

Possibly in the same way some cases of vomiting of pregnancy are relieved where the existing intrauterine irritation is just sufficient to cause reflex gastric disturbances, and by the addition of the irritation of cervical dilatation by the physician the effect is an amelioration of the symptoms, or on the other hand by the application of cocaine to the cervix the irritation may be lessened to such a degree as to produce a similar result.

The condition of nervous irritability of the person may have considerable to do with the severity of the reflex disturbance produced. How much oftener do we see convulsions produced reflexly in infants and young children than we do in adults. We may find a woman pass through her first pregnancy with little trouble, and when, reduced in strength, through lactation, become again pregnant, and in this weakened state suffer severe gastric disturbance. The most severe case of vomiting of pregnancy I have so far seen was a similar one where during the first pregnancy very little unpleasantness was experienced. The woman while nursing a fine boy became again pregnant, and so serious did her condition become from vomiting and loss of appetite that after a consultation it was considered necessary to empty the uterus in order to save her life. She rapidly regained strength and went through her third pregnancy with little inconvenience. In all probability her reflexes were so affected by her weakened state as to bring about the condition that seriously threatened her life.

The mode of onset of the irritation and the power of adaptability of the person to her changed condition have no doubt a considerable influence on the vomiting.

We find in sea sickness a reflex action where the chief factor in the causation is in all probability an increased irritation in the semicircular canals caused by the motion of the vessel. This is carried to the medulla and produces a train of reflex symptoms, the chief of which is a disturbed condition of the stomach. The more sudden the change from smooth to rough water the more certain are the symptoms of sea-sickness to be produced.

In sea-sickness also we have an example of tolerance or adaptability of the individual to its changed environment, for we find after a short time—sooner in some cases than in others—that, though the conditions causing the distress have continued, yet the symptoms of the trouble abate from an established tolerance, or the adaptability of the individual to its altered surroundings.

This may also explain why in the pregnant woman her vomiting usually ceases about the fourth or fifth month, though