be induced by the early rupture of the membranes, in either an artificial or spontaneous manner, with a general pressure of the child's head, or other presenting portion, upon the cervix, thereby compressing it upon the brim of the pelvis.

Cases, however, are recorded in obstetric works, in which the rigidity has depended upon a *cartilaginous* degeneration of the muscular fibres of the cervix, and upon cicatrization, the consequence of sloughing from injuries which that part of the viscus may at some antecedent period have received. Such cases, fortunately very rare, require a specific line of treatment by the knife. The fact is here only worthy of notice as having originated a division of this peculiar complication of labour into the two varieties of *symptomatic* and *idiopathic*.

Flowing from the idea, perfectly correct, that the irritation is likely to be succeeded by inflammation, unless quickly relieved, most obstetric works recommend, to overcome the difficulty, the practice of venesection, or the exhibition of opium.* But few authors advise

* "When the orifice is rigid, undilated and undilatable, we should employ to overcome this resistance, the various means I have already suggested; bleeding if the patient be phlethoric, baths, unctions on the cervix, with the extract of belladonna."—*Chailly's Midwifery, Am. Ed. 1844, page 273.*

"When there is much vascular excitement, &c., it is almost always advisable to abstract blood. The quantity must, of course, be regulated by circumstances; but as a general rule, I would say, let it be the minimum required. I think I have observed considerable benefit to result in such cases as these, from the employment of nauseating doses of tartar emetic, in conjunction with, or as a substitute for bleeding; but there certainly are circumstances under which the latter cannot safely be dispensed with. Opium has been much recommended as a relaxant, but it is a medicine, the effect of which in parturition, we cannot accurately measure. * * * * * Other means, as fomentations, the introduction of tallow into the vagina, application of belladonna to the os uteri, injections of tobacco, the warm bath, &c., have been recommended; but of their effects I know nothing from experience, and a *priore* see no reasons that can sanc-

a resort to tartar emetic; and in most of the works of authority to which I have had access, they recommend it as an *adjuvant* to the venesection, and by way of securing the effects of the bleeding upon the system. The local application of Belladonna has also been advised by Mr. Dubois of Paris.†

Therapeutic agents are of value exactly in accordance with the effects which, under peculiar circumstances, they are capable of producing. This I apprehend to be an axiom in medicine, and by which the relative value of medicinal agents may be accurately measured. I propose now to examine these several modes of treatment, keeping the above axiom in view.

I. With regard to venesection. This seems to be the established rule of practice, and is sanctioned by every author of note. Bleeding, in its influence upon the system, is one of the

"ion their use."—*The Dublin Practice of Midwifery, by H. Maunsell, M.D., 1845. Page 142 and seq.*

"Nauseating remedies, and even tobacco injections have been tried to a considerable extent, for the purpose of relaxing the mouth of the uterus, but they produce little or no good effects, and cause much suffering to the patient."—*Library of Medicine, Vol. 6, page 199.*

"For myself, in endeavouring to effect a relaxation of the soft parts, fomentations and bleeding are the remedies to which I principally confide."—*Principles and Practice of Obstetric Medicine, by J. Blundell, M.D.*

"For rest of body, tranquillity of mind, the abstraction of stimuli, the loss of blood, free bowels, and not allowing the soft parts to be disturbed by ill-timed and officious touching, or ill-conceived manual aid at the mouth of the uterus, have, in a thousand instances, overcome every difficulty presented by simple rigidity."—*Dewees' system of Midwifery, 1847, page 302.*

"If the patient be strong, phlethoric, and disposed to make violent straining efforts, a free depletion from the arm will be of use; it diminishes the tendency to inflammation, and produces a feeling of exhaustion in the patient which induces her to bear her pains more patiently. In order to produce such an effect depletion may be followed by tartarized antimony, in small doses, so as to excite nausea." &c.—*Lectures on Natural and difficult parturition, by E. W. Murphy, M.D., 1840, page 128.*

The multiplication of authorities is I think unnecessary.

† Besides the employment of bleeding, tartar emetic, opium, and belladonna, advantage has also been derived from the local application of leeches; the warm bath, the exhibition of purgatives and artificial dilatation. More lately, Dr. Scanzoni advises a continued douche of warm water, applied to the os uteri by a special apparatus; and, more lately still, Dr. Snow has found advantage from the employment of chloroform.