

PLACENTA PRAEVIA.

(READ BEFORE THE KINGSTON MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.)

ANY loss of blood which precedes, at any period of utero-gestation, the birth of the child is abnormal, unless we make an exception to the slight hæmorrhagic discharge occurring at or about the termination of the first stage of labor. There are cases occurring in practice, fortunately rare, in consequence of peculiar conditions, in which such a loss of blood occurs before birth, as to endanger the life of both mother and child. Hæmorrhage occurring in the last three months of gestation has been classed under the terms, *unavoidable* and *accidental*. It is to the former I desire to direct your attention for a few moments—the latter depending upon such causes as come under the heading of miscarriage.

Placenta Praevia, placental presentation, or unavoidable hæmorrhage as it is appropriately termed, is a condition in which it is impossible for the child to be born without hæmorrhage, generally of a most alarming character. Placenta praevia was first recognized by Portal in the year 1685, but long before his time authors had mentioned the presence of the placenta at the neck of the uterus, but attributed its presentation there, to a previous detachment from its original situation and its fall by its own gravity to the lower part of the uterus after it had been entirely separated. Gifford, after Portal, referred to this condition in his writings, but Levret of the French school was the first to convey any trustworthy information as to its causes and the means of detecting it, but he did not lay down any specific rules of treatment, and as one would imagine every victim of the unfortunate complication perished. Even in the present day there are few of the dangers of midwifery which the accoucheur dreads more than this; and it is the recognition of this fact which led the elder Naegeli to say, that: "there is no error in nature to be compared with this, for the very action which nature uses to bring the child into the world, is that by which she destroys both *it* and the mother." Roederer in his elementary work on obstetrics in 1866 gave a very complete description of placenta praevia, and we may say that any advancement in the treatment of this condition dates from that period. For over two hundred years then, physicians have recognized this condition, and though many advances have been made, and a clear conception of its nature and causes established, yet the