

ON THE ÆTIOLOGY OF THE NAUSEA AND VOMITING OF PREGNANCY.*

BY

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The purpose of this preliminary paper is to advance a theory, which seems to be founded on sound physiological grounds, of the causation of the nausea and vomiting of pregnancy.

In a brief review of the somewhat copious recent literature of the subject I have been unable to find anything which leads me to think that the theory which I wish to advance is other than new.

The vomiting of pregnancy is usually divided into two classes, namely: the mild or physiological; and the severe or pathological, hyperemesis gravidarum. The mild form, with which this paper particularly has to deal, occurs in the vast majority of cases of pregnancy.

In a brief paper it is impossible to refer to the various theories which have been advanced from time to time in explanation of the origin of this vomiting of pregnancy. That there exists in the pregnant woman a condition of exaltation of nervous tension all are agreed. A few consider that the origin lies in direct irritation of the medullary centres by toxic material circulating in the maternal blood. Others explain the irritation as originating peripherally, either in uterine contractions or in abnormal states of the gastro-enteric tract.

Exactly how conditions about the uterus give rise to peripheral irritation has been variously explained. Mechanical pressure of the enlarging uterus on the nerves of the pelvic ganglion; stretching of the muscle fibres of the uterus causing pressure on the nerves; versions and flexions of the pregnant organ; ovarian irritation from uterine pressure; diseased conditions, as endometritis, cellulitis, endocervicitis, etc., have all been advanced as factors in the production of this irritation. Gastric ulcer, gastritis and various abnormal conditions of the large and small bowel have also been advanced as possible sources of the peripheral irritation.

Dirmoser,¹ as the result of a careful examination of the urine in six cases of hyperemesis gravidarum, comes to the conclusion that intoxication is the cause of the severe symptoms. As to the production of the intoxication,¹ he advances the following elaborate hypothesis:

*. Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, Nov. 10, 1898.