

INFLAMMATION
OF THE
CAPUT CŒCI DURING PREGNANCY,
AND THE
EMPLOYMENT OF CALOMEL.

—
To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Shortly after my return home in the year 1822, after the conclusion of my first session at the University of Edinburgh, I was requested by my esteemed and revered friend, the late H. C. Cape, Esq., surgeon, of Ireby, to attend my sister, in conjunction with himself, who was in her sixth month of pregnancy of her sixth child, and labouring under a severe and acute inflammation of the caput cœci. On my arrival I found the patient had great pain and tenderness in the right iliac fossa; vomiting, colic (which invariably returned in a severe periodic manner, about four o'clock in the morning and afternoon), and constipation. Mr. Cape had bled the patient freely in the morning, and she was bled again in the afternoon, each bleeding being attended with considerable relief, but never entirely subduing the pain. I was first called to my sister on a Friday afternoon (she lived at a distance of four miles and upwards from my father's), when, until the following Tuesday afternoon, general bleeding and other suitable means were had recourse to, local bleeding excepted.

On this day (Tuesday) she was twice bled again, and I ordered a dozen leeches to be applied to the seat of pain in the evening, all of which bit well, and bled freely. The patient being now greatly relieved of her pain and suffering, and I being almost completely exhausted from constant nightly and daily attendance on the case, I sought repose about midnight, for the first time since my arrival on Friday.

Notwithstanding my extreme anxiety to recover a most kind and affectionate sister from so perilous and dangerous a situation, I had fallen into a sound sleep for about half an hour, when my brother came to summon me to a case of midwifery in the neighbourhood of my father's. On being roused from my slumber, the first object of my care and thought was to visit and closely examine the condition of my sister before leaving her; I found she had been considerably easier of pain since the application of the leeches, but the bowels still continued obstinately constipated. Thus, before leaving the house, I was induced to prescribe some pills containing one grain of the chloride of mercury and three grains of the comp. extract of colocynth, with peppermint oil, in each, one of which I ordered her to take every hour, and in case the pain should return, as many of the leeches to be re-applied as would lay hold.

Being detained with the obstetric case, I could not re-visit our patient until the following Wednesday afternoon, when I was most truly thankful and happy to find that she was completely relieved of her complaint, there being nothing the matter with her now but weakness and a sore mouth. I now ascertained that during my absence the pain had returned with all its wonted severity about the usual time of four o'clock in the morning, when ten of the leeches were immediately applied, according to my previous injunctions, after which the pain entirely left her; the bowels had been several times freely acted upon by the pills, and she was perfectly free from all complaint, the sore mouth excepted; indeed, her mouth became so sore and inflamed from the action of the mercury, that I found it necessary to leech and blister her cheeks, and to gargle the mouth. In fact this remedy caused the patient nearly as much suffering during its continuance as the disease itself, but still I am strongly of opinion that it was a great means of saving her life.

The subject of this case had previously enjoyed ordinary good health, but was occasionally liable to dyspepsia and constipation when not pregnant. When the full period of utero-gestation was completed my sister was delivered of a small, living child, who is now a tall, slender girl of fourteen years of age. This patient actually lost about 130 ounces of blood, independent of local bleeding. The circumstances of this and similar cases which I have witnessed, induce me to conclude this subject with a few remarks.

First. That pregnant women are not prone to abortion during inflammatory diseases.

Second. That calomel may be safely and advantageously administered in inflammatory and febrile diseases occurring during pregnancy, in conjunction with bloodletting.

Third. That both the disease itself, and the remedial means employed for its removal, may sometimes prove injurious to the human offspring while in utero in some cases; that is, they may occasionally produce an arrest of development, and thus affect both life and organisation. This subject opens out a wide field for future investigation and philosophical research in the deep and unexplored recesses of physiology and therapeutics. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

E. WILKINSON.

Aspatria, Cumberland,
July 16, 1838.

LEAMINGTON SPA.

WE have received several newspapers, with voluminous reports of a grand banquet to Dr. Jephson, at Leamington