

fulfilment of all the functions, and to the venous circulation in particular." Whether this explanation be the true one or not, there is no doubt that albuminuria, after it has existed for a long period, alters very materially the normal proportions of the constituents of the blood. The quantity of albumine is much diminished, and the number of cells is considerably lessened, while the cholesterine and the salts of the serum are augmented. It contains also on an average, a greater amount of fibrine. Blood altered to so great an extent, may, doubtless, produce such an effect on the nervous centres, as to materially increase their irritability, and thus place them in a state of high susceptibility to impressions applied to the peripheral extremities of the nerves connected with them, and, as a consequence, convulsions result. Even without the intervention of eccentric irritation, this state of irritability being extreme, may, of itself, and without any apparent mediate interference, give rise to eclampsia. There is this, however, in the albuminuria of pregnancy, it is not permanent, and, as the cause is limited in time, those great changes which we find to take place in the condition of the blood, from the long continuance of what is called Bright's disease, do not so frequently obtain. Hence, probably, one explanation of the rarity of uræmic intoxication as compared to the number of cases in which albumine is found in the urine of pregnant women: for it is not every case of Bright's disease even that is accompanied by uræmia and eclampsia. Out of every 100 cases of acute albuminuria, not more than 60 or 70 terminate with symptoms of uræmic intoxication. Pregnant women may have the urine loaded with albumine and not exhibit the slightest tendency to convulsions. Of 41 women with albuminous urine, observed by M. Blot, but 7 had convulsions; and of 20 mentioned by M. M. Devilliers and Reynault, 11 only were affected by them. We have repeatedly seen such cases, even where dropsical swellings existed, without convulsions intervening. Now, while we would admit that albuminuria is the principal predisposing cause of puerperal eclampsia, we are not prepared to go as far as to consider it the only one. There are conditions of the blood other than that caused by Bright's disease obtaining during gestation, which render that fluid a morbid stimulant to the nervous centres. These are produced by "all agencies which interfere with the proper depuration of this fluid during pregnancy. Such are the constipation and insufficient secretion from the bowels caused by the mechanical pressure of the gravid uterus upon the intestines." The determining causes are principally irritation of the nerves of the uterus, vagina, bladder, rectum, intestines, and stomach; violent emotions, such as fright, anger, and grief.

Eclampsia appears at all seasons of the year, and at every stage of ges-