

rally thought that fresh, healthy, non-offensive lochial discharge is harmless, and not capable of setting up a morbid state in the puerpera ; but we find that as far back as 1843, Scherer found that secretions taken on the third day after delivery from a puerperal woman and injected into a healthy pup produced its death in two days. Examination showed extensive inflammation of the muscles and connective tissue, collection of hemorrhagic exudations, and intense inflammation of the kidneys. Rokitansky and Kehrer also arrived at the same result in like experiments. In a few days after delivery, the pure blood tended to diminish and the pus to accumulate, bacteria were found, chiefly of the spheroidal form.

When we are aware of such facts as these, and with solutions of continuity of the genital tract, we have, 48 hours after delivery, a rise of temperature, a slight chill, some abdominal pain with headache, the lochia have been normal, though irritating enough to produce a slight lymphangitis, but not sufficiently poisonous to produce erysipelas. Yet, as Thomas has pointed out to us, recovery from parturition is the rule, notwithstanding all these circumstances which are best calculated to ensure a bad ending. Now and then, however, the matter does not end with these symptoms of slight illness. The poison gains admission higher in the genital tract, increases in its violence, acts rapidly, as does yeast on dough, alarming phenomena follow, until eventually death takes place.

Pathology.—As regards the pathology of puerperal fever, I think it is fairly well accepted to be “a septicæmia” attacking the puerperal patient, and that the essence of the disease is absorption of poison into the blood through some breach in the genital tract. Lusk’s* definition is a good one : “The septic inoculation of wounds which result from the separation of the decidua and the passage of the child through the genital canal.”

It is, however, to be regretted that this clear and comprehensive view of the pathology of this disease is not wholly free from dissent. It is held that a certain form of the disease termed “sapræmia” is dependent upon the absorption of putrid

* Semmelweis and Hervieux.