

Anæsthetics in Natural Labor.—Obstetric anæsthesia is quite different from surgical anæsthesia, the latter being indicated for all obstetrical operations. Obstetric anæsthesia may be general or local. For the former are used ether, chloroform, chloral, and a variety of mixtures, including the bromide of ethyl and the protoxide of nitrogen. Chloral can hardly be considered as a general anæsthetic in the same sense as ether and chloroform. An injection of three or four grammes of chloral in solution given during the period of dilatation, and repeated, perhaps, in four or five hours, will often prove of the greatest benefit and comfort to the patient, regulating the pains, moderating the suffering of the patient, and abbreviating the duration of labor. In the latter part of labor chloral is less useful than chloroform, this substance being now almost universally used in parturition. When it is employed only in the first stage of anæsthesia no particular influence is exerted upon the contractions. If it is pushed to the second stage the contractions are retarded, but soon resume their normal rhythm. In the third stage of chloroform anæsthesia the contractions are diminished, or may cease altogether. This is a stage of danger, for not only the uterus but the heart and other muscular organs may be paralyzed. The foetus experiences very little of the effect of the chloroform. The author's experience is thus summed up :

1. Chloroform given in small doses produces a condition of physical and moral calm in the patient.

2. If the inhalations are prolonged for a considerable time, the result will usually be an attenuation of the uterine pain. The perceptions of the patient become less keen and the uterine contractions are slower.

3. If the period of complete anæsthesia is reached with analgesia, there is surgical and not obstetrical anæsthesia.

4. In some cases chloroform excites instead of calming, and in such cases its use should be discontinued.

5. In some cases chloroform has unquestionably diminished the retractability of the uterus, and has thus been the cause of more or less severe hemorrhage after labor.

6. Chloroform has no action upon the foetus.