

THE VALUE OF LOCAL TREATMENT IN SEPTIC INFECTION OF THE PUERPERAL WOMAN.

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This contribution is presented this evening in the hope that it will call forth a free discussion, and not because the writer has anything new upon the subject to bring to your notice, or a new way of presenting an old subject.

Elevation of temperature in the puerperal woman is not always due to septic infection, nor is the uterine douche invariably indicated in every case of sepsis. The cause of the elevation in this class of cases must be carefully searched for and, if possible, a clear diagnosis made before a definite course of treatment can be decided upon.

Many practitioners have but the haziest ideas as to the subjective and objective symptoms of septic infection in the puerperal woman, and these are scarcely less nebulous than their ideas of its treatment. In hardly any condition is an exact diagnosis more urgently called for, nor is the benefit of prompt and energetic treatment more brilliant than in so-called puerperal septicæmia. Delay and hesitancy, or the adoption of inadequate treatment, prove disastrous not infrequently, not only to the life of the patient, but also to the reputation of the physician.

One often hears the assertion made that out of such a number of cases of midwifery attended, there has not been a single case of septic infection. Perhaps there has not been a fatal case, but let any one examine the case books of any gynaecological clinic and he will note the number of patients who date the beginning of their sufferings to a certain confinement. I am sure the gynaecologists will bear me out in the statement that fully 50 per cent. of their cases are the result of careless midwifery. Gentlemen, if midwifery were practised as it should be, cases of

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