

Among the lower animals gonorrhœal infection is rather rare. We all know that the dread of the breeders of cattle and horses is "fever" after delivery of the calf or colt. This fever, even among those who are ignorant of medicine, is frequently considered to be due to some portion of the secundines retained in the cavity of the uterus. Many of us have left portions of placenta in the uterus without knowing it, notwithstanding the fact that we have most carefully examined the placenta by sight and touch after its delivery, and we are not ignorant.

I am convinced that it is impossible for any obstetrician to say positively that all the placenta has been expelled from a mere inspection of it. We may be able to make an approximate guess that all has been removed, but, as with everything else that is uncertain, we are apt by it to be led very much astray. How, then, is this danger to be avoided?

For many years the woman who miscarried was allowed to remain in bed and to bleed for days from a piece of retained placenta, without any attempt being made to remove it. It was supposed that such an interference was an extremely dangerous procedure. As time passed on the fact became recognized that the proper treatment of such cases was not tentative measures but a thorough riddance of the uterus of the dangerous material contained within its cavity. The introduction of chloroform into practice made this little operation much easier of performance and much more thorough in its execution, without, at the same time, exciting the dread of a timid patient. Thousands of women have lost their lives or have been sexually maimed as a consequence of the retention of placenta after miscarriage.

For some years I have been an ardent advocate of the administration of an anesthetic in each such case and a thorough inspection of the interior of the uterus with the finger, in the belief that prevention is better than cure. If we occasionally find the uterus already thoroughly emptied of its contents, we have done no more than our duty in exploring its interior and we need not feel in the least chagrined. Until this exploration has been carried out we are entirely in the dark, and nothing but the index finger can assure us that the uterus is empty. Curettes in such cases are valueless, and though they serve a certain purpose they must not be entirely depended upon. The man who uses a curette alone is increasing the danger of his patient. He is tearing down and loosening portions of decomposed material without affecting a complete and thorough removal of the same.

Chloroform and the index finger are two weapons with which we must prevent the occurrence of septicemia following miscarriages. When these two weapons are utilized the enemy will