ON THE

INDUCTION OF PREMATURE LABOUR

IN

CASES OF PREGNANCY,

COMPLICATED WITH

ALBUMINOUS URINE, DROPSY, AND AMAUROSIS.

BY

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Received April 22nd.—Read June 9th, 1863.

ON the 29th of January, 1863, I saw a young lady in the third month of her first pregnancy, who was suffering from great sensibility in the region of the uterus, sickness of stomach, and general nervous irritability. The pulse was not very rapid, and there was no symptom to excite alarm.

On the 21st of March I received the following letter from Mr. Bowman :

“5, CLIFFORD STREET; March 21st.

“Dear Dr. Lee,—I am anxious for a consultation about Mrs. ——— whom you saw some time ago, who has now a serious complication of her pregnancy, in the shape of a retinal affection, so that we may confer on the best plan of

treatment for her. I could come to you this afternoon between 2 and half past, or could receive you here up to half past 2, if more convenient.

“Yours very truly,

“W. BOWMAN.”

Soon after the receipt of this note I went to Mr. Bowman's house, where the patient and her mother were waiting. Mr. Bowman then informed me that he had examined the right eye with the ophthalmoscope, and ascertained that there was a destructive disease going on in the coats of the eye. From the condition of the retina and choroid coat Mr. Bowman was led to suspect that there was some disease of the kidneys, and on examining the urine he had discovered that it was loaded with albumen. A small quantity was put into a glass tube, and heated with a spirit lamp, and it was at once seen that the patient was suffering from albuminuria in a high degree. There was no swelling of the face or extremities. There was headache and quickness of the pulse, and the patient being in the sixth month of pregnancy, I inferred that she was threatened with convulsions. A leech was applied to each temple, a grain of calomel given at bedtime, and an aperient ordered to be taken in the morning. The symptoms became aggravated during the three following days. I then proposed that premature labour should be induced, believing that the affection of the eyes and kidneys arose from the pregnancy, and that they would not yield to any treatment until the fœtus and its appendages had been removed from the uterus. Some years before I had seen a patient in Holland Ward, St. George's Hospital, under the care of Dr. Bence Jones, with albuminuria and dropsy, in whom all the symptoms speedily disappeared after the spontaneous expulsion of a dead fœtus of seven months.

Before having recourse to the induction of premature labour, it was considered proper that Dr. Robert Ferguson should see the patient, and sanction the proceeding. On the 27th March, Mr. Bowman, Dr. Ferguson, and I, met in consul-

tation to consider the subject, and Dr. Ferguson thought it unadvisable to induce premature labour, chiefly on the ground that the life of the child would necessarily be sacrificed, as the pregnancy had not advanced beyond the sixth month. It was determined in consequence of this opinion not to interfere, but to wait and see what course the disease would take.

Dr. Ferguson prescribed the following medicines, which were taken with great regularity until the 8th of April :

℞ Liquor. Ammoniae Citrat., ℥ss;
 Ammon. Benzoat., ℥ss;
 Syrup. Corticis Limonis, ℥ss;
 Potass. Bicarb., ℥iiss;
 Aquæ, ad ℥viij.
 Sumat, ℥iiss cum ℥ss Succo Limonis, 6tis horis.

27th March, 1863.

R. F.

On Friday night the 10th April, there was an attack of convulsion, but the symptoms were not of long duration. They were, however, sufficient to excite apprehension that fatal puerperal convulsions would soon take place, if a period was not put to the pregnancy. The albuminous state of the urine continued undiminished.

At a consultation held on Saturday, the 11th April, at a quarter past 1, Dr. Ferguson, Mr. Bowman, and I, considered it proper that premature labour should immediately be induced. I had no difficulty in passing up the stiletted catheter and puncturing the membranes, when a quantity of bloody-looking fluid escaped, entirely different from the liquor amnii in a healthy condition.

Labour pains came on in the course of the afternoon, and at 11 at night a dead fœtus of four months in a state of decomposition was expelled. The feet presented, and the funis was twisted around the neck. The placenta was in a morbid state, and a part being firmly adherent to the uterus, was removed with great difficulty. Dr. A. Farre saw the patient at this time, and agreed with me in thinking that

it would be unsafe to pass the whole hand into the vagina, and that it would be better to take away all that could be removed with the fingers alone. This I did, and the small indurated portion that had been left escaped, when an injection of warm water was thrown up into the vagina.

During the 12th, 13th, and 14th, the patient appeared to be recovering in the most favorable manner, the albumen in the urine gradually diminishing. On the evening of the 15th there were rigors rather severe, followed by cramps in the muscles of the left arm and leg and about the jaws. Stimulants and anodynes were employed with hot fomentations and frictions, and the cramps gradually disappeared.

On the 16th and 17th, there was less albumen in the urine, and the vision was obviously improving, and sound sleep was enjoyed. The patient continued progressively to recover, until the 21st, when the headache had wholly disappeared, and she could distinctly see the figures on the dial plate of my watch. She could take nourishment, and was stronger. The albumen in the urine had not wholly disappeared, but was very small indeed compared with what it had been before the induction of premature labour.

It would be unphilosophical to draw a general conclusion from a single case, but from the striking happy results of the example of albuminuria and amaurosis with pregnancy, now related to the Society, in which premature labour was induced, it seems reasonable to suppose that in similar cases the same method of treatment might be employed with success.

Mr. Bowman has had the kindness to communicate to me the history of the following interesting case :

CASE.—On the 7th of last December I was consulted about Mrs. J. Brookes, jun., who has rather suddenly lost her sight in great measure. There was no headache, nor fulness, nor intolerance of light, nor were there any evidences of congestion on examining with the ophthalmoscope. Perceiving a slight puffiness under one of the eyes, I tested the urine carefully, and then found it to be exces-

sively loaded with albumen. At my suggestion Mr. Brookes took his wife to London and consulted Mr. Paget and Dr. West, two of the best opinions in such a case, both of whom anticipated, as I did myself, that the confinement would be attended with convulsions of a dangerous character. However, on the 9th January I attended Mrs. Brookes in a premature confinement of a male foetus, still-born. Chloroform was freely given, and no convulsions ensued, and gradually, though slowly, Mrs. Brookes convalesced, and she has now regained her strength to a point very much as previous to her confinement. I regret, however, to say that the sight has only partially returned, while the albuminous condition of the urine, although very much improved from what its condition was previous to the confinement, is still not satisfactory. I have had the advantage of the opinion of Mr. Paget and Dr. West; have given gallic acid, preparations of iron, salines, cod-liver oil, using gentle counter-irritation to the region of the kidneys; and I have requested Mr. Brookes to take with him a few medicines which may not be procurable at Demerara as fresh as he may take from here.

“ April 10th.

“ Dear Dr. Lee,—As you will be interested in the case of the lady in connection with Mr. ———, I send it you. Please let me have it when I meet you to-morrow at a quarter past 2.

“ Yours truly,

“ W. BOWMAN.”

P.S. to Dr. Lee's paper.—Since the preceding observations on the ‘ Induction of premature labour in cases of albuminous urine complicated with pregnancy,’ were presented to the Society, the following case has occurred:—On the 10th May, 1863, Dr. Fly Smith requested me to see a patient who was near the full period of pregnancy, and who had been in convulsions the whole of the night. She was

in a state of complete insensibility. Pupils were widely dilated, the saliva flowing from the mouth. The jaws were clenched, and the muscles of the face and the extremities were convulsed. Pulse was rapid and feeble. There was no symptom of labour. The os uteri had not begun to dilate, but on passing the finger the head of the child was felt presenting, and the membranes distended with liquor amnii. I immediately ruptured the membranes, pressed up the head, and this was followed by the escape of a large quantity of liquor amnii. The os uteri was afterwards gently dilated with the finger. Cupping to the extent of seven or eight ounces from behind the ears was prescribed. The urine had previously been drawn off by the catheter, and ascertained by Dr. Smith to be albuminous.

The patient remained insensible till the evening, when labour supervened, and the child was expelled alive. She remained completely insensible for several days after her confinement, but the convulsions gradually ceased. She has since been removed into Burton Ward, St. George's Hospital, and the consciousness has been completely restored, but not the vision. She cannot yet see any object distinctly. The albuminous condition of the urine has been gradually disappearing, and is now almost gone, and there is every prospect that this patient will be restored to complete health.