

THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE,
CRITICISM AND NEWS.

VOL. XX.] TORONTO, FEB., 1888. [No. 6.

Original Communications.

SUPRA-PUBIC LITHOTOMY.

BY W. BRITTON, M.D. TORONTO.

This operation is ordinarily resorted to in preference to Cheselden's or any other modification of the perineal section, when circumstances render it the only one feasible; indeed, with the exception of the German School of Surgery, the rule the world over has been to cut through the perineum if the pelvic outlet is not contracted and the calculus small and not encysted. The first recorded case was, like the majority of its successors, unpremeditated. In the year 1551, Franco failed in extracting a stone through the perineum of a child, and in desperation determined to remove it through the abdominal wall. Some of his admirers, after mature consideration, advised its adoption not only in such cases as forbade the perineal operation, but also in young subjects; indeed, Cheselden, whose name is so closely identified with lithotomy, was for years one of its most ardent advocates, and relinquished it not through want of success, but out of enthusiasm over his new modification of the lateral.

The earliest recorded case in England was in 1700, when Proby removed a bodkin in this way from a woman's bladder. In 1718, Douglas strongly claimed for it the attention of the profession, published a work on the subject; and very unostentatiously christened the operation "Lithotomia Douglasiana." From that time up to the present century its hold on the surgical world has been marked by many vicissitudes—to-day espoused by some of the foremost, and to-morrow falling into disrepute because of the objections put forth by the many. Only lately has it been received with anything like general favor, and this revolution of opinion may be referred to the reports of a number

of successful cases by Amussat, Dupuytren, Scarpa, Home and others.

A table of statistics was compiled in 1850 by Humphrey, of Cambridge; he managed to collect only 104 cases; and amongst English speaking nations no further work of any magnitude in this line was accomplished until 1875. During this interval the Germans took considerable interest in the subject, aroused chiefly by a second table compiled by Prof. Günther, of Leipsic, who collected the reports of 200 cases. In the year 1874, Dr. C. W. Dulles, of Philadelphia, devoted considerable attention to the matter; he tabulated four or five hundred cases; and comparing the results with an equal number of the lateral operation, he found that "the operation is as successful as the perineal for calculi under two ounces in weight, and has better results for larger calculi." He concludes the able article from which I have quoted, in these words:—"After thirteen years of study of this method, and an analysis of over 700 operations, I have come to the conclusion that a temperate view of the subject will lead to the conviction that the supra-pubic operation deserves to rank above all other methods of lithotomy, for stones of large size, and that its applicability to any case should be carefully discussed before deciding to cut through the perineum." In 1880, Dr. Peterson, of Kuhl, gave it a fresh impetus by his published description of the method of rectal dilatation for the purpose of elevating the bladder.

Heath says that the operation has been performed so seldom, that a comparison of its results with those of the perineal would be premature; but should it not, on further trial, prove to have a heavy mortality, it is certain to take a high place in professional esteem, and to supplant all other methods for the removal of large stones. I shall now give an epitomized history of a case of my own which occurred recently.

In November, 1887, I was called to see C. W., an active robust boy of nine years. He was suffering from the ordinary symptoms of stone, which on sounding I readily found present. When about two years old, and for some years subsequently he had been troubled with incontinence of urine, together with vesical irritability, manifested only by frequent urination; these were the only symptoms until two years ago, since which time dysuria had been constant and accompanied occasionally