Justifiable Abortion

It is common for some physicians to try to make themselves believe that they are justified in producing an abortion because of some minor condition or some condition of environment or of circumstance with which the patient has to contend.

A German writer claims that only two or three conditions justify interruption of pregnancy. One is uncontrollable vomiting, the other is tuberculosis, and the last is a condition of deformity which would interfere with natural expulsion. But with many this last is no longer considered justifiable, because the Cæsarean operation has been so greatly simplified, and the mortality when skilfully performed, is so very low that it is counted as a justifiable and dependable procedure.—*Elling-*

The Wasserman Reaction

W. J. Heimann, New York (*Journal A. M. A.*, May 21), proposes a method of reporting the Wassermann reaction similar to the blotting-paper hæmoglobin test. We have determined what intensity of color in hæmoglobin represents 100 per cent., and have reconstructed our conceptions of weaker concentrations by numbers accordingly. He describes the Wassermann test and says that the gradations between the two extremes of total binding of the complement and total hæmolysis are infinite; every man has his own system of recording them. He uses graduated centrifuge tubes and, counting total hæmolysis as zero and 1-20 c.c. of erythrocytes in bulk or the maximum amount as one hundred, by comparing the volume of surviving erythrocytes according to the scale and recording the result in per cent., one immediately has a quantitative idea of the reaction. Thus, if 1-40 c.c. of erythrocytes are left the reaction is 50 per cent.; if 1-30 c.c., 66.6 per cent. He gives a table showing the advantages of this method in actual practice and describes the appearances in a test tube in which the reaction has been made after from 16 to 24 hours have elapsed. With a negative reaction we have a clear wine red fluid; in a strongly positive test the red cells lie heaped at the bottom and above them the fluid is pure white. If the test be positive but weaker, the cells are below and the supernatant fluid containing dissolved hæmoglobin is pink, salmon-colored, deep red, etc., according to the amount of hæmoglobin in the solution. The weaker the reaction the deeper the intensity of the fluid and the smaller the number of corpuscles. These differences, expressed mathematically, become definite and objective