

DIFFICULT MENSTRUATION. (*Dysmenorrhœa.*)

BESIDES the other deviations from the usual course of nature, alluded to under this head, a third sometimes occurs, wherein menstruation, although not entirely suppressed, is nevertheless somewhat difficult, and accompanied with severe pains in the back, loins, and bottom of the belly. This disease is supposed to be owing to a weak action of the vessels of the uterus, or spasm of its extreme vessels; and is to be removed by chalybeates, warm bathing, both topical and general, with the use of opiates, which should be employed as soon as the symptoms that denote its approach are apparent. The extract of stramonium, in half grain doses, will often prove serviceable when other anodynes fail.

CESSATION OF THE MENSES. (*Commonly called the "Turn of Life."*)

THAT period of life at which the *menses* cease to flow is likewise very critical to the sex. The stoppage of any customary evacuation, however small, is sufficient to disorder the whole frame, and often to destroy life itself. Hence it comes to pass, that so many women either fall into chronic disorders, or die about this time. Such of them, however, as survive it, without contracting any chronic disease, often become more healthy and hardy than they were before, and enjoy strength and vigour to a very great age.

If the *menses* cease all of a sudden, which is seldom the case, in women of a full habit, they ought to abate somewhat of their usual quantity of food, especially of the more nourishing kind, as flesh, eggs, &c. They ought likewise to take sufficient exercise, and to keep the body open. This may be done by taking, once or twice a week, a little rhubarb, or an infusion of *hiera picra* in wine or brandy.

Should any scirrhus or cancerous affection of the uterus take place on a stoppage of the menstrual flux, as sometimes happens, all that can be done in such cases is to have recourse to palliatives, such as opium, henbane, and hemlock, in the manner pointed out in the diseases wherein these medicines are indicated.

It often happens that women of a gross habit, at this period of life, have ulcerous sores break out about their ankles, or in other parts of the body. Such ulcers ought to be considered as critical, and should either be suffered to continue open or have artificial drains substituted in their stead. Women who will have such sores dried up are often soon after carried off by acute diseases, or fall into those of a chronic nature.

CHAP. VII.

DISEASES OF PREGNANCY.

THOUGH pregnancy is not a disease, yet it is a state often attended with a variety of complaints which merit attention, and which sometimes require the assistance of medicine. Some women, indeed, are more healthy during their pregnancy than at any

other time ; but this is by no means generally the case ; most of them being frequently indisposed during the whole or greater part of the time of their gestation. Few fatal diseases, however, happen, during this period ; and hardly any except abortion that can be called dangerous.

During a state of pregnancy, three different stages evidently exist, each of which has a distinct set of symptoms ; nor need we be surprised, when we come to consider the alteration the constitution suffers as a consequence of impregnation, at the many complaints and irregularities which then arise. The first state of pregnancy is usually attended with a suppression of the menses, accompanied with frequent nausea and vomiting, particularly in the morning, heartburn, indigestion, peculiar longing, head-ache, giddiness, tooth-ache, and sometimes a slight cough : the breasts become enlarged, shooting pains extend through them, and the circle round the nipple alters to a dark brown colour. A feverish tendency, with debility, emaciation, irritability, and peevishness of temper, and a total alteration of the countenance, every feature of which becomes much sharpened, also frequently occur. During the whole or greater part of the second stage of gestation, as well as the first, the vomiting will continue with some women ; this, however, does not usually happen.

Partial suppressions of urine, with a frequent inclination to void it ; itching about the external parts of generation, costiveness, inclination without ability to go to stool, and the piles, are what pregnant women are chiefly incommoded by during the second stage.

Quickening.—Most women quicken about the sixteenth week after conception, at which time the mother becomes sensible of the slightest efforts of the child ; and besides the complaints just enumerated, she will then be liable to sudden faintings, and slight hysteric affections.* During the last three months, or third stage of pregnancy, general uneasiness, restlessness (particularly by night,) costiveness, puffy swellings of the feet, ancles, and private parts, cramps in the legs and thighs, difficulty of retaining the urine for any length of time, varicose swellings of the veins of the belly and lower extremities, and the piles, are the affections which usually prove most troublesome. In delicate and weak women, of an irritable habit, convulsive fits sometimes arise, which are ever to be regarded in a dangerous point of view.

NAUSEA AND VOMITING.—These symptoms most frequently arise immediately on first getting out of bed in the morning ; under such circumstances, therefore, it is advisable for the patient never to rise until she has taken a dish of tea or coffee, or whatever else she may have been accustomed to substitute for her breakfast.

* According to the opinion most commonly received, quickening, thus termed, has been generally understood to commence at the time when particular sensations are perceived by the mother, supposed to be occasioned by the first motion of the child. The most usual time of feeling any such symptoms is about the latter end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth month of pregnancy : at this period the uterus filling up the pelvis slips out and rises above the rim ; and from that sudden transition, women of a delicate constitution and irritable fibre are apt to faint, more particularly so if in an erect position. Ed.

Should the vomiting at any time become so severe as to threaten abortion from the violence of the straining, it may then be advisable to direct two or three table-spoonsful of the saline medicine to be taken every now and then in such a manner as the effervescence shall ensue after it is swallowed. The patient also should keep the body open with some gentle laxative. Should these means not succeed, about six ounces of blood may be drawn from the arm, and, if necessary, repeated in a week's time. The sickness in such cases depends on irritation, and is only to be removed with certainty by bleeding.

To abate excessive vomiting local applications have been recommended. For example, a piece of folded linen cloth, moistened with the tincture of opium, may be kept constantly applied to the stomach; to which, probably, the addition of a small portion of ether might increase its effect. It sometimes happens that vomiting continues incessantly for many days, accompanied with great prostration of strength, and constant thirst, with, at the same time, an utter impossibility of retaining any thing on the stomach. Under these circumstances the application of leeches to the pit of the stomach, and a constant attention to swallow nothing that can irritate, allowing the patient asses' milk, and that by a single spoonful at a time, have afforded relief. If much nausea should prevail without the possibility of throwing up, fourteen or fifteen grains of the powder of ipecacuanha may then be given, experience having proved that gentle emetics may be safely administered to pregnant women.

HEARTBURN.—When a pregnant woman is incommoded by heartburn, (which commonly arises from acidity in the stomach,) half a drachm of magnesia may be taken morning and evening; and, if this fail to obviate it, the absorbent mixture advised below* may be used, which Dr. Sims says he has found the most efficacious of all remedies for the removal of this distressing complaint.

HEAD-ACHE WITH PLETHORA.—When either drowsiness, a sense of fulness of the vessels of the head, or head-ache, prove troublesome to pregnant women, taking away a few ounces of blood from the arm in robust women will most likely prove serviceable. In women of a weak irritable habit the application of a leech or two to each temple will be more advisable than bleeding from the arm, where the head-ache proves obstinate, and resists the other means employed.

COSTIVENESS, PILES, &c.—Costiveness, partial suppressions of urine, and the piles, which attend on the second stage of pregnancy, are occasioned by the great pressure of the uterus on the rectum and bladder. The first and last of these symptoms are to be obviated by a daily use of some gentle laxative; such as a solution of manna, or the subjoined electuary.† Pills com-

* Take Magnesia, 1 drachm. table-spoonsful may be taken occasionally.
Pure Water, 5 ounces.

Spirit of Cinnamon, 3 drachms.
Solution of Ammonia, 1 drachm.

Make a mixture, of which two or three

† Take Confection of Senna, 1½ ounce.
Cream of Tartar, ½ ounce.
The size of a nutmeg to be taken occasionally.

posed of aloes are highly improper, as being of a nature too stimulating, and very apt to occasion hemorrhages, and bring on the piles. When the piles are troublesome, the best applications, when they can be applied, are leeches and cold saturnine lotions, as a solution of the superacetate of lead. To allay the irritation, ten grains of the superacetate of lead, dissolved in four ounces of rose-water, to which, if necessary, a little of the vinous tincture of opium may be added, form a good lotion.

TOOTH-ACHE.—To relieve the tooth-ache a few drops of the oil of cloves, cajeput, juniper, or any other essential oil, applied to the affected tooth, will often remove it for the time.

LONGINGS.—It is always desirable to gratify the peculiar longings of pregnant women, otherwise they are apt to miscarry from the anxiety these occasion, when not indulged in them. But that the child in the womb can be marked by any depraved appetite of the mother, or be mutilated by any disagreeable sight that may be presented to her, cannot readily be admitted.

HYSTERIC.—Should sudden fainting, or any other hysterical affection, arise, little more will be necessary than to expose the patient to a free open air, to place her in a horizontal position, and to give her a glass of cold water, with a few drops of hartshorn, or a little wine sufficiently diluted.

DIARRHŒA.—Diarrhœa during pregnancy should be treated just as at any other time; and after the stomach and intestines are cleared astringents may be used, if there be no great degree of fever present; but should there be fever, that must be attended to and first removed.

SUPPRESSION OF URINE.—To relieve the suppression of urine that frequently takes place in the advanced state of pregnancy, besides making use of emollient fomentations, clysters, and gentle purgatives, such as castor-oil, &c., the patient, at the same time, drinking plentifully of diluent liquors, surgical aid will be necessary to draw it off morning and evening by means of a catheter.

TROUBLESOME ITCHINGS.—When these sensations arise about the parts of generation during the pregnant state, it will be proper to keep the body perfectly free with some cooling laxative, and to wash the parts three or four times a day with a solution of lead, or the diluted solution of the acetate of lead. If much irritation accompany this itching, leeches may be applied to the place.

PUFFY SWELLINGS of the feet, ankles, and private parts, which are apt to arise towards the end of pregnancy, are occasioned by the pressure of the womb on the returning vessels, which prevents the blood being carried back to the heart. Gravid women are usually free from these complaints in the morning, but towards night they frequently suffer much from them. Slight scarifications from the edge of a lancet, to discharge the stagnated fluid, with the af-

ter-application of flannels wrung out in a warm effusion of emollient herbs, have been employed in cases of great distention. In general, however, it will only be necessary that the patient does not keep her feet in a pendent position for any length of time.

CRAMPS OF THE LEGS AND THIGHS are to be relieved by rubbing the parts with cold vinegar; camphor dissolved in oil, or other liniments, the person wearing stockings in bed. At an advanced period of pregnancy they are only to be relieved by labour removing the cause. Proper doses of ether and tincture of opium, with the means advised in hysterical affections, will afford the greatest benefit where the stomach is affected with spasms. In such cases the patient will do well to avoid all kinds of food that are apt to prove flatulent and hard of digestion, and keep the body perfectly open.

RESTLESSNESS AND WANT OF SLEEP prove troublesome complaints towards the latter end of pregnancy, obliging the patient to rise frequently throughout the course of the night, in order to expose herself to the influence of cool air. In cases of this nature nothing affords relief so effectually as small bleedings, with the occasional use of some cooling laxative medicine. Opiates, in such conditions, are never attended with any advantage.

VARICOSE VEINS.—Considerable enlargement and distention of the veins of the legs, thighs, and abdomen often take place to an alarming extent in the last state of pregnancy. But, as no bad consequences have been observed to attend this state, the only thing necessary to be done is to empty the vascular system by moderate bleeding, gentle purging, and a spare diet. Should, however, the vein of any particular part become so distended as to prove troublesome, it may be advisable to apply a bandage of a moderate tightness, so as to give the necessary support to it.

JAUNDICE.—Pregnant women, in some instances, are afflicted with a pain in the side, excessive sickness at the stomach, and retchings, the skin assuming a deep yellow tint; under which circumstances alone the complaint proves distressing; and it is usually occasioned by the formation of one or more gall-stones, and the obstructions they oppose to the usual and regular passage of the bile. The most efficient means to relieve the patient from this degree of the complaint are, bleeding, fomentations of the painful part, and large doses of opium, with such laxatives as shall counteract the constipating effects of the latter. When jaundice or any other bilious effects prevail during pregnancy, in consequence of the pressure kept up by the womb on the gall-bladder or ducts, it is to be obviated by keeping the body open with some gentle laxatives, as pills composed of jalap and rhubarb.

INCONTINENCY OF URINE is to be removed only by delivery, but may admit of being partially relieved by the horizontal posture. The bad effects of this very disagreeable complaint, may be prevented by a scrupulous attention to cleanliness, and the use of a

thick compress of linen, or a sponge of considerable size, properly fastened.

OVER-DISTENTION OF THE SKIN.—The skin of the abdomen, in the latter months of pregnancy, will sometimes become cracked and sore. In this case nothing is more effectual than the frequent use of warm oil by friction; to which a little camphor may be added to give it somewhat of a medicated appearance.

FALSE PAINS, resembling those attendant on actual labour, are apt to come on at a late period of pregnancy, often occasioning unnecessary alarm. Confinement in a horizontal position; bleeding, if of a full habit; laxative medicines if costive, and giving small and frequent doses of some opiate until the patient finds ease, will, in such cases, be necessary.

CHAP. VIII.

CONVULSIONS.

CONVULSIONS may take place either during pregnancy or labour. These are of different kinds, requiring opposite treatment. One species is a consequence of great exhaustion from a tedious labour, excessive fatigue, and profuse hemorrhage; which makes its attack without much previous warning, and generally alternates with faintings, or great depression of strength, and debility: the muscles about the face and chest are chiefly affected, and the pulse is small, frequent, and compressible, the face pale, the eyes sunk, the extremities cold. The fits succeed each other rapidly, and very soon terminate in a fatal syncope.* In all cases of this nature, the first object should be directed towards restraining the hemorrhage if present, or preventing any kind of exertion, thus husbanding the remaining strength, or recruiting it by cordials. In conjunction with ether and camphor, opiates will be of considerable service. Delivery is usually necessary.

The other species of convulsions, which are those of an hysterical nature, are more common during gestation than during parturition. In this case it may only be necessary to add to what has been already said relative to hysterics (p. 390.), that if they do not speedily yield to antispasmodics, bleeding had better be resorted to: should this fail, the woman, if possible, should be delivered.

Puerperal convulsions seldom happen before the sixth month, but may occur at any time between this period and the completion of labour. They may arise as the first symptom of labour, or after delivery. This species of convulsion depends on the state of the uterus, and has been remarked to occur more frequently during the first pregnancy than in any subsequent one, particularly where the woman is unmarried.

To prevent the occurrence of puerperal convulsions, as they are

* It was this species of convulsion, apparently, that destroyed Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Wales.