advantages are obtained :—the stomach and other abdominal organs will at that time and of that kind digest better, and it will be more easy under this regimen to detect the first commencement of functional derangement and malady. Frequent variations with the kind of food lead to voracity and indigestion.

I forgot to mention the occurrence of pregnancy as an imperative reason for weaning the infant. Sore nipple, if severe, unmanageable, and causing to the mother, during the act of suckling, insupportable pains, may also be regarded as a circumstance making weaning necessary.

With regard to *diet and hygienic means* I think I need not enter into particulars. The important specialities of *therapeutical diet and hygiène* I suppose to be in general known to you; and some indications and modifications of the kind result also from what I have brought before you when speaking of the different kinds of food convenient to the different dispositions and ages of children. A good ventilation of the room, a convenient sort of clothing, a suitable kind of bed, and attention to be paid even to the position of the child, different in different maladies; these are points easily to be understood. Let me, finally, remark that in inflammatory diseases a reduction in suckling, viz., in the quantity of the milk of the breast, and, at the same time, the frequent use of cold water; in acid and flatulent dyspepsy, again, complete abstinence from farinaceous food. These measures act sometimes more powerfully in children's ailments than pharmaceutic substances. Next I shall speak upon the most useful remedies in children's practice.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCRIMINATING
BETWEEN

PREGNANCY & ABDOMINAL DISEASE.

ILLUSTRATED BY A VERY RECENT CASE.

By DAVID NELSON, M.D., EDIN.,

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THERE is no subject upon which it behoves the medical practitioner to exercise more care and caution than the above. Considering the magnitude of the physical and moral consequences involved in the question, and the well-known obscurity of many of the symptoms presented to us, along with the great difficulty of determining either their positive or their relative value, we ought to search diligently for every available proof on the one side and on the other, and yet, after all, ponder over the matter well and deeply before we commit ourselves to a decided opinion; for, if we only recal to mind the ordinary symptoms of pregnancy, we shall at once see that almost all of them are beset with doubts, and that their strength consists more in their number than in their individual weight. Thus, for instance, the increase of size in the abdomen may be due to sundry other causes, as polypus, ossifica-

tion, hydrops uteri, and hydatids. So may the irregularity of the menses, which discharge, from being profuse in the earlier or irritative stages of ovarian or uterine disease, may be quite stopped in the later. Sickness is certainly no criterion of itself. The enlargement of the breasts and of their areolæ, and also the secretion of milk, may take place under other irritations of the ovary, as well as pregnancy. Kiestine in the urine has now been shown to be a very doubtful mark. Even the supposed movements of the child, when only felt through the parietes of the abdomen, may be simulated by rushes of gas under certain forms of disease; and, though the stethoscopic signs of the cardiac and placental sounds within the womb must always afford proof positive of the presence of a living child; they are, of course, not applicable to one that may be dead. Ballotement is certainly a very valuable sign, but when that and the stethoscopic evidences are wanting, it becomes us to look with much discredit on any of the other symptoms, the most of which are merely sympathetic. Moral considerations are also to be taken into account in such a review of any case, as the station, known principles, and habitual manners of the patient. That great difficulties will beset certain cases, even when there exists the most earnest desire to arrive at truth, there can be no doubt, as witnessed in the memorable instances of Queen Mary and of Lady Flora Hastings. But these difficulties should only afford a wholesome lesson against rash conclusions, especially when ladies are unmarried, of mature years, and of superior character; and the following case, as resembling in the most essential point that of the late Lady Flora, is now adduced, to enforce such caution, especially on the part of our younger brethren. The writer holds a very strong opinion in regard to the non-publication of cases occurring in private practice, but he conceives that that principle does not apply to occasions such as the present, when he can positively vindicate, and feels that he ought to vindicate, the injured reputation of a deceased female patient, who, though conscious of innocence, was yet deeply wounded by the widely-spread suspicion against her. The facts are as follows :—

Miss P—— of this town, and late of Henly-in-Arden, aged about 34, of pious reputation, and unmarried, had, about eight months ago, or more, first become conscious of an uneasy pain at the lower part of the abdomen, which was by and by followed by a swelling in that region. At first, without being subjected to any particular examination, she had been treated for dyspepsia, and some hepatic affection, by a general practitioner, to whom she did not seem to have mentioned the above notable fact of enlargement. Afterwards, as the disease advanced, and assumed a more serious aspect, others were called in, and a physician of some standing, and others of obstetric experience, at length thought it necessary to declare positively that she was pregnant, in order to save professional reputation. Accordingly she was treated under this idea for some time, until, from certain communications to that effect, the patient and her friends declined further

attendance, and decided on calling the writer in to pass an opinion. He visited her, accordingly, on the 12th of last September, requesting that Mr. Partridge, of the same neighbourhood (Bordesley), should meet him, as that gentleman had had some general management of the case before that period. On arrival, he heard from the mother and the patient what previous opinions had been given. Mr. Partridge also stated that pregnancy had been affirmed in the case, limiting, however, his own view to a statement of the plain physical facts alone, viz., that there was fluctuation, with a solid or fluid body in the neighbourhood of the uterus, and occasional movements.

On examination, the patient was observed to be of small stature, and much emaciated, with a calm and interesting expression of countenance. The head was cool, the tongue clean and rather red, stomach tender, bowels obstinate, and kidneys torpid. The pulmonary sounds were natural; heart's action small, smart, and rapid; pulse 100 to 112. The abdomen was enormously distended with fluid, having a most distinct fluctuation all round, except just over the pubes and under the liver. The parietes were so tense that it was difficult to press them down. Still, however, they could be sufficiently dimpled to permit of the discovery of a more solid and pretty large body, like a child's head, in the left iliac region, which twice or thrice seemed to move with a jerk against the hand; while, on the right side, under the liver, there was an extensive doughy mass, distinctly margined, and giving the idea of hepatic enlargement. The os uteri was high up, and the cervix was scarcely distinguishable; but neither the placental blowing, nor the cardiac tic-tac was to be heard. The breasts were not enlarged; there was no remarkable areola, nor any milk in the nipples. A scum did form on the urine, but that disappeared under acetic acid. She had also menstruated some time before (explainable, perhaps, by the exhibition of certain medicines). The test by ballotement was not tried, as, besides the above negative evidences, she had that calm and straightforward look of the eye which seldom accompanies any such concealment as was supposed. The opinion then given was, that there was no evidence of pregnancy; but, certainly, every evidence of universal abdominal fluid, possibly ascites, with a solid body within it, most probably an ovarian tumour or cyst. Respect was certainly paid to former opinions on the subject, especially as they had been formed at an earlier period, before the abdominal fluid had so buried the tumour within, and thus beset the case with innumerable difficulties; but still the diagnosis was sufficiently confident to justify a decided plan of treatment. She had much flatulence, and was ordered pills of aloes and assafoetida, along with a course of iodide of potassium, and blisters; under which treatment a patient of the writer's, now in the Queen's Hospital, has obtained much relief, with a diminution of the tumefaction. On the 14th, however, it was discovered that her digestives were so irritable that they could not bear the iodide of potassium, which was, therefore, discontinued, and a preparatory treatment substituted, of compound tinc-

ture of gentian with hydrocyanic acid. On the 16th three leeches were applied over the liver, where there was pain, while she commenced some mercurial frictions over the abdomen; and, as the bowels and kidneys did not act, purgatives and diuretics were also resorted to. These, however, had no effect; and, as the legs began to swell to a great degree, while the fluids, &c., pressed upwards on the diaphragm, and fluctuated even over the pubes, the writer proposed that tapping should be resorted to. As, however, there was a married female friend present, who specifically put the question in regard to pregnancy once more, and recalled to mind the positive affirmations formerly made, it was considered proper, in full justice to the patient, that some eminent *surgical* opinion should be taken before that procedure was adopted. Accordingly, after a day or two, Professor W. Sands Cox, F.R.S., met Mr. Partridge and the writer in conference. He conjoined in the opinion that there was no evidence of pregnancy, but that there was a vast accumulation of fluid, and some very solid body within it. He deferred tapping, however, and only advised the feet to be punctured for the oedema, which operation was performed by Mr. Partridge, and gave, for the time, some relief. Shortly afterwards some erythema set in, and healing measures had to be resorted to forthwith. The distress now increasing, Mr. Cox was again summoned; and on the 19th of October, in the presence of the writer, and assisted by Mr. Partridge, he performed the operation of tapping, per vaginam, without inflicting the slightest pain, when there drained away about two gallons of thick fluid, like pea-soup, found to be almost pure albumen. After this had ceased to flow, the belly still remained very large, but was much softer. The tumour, also, in the left iliac region had disappeared, though the doughiness of the right side remained as before. It was not deemed prudent, for the present, to tap again through the parietes of the abdomen, and she was accordingly bandaged round, and left at rest, feeling considerable relief in her breathing, &c., while the oedema of the legs had almost at once diminished. She was so wasted and faint, however, from her long protracted sufferings, that this ease proved but a brief and partial respite. Her appetite and flesh were gone, and all her organs so torpid that, with the view of hastening her improvement, she exceeded the prescriptions given her, and swallowed of herself, one after another, many strongly purgative pills. These only increased the flatulency and gastro-enteric irritation, without producing the desired effect, and she gradually sunk and died on the 24th.

On the 25th, Mr. Cox being from home, an autopsy was instituted by the writer and Mr. Partridge, in the presence of the nurse and another female attendant. On cutting through the abdominal parietes in front, a large thick sac was found closely adherent to the walls, and from this sac was drained off upwards of three or nearly four gallons of an albuminous fluid, as before (for there were no means of exact measurement). There was then seen a large solid mass attached to the right wing of the uterus, and stretching away under

the liver. The uterus itself was pulled up by it. This mass appeared to be of the weight of about four pounds. On cutting into it, it had a fibrous covering, and appeared partly solid, and partly of honey-comb structure, from which exuded a bloody and brownish-white matter. This, under the microscope, was observed by Mr. Partridge and Dr. John Wright, Resident Officer at the Queen's Hospital, to consist partly of fibrous filaments, with pus, and blood corpuscles, granular matter, and fusiform cells. The sac was universally adherent, of a thick, leathery, fibrous structure, interspersed with large vessels, and here and there it presented extensive patches of inflammation and effused lymph on its inner surface. The liver was soft or almost diffident in some parts, and of a dirty grey colour. The uterus was of natural size and structure, and on being cut open, there was *no pregnancy*.

Birmingham, Nov. 1, 1851.

SOME REMARKS

ON CONSTIPATION AS ATTENDANT ON CHRONIC UTERINE DISORDERS.

By JAMES TUNSTALL, M.D., EDIN.,

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THAT an intimate sympathy exists between the reproductive organs of the female and those of digestion, is a fact so self-evident that I need not dilate upon it. Familiar instances occur in the vomiting of early pregnancy and the diarrhoea which more or less attends upon the catamenial secretion in those in whom this function is attended with pain and difficulty. In these latter cases costiveness, of an habitual character, is the general state of the bowels, and it is in them that the greatest amount of mischief is produced by the habitual use of the stronger aperients and mercurials. I do not think that contiguity of structure affords a sufficient explanation of their phenomena, but that they are to be regarded as examples of reflex nervous action.

If we proceed to consider the hysterical paroxysm in its completeness, we find the majority of the organs supplied by the great sympathetic, more or less participating. We have irregular or painful menstruation, excessive secretion of urine, costiveness, difficulty of breathing, with palpitation, giving rise to convulsions, partial paralysis, and other results of reflex actions. While the paroxysms are intermittent in their character, the functional derangements of the uterus and larger viscera remain, the reflex action still continues, in some cases manifesting itself in a short, dry, husky cough, in the majority constipation. These cases are characterized by an irregular action of the muscular fibres of the intestines, producing irregular and atonic propulsive power, just sufficient to enable the patients to pass small quantities of scybala only, with great pain, the great mass of faeces remaining; resort is then had to cathartics, an artificial diarrhoea is sought to be produced, and thus the bowels are excited into an undue

action, to relapse again into an additional degree of torpor. Mr. Collett, in the *Journal* for November 12th, has, I think, clearly shown, that many of the ordinary cases of simple constipation may be relieved by the judicious plan pointed out by him, but in cases similar to those I am about to relate, I conceive we want something more, in other words we require to subdue the nervous irritability, both of the uterus and intestine; not merely to subdue the constipation, but to remove the exciting cause, to regard the two organs as acting and reacting upon each other, and to endeavour to restore the healthy function to both. I shall assume, for granted, that the constipation depends upon irregularity of muscular action, and not upon the capacity of the female abdomen and pelvis, and that its remote cause is uterine functional derangement. Thus, then, our treatment must be tonic and anodyne, rather than aperient, and the diet of the patient should be strictly regulated. Conium appears to me to exert a peculiar action in uterine cases; it does not constipate like opium, and is far more manageable than belladonna. In small doses it does not affect the head, which in the cases under notice is a great desideratum.

Shortly after Stork had introduced conium to the notice of the profession, as a valuable remedy in cancerous affections, the celebrated Dr. John Fothergill published some observations upon it in the third volume of the "Medical Observations and Inquiries," lamenting that it did not answer his expectations, he says it proved beneficial in various obstinate complaints. In the conclusion of his paper he makes the following remarks:—"The extract of hemlock is apparently anodyne; it promotes rest, and eases pain; it seldom occasions that kind of morning headache which succeeds an opiate. In most cases it produces a laxative stool the following day. In some habits it offends the stomach, producing spasmodic twitchings. I have been induced to try it in painful discharges from the vagina, and often with success; also in fixed excruciating pains, probably arising from acrimony."

Fothergill being engaged in testing its efficacy as a remedy for cancer, gave it in large doses. He prescribes the extract to the extent of two scruples during the day, and continued it until its physiological effects were produced. I have never exceeded five grains during that period.

In the cases now under consideration, its evident effects were first anodyne and soothing and then mildly aperient. It produces, as it were, an evacuation by its direct action upon the muscular fibre, by subduing irregular contractions, in addition to its sedative effect upon the uterus.

The following illustrative cases are selected from my diary:—

Case 1.—Mrs. K., aged 30, who had suffered 7 years from prolapsus uteri, caused by severe abortion, attended with great nervous irritability and habitual constipation, having been advised to come to Bath for the use of the waters, placed herself under my care in the early spring of 1850. When examined, I found the pulse feeble, 60;