

accoucheurs; on the contrary, there is much diversity of sentiment. With some it is the universal habit in every case of labour, no matter how natural and auspicious it may promise to be, to resort at once either to sulphuric ether or chloroform. This, it seems to me, is really abusing a good thing. Labour is unquestionably a natural process—it is, indeed, entitled to be designated in strict physiological language a function. If this be so, is it right to interfere with a function, properly so called, as long as its exercise is normal, and within the true record of nature? I think not. Again, there is another argument, which has always struck me with force, why anæsthesia should not be employed in a natural parturition, and it is this—the female, at the most interesting period of her life—the time of labour, should, all other things being equal, have her mind unclouded, her intellect undisturbed, her judgment fully adequate to realize and appreciate the advent of a new and important era in her existence—the birth of her child. Therefore, I shall advise you not to resort to anæsthetics in natural and ordinary labours, except in the event of certain contingencies which, in the judgment of the accoucheur, would justify their administration. The employment of these agents will be proper in cases of operative midwifery, whether instrumental or manual; in cases of unusual pain accompanying the labour; in instances of rigidity or an unyielding condition of the mouth of the womb, vagina, or perineum; in a womb of excessive nervous irritability; in certain cases of irregular contraction of the uterus, in which the strength of the mother is severely tested without a corresponding progress in the delivery; in many cases of puerperal convulsions, provided there is no tendency to cerebral congestion; in spasmodic contraction of the uterus before the birth of the child, and subsequently to the birth, the placenta being retained by the spasm of the organ. In some conditions of pregnancy—for example, where there is a degree of undue irritability of system, or the hysteric manifestation, or where it becomes necessary to extract a tooth; and I may remind you that I have on several occasions derived marked benefit from the administration of sulphuric ether in cases of rebellious dysmenorrhœa. Let me here add that, in the irritability and convulsions of children, etherization will oftentimes exhibit the happiest results.”

We cannot altogether agree with the author in the argument here advanced. It is a natural process for a tooth to ache when there is disease of the fang or where from caries the extremity of the nerve is exposed, but because it is a natural process for a nerve to give evidence of its presence when pressed upon, is no argument against using the means which nature's god has permitted us to discover for its relief.