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ON PLACENTA PRÆVIA.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:—You will all admit that it is very natural, as it certainly is very proper, that, considering my long isolation from the field of general practice, I should with some timidity venture to address you on a subject with which I have for so many years had very little opportunity of practical acquaintance. Having, however, on previous occasions experienced your fraternal condescension, I am encouraged to submit to your consideration a few remarks on a distressing incident, which may have often engaged your serious attention; though, before proceeding, I must frankly state that I am actuated much more forcibly by the desire to elicit valuable information from the discussion which I trust this paper will evoke, than by any expectation of augmenting your knowledge by anything I am competent to offer.

The subject on which I am now, by a revived affinity, induced to offer a few re-habilitated thoughts, is that formidable physiological deviation known as *placenta prævia*. It is now a third of a century since I committed to paper in the form of lectures, for my class in the old Toronto School of Medicine, the views which I then held on this dangerous complication, and perhaps there may be in my present auditory some who have not forgotten my words.

In one of those frequent conferences which it is my privilege to hold with my valued friend, Dr. Charles W. Covernton, our conversation turned on the subject of unavoidable uterine hemorrhage, and in consequence of some allusions made by me to the opinions expressed in my lectures, and to

certain rough drawings illustrative of them, Dr. C. requested that, at our next interview, I would go into fuller details. I did so, and after politely listening to my rehearsal, and viewing the drawings, Dr. C. urged me to prepare a paper on the subject for this meeting.

I confess, however, that in venturing to address an assemblage such as this, comprising as it does the most distinguished and experienced members of the medical profession of Canada, I am not a little embarrassed by the consideration of my imperfect acquaintance with the present prevailing opinions on the subject to which I have been induced now to entreat your patient attention. It may be that the views which I entertain harmonize with those of the majority of your body, and that, consequently, my exposition of them on this occasion may be but a work of intrusive supererogation; or it may be, on the contrary, that extended practical observance has led you to conclusions quite antagonistic to those which I shall here endeavor, however feebly, to advocate.

I am, assuredly, very sensible of the formidable disadvantage under which any provincialist must labor, in controverting the hardly less than oracular deliverances of a teacher so eminent as Professor Simpson, whose name must be venerated as long as the primal fiat, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth," shall continue to be the penalty of maternity. But as error is infinitely more harmful when promulgated by great men, than when obtruded by the undistinguished, it is every man's duty thoroughly to sift the *rationalia* of every new theory, however high may be the repute of its author.

I shall now, without further preface, reproduce a few of the more salient passages from my long stowed-away manuscripts, and I presume those of your number who remember the doctrines taught 40 or 50 years ago, and the introduction of the new theory and practice taught by Professor Simpson, of Edinburgh, will readily perceive that I concurred not in either the orthodoxy of the former, or the courageous heterodoxy of the latter.

In my 27th lecture, first delivered in December, 1846, I wrote as follows:—"Unavoidable hemorrhage during labor commences with a small discharge, which increases with each successive pain. Here, we are aware, there is, as in fact there must be, some separation of the placenta, for the uterus is now undergoing a sudden distension of its

*[Read before the Canada Medical Association at London, Ont., Sept. 10, 1879.]