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REMARKS ON OVARIOTOMY.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF SEVERAL TYPICAL CASES MET WITH IN PRACTICE.*

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The operation entitled *ovariotomy*, first suggested by William Hunter, first taught by John Bell, and first performed by Ephraim McDowell, has speedily come to be recognized as a legitimate and established procedure for the radical cure of ovarian disease; and, indeed, offers a more favorable prognosis than most other capital surgical operations. Never has any medical procedure risen more rapidly into favor, nor gained a stronger hold upon the professional mind, nor been more frequently resorted to by eminent practitioners throughout the civilized world, than has *ovariotomy* during the past quarter of a century. Seeing, that the investigation of the etiology and pathology of ovarian disease have recently been brought to the best thought and experience of the age, and that *ovariotomy* has in so short a period accomplished so grand a career, rescuing many valuable lives from a premature death, this operation is justly entitled to be regarded as the monarch of gynecology.

Considering the growing frequency of the operation in the Dominion, it is desirable that the profession should discuss the different methods now practiced, with the view to arrive, if possible, at some definite conclusions as to the best means of completing the several steps thereof. In this, as

in every new development of science, the advance is not uncontested. There are to be found those who, with equal honesty and tenacity, hold opposing convictions. Ovariotomy has not won its final triumph, though destined so to do; its progress has been a succession of brilliant victories, and ere long, we may hope to see it coming out of the strife, its last opposition overcome, and having accorded to it a place chief among capital operations;

"Like some tall cliff, whose awful form
Swell from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its base the threatening clouds be spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

When about to perform this operation for the first time, being anxious to find some definite rules for guidance at certain points, great was the sense of disappointment upon finding that the acknowledged authorities did not supply the information required by a beginner. To remedy this defect, I was obliged to consult the record of cases published by different operators, in the several medical journals, and decide upon the plan to be adopted under certain circumstances. Recently, however, abundance of information on the several unsettled questions has been supplied. Though we have neither the literature, the tradition, nor the sobered reason of centuries to guide us in this, as in the better known capital operations, fortunately some of the greatest modern lights have sufficiently explored this hitherto unknown realm, with such brilliant results as startle the world, while supplying data, that to the reflecting mind will furnish rules for guidance in further operations—rules that may, as in all practice, from time to time, be amended, as new discoveries are made.

Though *ovariotomy* is of only recent date, there have been attracted to its investigation numbers of men eminent in the profession—the peers of the men of the past—who have pursued their researches from widely differing points of observation, and with so impressive results, that already from the mass of testimony thus supplied, we may glean such important facts as will enable us to reach conclusions, which, we venture to predict, experience will but confirm. True, some of the most experienced authorities have expressed the opinion that we are only on the threshold of knowledge respecting the etiology, pathology, and treatment of ovarian disease, and in their modesty refrain from making any deductions. The wisdom of such

*Read by title at the meeting of the Canada Medical Association held in Montreal, 12th and 13th Sept., 1877.