

in feeble health. The subject of the third case had hemorrhage after the birth of her two first children, and I had taken the precaution, on three subsequent deliveries, to give ergot just before the child was born. It caused her, however, considerable pain, and the last time I omitted it. She did well—and trusting to that, I omitted it on this occasion. The result was not so fortunate. I think it will not be doubted that the causes of the hemorrhage were to be found in the nature of the cases—and were independent of ether. With these exceptions the contraction of the uterus was, in all cases, immediate and thorough.

The remaining point to be noticed is the effect of ether on the duration of the labor. Other things being equal, that is the most perfect labor in which there is the most perfect correspondence between the efforts on the one hand and the resistance on the other. The powers of both parts of this process are impaired by etherization, and the question arises how nearly the due proportions are preserved. When we abstract from one side a certain amount of expulsive force, do we restore the balance by a proportionate diminution of resistance. The effects of etherization vary according to the idiosyncrasy of the subject and the degree to which it is carried. In one of the cases related, there was no perceptible loss of expulsive power; but this is rare. Again, many facts prove, and among others, the well known case of Levret, that the uterus possesses inherent independent power. The aid that is given—the sort of fulcrum that is supplied by the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, is not essential to its effective action. I am convinced, nevertheless, that more time is lost, when even these subsidiary muscles are paralyzed, than is gained by the relaxation and diminished resistance. But not only are the voluntary efforts impaired, but the action of the uterus itself is at times overpowered, and the process of parturition suspended.

There are conditions, however, in which the positive unequivocal advantages of ether far outweigh any temporary evils: in which it is not merely yielded to the patient's comfort, but demanded by her necessities. The muscular action may be inordinate, wasting the strength without advancing the labor—inflicting injurious pressure upon the soft parts, and thereby compromising the safety of mother and child. These, besides various mental disturbances, are materially controlled and relieved by the use of ether. Above all, in obstetric operations, the patient is saved much suffering. Apart from the prostration and other immediate and remote evils consequent upon the use of antimony, opium and venesection, which, to be effective, must be full, they often fail to produce the desired relaxation and repose. If the cases related should not prove to be exceptions, we have in ether a most valuable auxiliary. Any one who has encountered the resistance and benumbing pressure of the uterus in a case of difficult turning, will feel that it was here pre-eminently useful. Under the particular combination of circumstances the operation might have been difficult and dangerous, if not impossible, unless by means of an unjustifiable degree of force. In no case is violence more to be deprecated.

*Erratum.*—On page 516, 7th line from bottom, for “without,” read *with*.