

THE DIAGNOSIS OF THE POSITION AND PRESENTATION OF THE FETUS IN UTERO, WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ABDOMINAL PALPATION.*

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Mr. President and Gentlemen,—The subject for discussion to-night ranks second in importance only to obstetrical asepsis, in the list of recent important advances made in practical midwifery. When the day comes that every obstetrician makes a thorough and correct diagnosis of his cases before the onset of labor, then and only will the term "still-born" be seen less frequently upon our death certificates, and the field of the gynecological surgeon become more limited.

Although an obstetrician requires the aid of more than one method of examination before venturing an opinion upon the position of a child *in utero*, it is the object of this paper to bring more forcibly before your minds the very great importance of every practitioner striving to become more and more proficient in abdominal palpation. It is remarkable that although the value of abdominal palpation has been recognized for nearly one hundred years, it is only quite recently that obstetrical writers have insisted upon necessity for its practice, even although many writers since the observation of Semmelweise have noticed the close connection between repeated vaginal examinations and the occurrence of septic infection.

Ninety-four years ago Wigand drew the attention of the profession for the first time to this method of examination, and twenty years later, Schmidt and Hohl published very complete papers upon the subject. In spite of these writings, however, abdominal palpation was not generally recognized to be of value until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when Crede and Leopold in Germany, Pinard in France, and Macan, Neville and Smyly in Dublin, drew the attention of obstetricians to its immense practical importance.

I think we owe no small amount of credit to the surgeons, who in their field have clearly demonstrated that no man can afford to make light of aseptic and antiseptic precautions, and still hope to get perfect results. At first there was a great controversy about disinfecting a surgeon's hands, then

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