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SUPRA-PUBIC LITHOTOMY. *

BY MR. MARTIN.

The brief space allotted to the consideration and description of the operation in surgical literature, and the disfavour with which it has hitherto been regarded by the great majority of surgeons, combine to force me to make this paper somewhat of a comparison between supra-pubic and perineal lithotomy, rather than a consideration of the former operation alone. So far as I have had opportunity of reading, I have completely failed to discover any sufficient reason why this method of removing stone from the bladder has been rated so low, and kept so much in the background. The only existing cause would seem to be that it has been somewhat a departure from the old orthodox and beaten way, and its adherents have been regarded as heretics. It reminds one of the peasant, who, when taking his grist to the mill, always placed a large stone in one end of the bag and the wheat in the other to balance it across the horse's back. On one occasion, the boy, being sent with the grist, conceived the idea of dividing the wheat and thus dispensing with the heavy stone; but unfortunately for the boy's ingenuity the flour from this particular grist made bad bread, and nothing could dissuade the father from the belief that it was the discarding of the

stone that spoiled the grist. So accidents attending supra-pubic lithotomy, whether resulting from the operation or not, have terrified many of its advocates into abandonment of this method; had the same mischief followed upon any other incision it might have escaped notice and the operation have gone unblamed.

A detailed account of the apparatus major was published in 1524 A. D., by Marianus Sanctus, from whom it took the name of Marian method, a median operation, which supplanted the older "cutting on the gripe;" and about this juncture the high operation or supra-pubic method was attempted by Franco. We read that his patient made a good recovery, but for some reason, not given, he disapproved of this method of operating. In 1717, Dr. James Douglas recommended the supra-pubic operation before the Royal Society, and showed from the anatomy of the parts that it might be performed with safety. However, no surgeon seems to have undertaken it until three years later, when his brother, Mr. John Douglas, performed the operation twice, both patients recovering. Shortly afterwards one of the surgeons in St. Thomas's Hospital operated four times in this way with two deaths and two recoveries. The cause of death in both cases being rupture of the peritoneum, which was so extensive as to allow the intestines to protrude through the opening.

This caused the operation to fall into disrepute, until revived by Cheselden himself,

* Read before the Toronto School of Medicine Med. Society.