

PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM AN EXPERIENCE OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED CASES OF ECLAMPSIA.*

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In the University Maternity we have the records of fifty-four cases of eclampsia. In ten years' service in the Maternity Hospital, in seventeen years' service in the Philadelphia Hospital, in private and consulting practice, I have seen an equal or greater number. Certain facts stand out from this experience which should be emphasized at present, I think, in view of the prevalence of theories not reconcilable with clinical observation nor with the best treatment of the patient.

There are three phases of the subject on which clinical experience throws a valuable light: etiology, the premonitory signs, the preventive and the curative treatment.

It is not the purpose of this brief communication to enter the maze of theories about the etiology of eclampsia: whether the disease depends upon an embolism of placental cells; upon cytolysis of the syncytium, the consequent production of a toxin, and the failure of the organism to produce an antitoxin; upon deficient work on the part of the liver in the reduction of the products of metabolism, and of excess nitrogenous food to urea; upon hyperactivity of the suprarenals or deficient activity of the thyroid; upon resorption of toxins due to microbic infection, is not yet demonstrated. There is no theory yet advanced which has the same basis of common sense and is in such accord with clinical observation as the long-accepted view that the products of fetal metabolism discharged into the maternal blood and eventually eliminated by the maternal kidneys are the chief predisposing cause of eclampsia, and that insufficient elimination by the maternal kidneys is the chief exciting cause. Dienst, one of the latest investigators† of the subject, has come back to this view

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† Herzfeld, from an experience of 81 autopsies on eclamptic subjects unqualifiedly declares that insufficient renal excretion, due to a diseased condition of the epithelium, is the cause of eclampsia. *Centralbl. f. Gyn.*, 1901, No. 40. Bar found the kidneys badly diseased in every one of the cases he examined. *L'Obstretique*, 1903.