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THE PLACENTAL INSPECTION: ITS UNCERTAINTIES AND ITS DANGERS.

BY J. F. W. ROSS, M.D.,

Associate Professor of Gynecology, Toronto University.

Parturition is a necessary sequel to impregnation. The dangers of the first stage of labor are but few; those of the second stage consist chiefly of traumatisms that may be inflicted upon the mother as a consequence of necessary or unnecessary obstetrical violence; but the dangers of the third stage, the delivery of the placenta, are to my mind of the greatest importance to both the life and the subsequent health of the mother.

For a long time puerperal fever, or the fever accompanying the lying-in period, was, and perhaps yet is, to a certain extent shrouded in mystery. As far as I have been able to demonstrate to myself, from the experience of a large number of cases seen in consultation, there are only four causes of puerperal fever; firstly, traumatism; secondly, the inflammation or rupture of some pre-existing intra-pelvic tumor; thirdly, the presence of the gonorrhoeal virus in the parturient canal; fourthly, retention of a portion of the placenta or membranes. The two most frequent causes of puerperal fever are the presence of the gonorrhoeal virus and the retention of a portion of placenta. I believe that these will be found to induce at least 75 per cent. of all the cases. Of this 75 per cent. about 35 per cent. will be found to be due to gonorrhoeal infection and 40 per cent. to retained placenta or membranes. I wish particularly to draw attention to the latter cause and discuss ways and means for its prevention.