

only one case was it followed by any inflammation to speak of, which soon subsided, and a permanent cure followed. I have not had a stiff joint yet from this treatment. I do not now hesitate to open a joint, and I have never seen pus formed from opening the joint or from injection of iodine. I have also used the same treatment for bursa, and synovial leakages from tendons with the same result."

531 Wellington Street, Oct. 1, 1876.

Progress of Medical Science.

THE ADDRESS IN OBSTETRIC MEDICINE. (*)

By LOMBE ATTHILL, M.D.,

Master of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin;
President of the Section.

I think, gentlemen, I may safely assert that the proceedings of this section of the British Medical Association, which is devoted to the consideration of the subjects comprised in the term "Obstetric Medicine," attract, on the whole, more general attention from the great body of our profession, than do those of any other section. The reason for this is sufficiently obvious, for while the busy practitioner may be wholly unable to devote time or attention to the study of the important subjects included under such heads as those of "Physiology" and "State Medicine," or find that in practice cases of operative surgery are comparatively rare, he is certain to discover that the conditions and affections brought under discussion here, are of daily occurrence amongst his patients; hence he seeks to improve his acquaintance with the nature of the conditions, and to learn the best means of successfully treating those affections, which are peculiar to women; more so, as the study of these diseases has probably been neglected, possibly entirely overlooked by him, during his student's career.

Another reason for the interest evinced in the proceedings of this section is this, that marked and rapid progress has of late years been, and still is being, made in the department of obstetric medicine. The very name of the section proves this. A few years ago the term "obstetric medicine," if used at all, would hardly have been understood. This section of the British Medical Association was until very recently termed that of "midwifery." Consider for a moment what this change of nomenclature implies—it implies this, that the study of the process and phenomena of parturition, important though they be, is by no means all that is now

required of the obstetric practitioner; that is, not of those alone who make obstetrics their special study; but of all, and their name is legion, who are called upon to treat the diseases of women.

This section then includes subjects of a most varied and extended nature; it includes midwifery proper, the diseases of the puerperal state, and those incidental to pregnancy, the considerations of disease of the vagina, bladder, and uterus, of the breasts, and last and not surely least, of the ovaries. Diseases of these latter organs are doubtless, in one of their aspects, within the domain of surgery proper; but that condition which demands the performance of the capital operation of ovariectomy, is by no means the most common of those requiring treatment, and, moreover, not a few able and successful ovariectomists are to be found amongst the ranks of obstetric surgeons. Some such I have the pleasure of seeing around me here to-day.

Gentlemen, we deem the practice of midwifery to be in no way derogatory. It is our honorable function to succor woman in her hour of trial, to shorten or relieve her sufferings, often to save her life or that of her offspring; to meet with promptness and decision the numerous dangers and difficulties which frequently and unexpectedly occur during labor, and which tax to the utmost our courage and endurance and skill; but these duties, though most important, form but a small portion of those which now devolve on us daily. The affections I have already indicated as coming within the province of obstetric medicine are so numerous and of such constant occurrence, that the right treatment of them is all important, as well for the sake of the sufferers as for the reputation of the practitioner.

The truth of this is now on all sides admitted, and the study of uterine disease, in its protean forms, is consequently steadily becoming more general; but unfortunately our knowledge of the pathology of these important affections is as yet imperfect, and our treatment consequently in many respects empirical and unsatisfactory. Still, great strides in advance are steadily being made, and we may look forward hopefully to a time not far distant when phenomena and symptoms at present overlooked or misinterpreted will be explained, and our treatment consequently become more scientific and efficient.

To the late Sir James Simpson, without doubt, is due the credit of inaugurating an era which has been marked by great and rapid progress in the department of obstetric medicine. His master-mind perceived how vast an amount of unrecognised disease, and what an extensive field for pathological investigation existed with reference to the reproductive organs of women; before his day little was

(*) An Address delivered at the opening of the Section of Obstetric Medicine at the annual Meeting of the British Medical Association in Sheffield, August, 1876. By Lombe Athill, M.D., Master of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin; President of the Section.