

Pressure by the fingers could not, it was shown, act on the os uteri like the bag of waters, or the head when moulded into a lengthened shape. There could be no reciprocal action between the force pressing upon the cervix and the power of the uterine structure to endure the pressure. The accoucheur cannot tell by the mere motion of his finger what amount of space there is for the head to occupy ; and he will seldom succeed in keeping up the lip of the os, except in the last moments of a protracted first stage of labour. Fissures of the os uteri in labour, with enlargement and ulceration, so called, of the cervix, about which so much has lately been said, were briefly alluded to ; the cause of these post-parturient complaints being considered a want of tone in the uterine vessels, contraction not duly taking place after labour, or, in other terms, there being want of re-absorption of the enlarged uterine structure. The author considered that pressure on the os uteri in artificial dilatation must bruise the part, and render it unable to resume perfectly its pristine condition. The os is treated as if not possessed of sensibility ; the sensibility to external objects may be slight, but the distribution of nerves of the organic class is abundant, and they cannot fail to receive injury, and so impede the return of the part to a healthy condition. The necessity of bleeding and tartar emetic to overcome congestion, where pressure has been exerted on the os uteri, pushed down before the head, was also briefly alluded to, as an argument against using artificial pressure in ordinary cases. The author proceeded as follows :—"The temptation to endeavour to hasten a slow labour where the patient resides at a distance, where the fee is small, and a sufficient income can only be got by incessant occupation among a number of patients, is too strong to be resisted ; the smallest concession to the desire to afford manual assistance in some peculiar cases is certain to be extended to others, where the necessities of the practitioner are so many. We ought therefore to set our faces boldly against any proposals, the following of which is likely, almost certain I might say, to be injurious to the mother." Then suggesting that the "passing the finger gradually round the os uteri" may produce its effect in a secondary way, by enabling the accoucheur to regulate the mother's expenditure of force upon her uterine organs, by observing whether her powers are equal to the task, and giving nourishment or medicine as required, he concluded thus :—"I look upon labour as essentially a natural, healthy process, yet verging upon disease. The accoucheur's business is to preserve health, not to promote disease ; he may hasten a labour by interference, but the interference of dilatation of the os uteri by the finger ought not to be made, except there is that amount of pressure upon the anterior lip of the uterus which would soon bring on congestion if it were not moved out of the way."