

knife, to speak generally, more uncomplainingly than men. However that might be, it was clear enough that there were many women who would not flinch from surgical proceedings, that would express most bitterly the sufferings of parturition, which, though happening in the natural course of things, were oftentimes all but intolerable, and were often made infinitely worse by being spread over so tedious a space. He thought that some persons were too much in the habit of making light of pain, and underrating its complex effects upon the body. Let them turn to Mr. Travers's beautiful work on "Constitutional Irritation," and there read of deaths which seemed to be owing to the shock of pain. Pain had remote effects as well as immediate, and the former were apt to be forgotten. It was very well for those who had no pain to suffer, to talk philosophically of the agonies of others; the remark was quite applicable to the pains of parturition. As to the second and more difficult question—can chloroform be safely administered in labor?—it was one which facts only could determine. He thought that Dr. Murphy was right in rejecting rumors and vague assertions as quite inadmissible in an argumentative discussion. If statements were to be made of deaths from chloroform, and used as arguments against its administration, it was but fair to demand that they should be explicit, and properly supported. If instances of a fatal result were mentioned, something should be said, surely, of the condition of the patient, of the mode in which the chloroform was administered, of the time it was inhaled, and of the state of the respiration and circulation at that period when efforts were first made to avert dissolution.

Mr. Gream spoke at considerable length against the employment of chloroform. He had tried both ether and chloroform himself to some extent when they were first introduced. He was satisfied of their injurious effects. He considered Dr. Murphy had advanced no new facts in his paper, which did not call for special notice. He drew a parallel between the practice of the late Dr. Clarke and Dr. Simpson as to operative midwifery and its results, the balance being in favor of the old plan, without anæsthesia. He quoted the opinions of Collins, Meigs, Montgomery, and others, against the agent, and said that no accoucheur of extensive practice in London used chloroform.

Dr. Webster said, as he did not practise either surgery or midwifery, he had no personal experience respecting the use of chloroform under such circumstances; still, he had paid considerable attention to the subject, and considering it was only by the accumulation of facts relative to the employment of so powerful an agent that we could arrive at any correct knowledge, he would now state some cases which were instructive. Dr. Murphy had said he never saw bad results supervene during the use of chloroform in midwifery. This was important; but he wished to learn if this opinion applied as well to the immediate as to the remote effects produced by the remedy: and especially whether any permanent or transitory impression had ever been produced upon the mental functions of individuals? On this point he (Dr. Webster) could speak with some confidence, and would therefore refer to three cases which had come within his cognizance, showing the serious consequences sometimes following the inhalation of chloroform during child-birth. In the first case, the patient, who had been delivered under the influence of chloroform, was, for three days subsequently, constantly incoherent and rambling. She soon afterwards became perfectly maniacal, and so furious as to require confinement in a lunatic asylum, where she remained for twelve months, when she was discharged cured. In the second case, the patient never recovered from the effects of the chloroform exhibited during her confinement, and soon afterwards became quite maniacal, and continued so for many months, but recovered ulti-

mately. The third case to which he would now allude, by some psychological physicians, might, perhaps, not be considered as a true instance of insanity; however, to remove doubts, he would relate the chief symptoms. The cerebral disturbance following the use of chloroform during delivery never ceased entirely; the patient could not sleep at night for a long time, and often said she felt as if in the presence of a madman who was going to murder her. Three weeks afterwards, she became almost maniacal, exhibited much mental excitement, laughing frequently; had a strong desire to sing, with other extraordinary feelings; conducted herself like an infant, and lost her memory, in which state she continued during five months, when recovery took place.

Dr. Murphy briefly replied. He was anxious for truth, and was glad to hear of any well-authenticated facts on either side of the question. The names quoted by Mr. Gream were those of practitioners who had not tried chloroform; and therefore their opinions were of little weight. Dr. Webster's cases were not so valuable as they might be, as evidence of the asserted dangers of chloroform, if puerperal mania did not occur sometimes without the use of that agent. Doubtless there were some peculiar constitutions, in which chloroform, as was the case with opium, calomel, &c. could not be given without ill effect. To determine what were these constitutions in what way to administer the chloroform, and to determine its real value, was, and should be, the object of his inquiries respecting it.—*London Medical Gazette.*

Development of Electricity by the Contraction of Muscles.

—The experiment of M. Du Bois Reymond, on the development of electricity by the voluntary contraction of the muscles, has been discussed on the Continent. MM. Despretz, Becquerel, and Matteucci have not been successful in producing the effects which were stated to have been obtained by M. Reymond, and attested by M. de Humboldt. M. de Humboldt has addressed a second letter to M. Arago, stating that, at a new *séance* in the cabinet of M. Emile Du Bois Reymond, the effects produced by M. Mitscherlich were most unequivocal, and fully established the truth of this new fact. "Occupied myself," concludes Humboldt, "for more than half a century in this class of physiological researches, the discovery which I have announced has for me a vital interest. It is a phenomenon of life rendered sensible by a physical instrument."—*Med. Times*, August 25, 1849.

PHYSIOLOGY.

On the Muscular Contractions which occasionally happen after Death from Cholera.—Mr. Barlow has noticed two striking cases in which the movements occurred after dissolution, and lasted for a very considerable time. The muscles of the arms, chest, and legs, and, in one of these examples, those of the face, were observed to be affected, some muscles being much more influenced than others. Some of the movements in respect of form were not unlike those of volition. In one of these cases the motions ensued two minutes after death; in the other, a quarter of an hour. In both the muscles of the lower extremities were first affected, and the movements appeared successively in those of other parts. Two cases, very well marked, accurately observed, and presenting very similar features to the foregoing, and which had occurred long ago in India, were referred to. The author described those more local and transient forms of the affection which were more commonly observed; the movements might be confined to the legs, the chest, the face; to a single muscle, or even to certain fibres of it. A case of cholera was on record in which paralytic muscles had been