PRESSURE IN UTERINE HÆMORRHAGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In 1818, Dr. Ramsbotham gave to the profession the results of a practice not generally known, for promoting the contraction of the uterus to restrain hæmorrhage after the expulsion of the placenta. This practice consisted in the application of pressure by means of the hand. Very soon after this treatment was made known, it was suggested by Dr. D. Davis that a compress might be substituted, and secured in such a manner as to ensure contraction of the uterus, and render a return of the hæmorrhage absolutely impossible. Mr. Searle tells us that three years ago, he discovered that pressure would contract the uterus and restrain hæmorrhage. The object of my former letters was to set him right upon two points where he was certainly wrong; first, in thinking that he was the discoverer of the utility of pressure, which was before done and published by Dr. Ramsbotham—and, secondly, in supposing that he was the first to discover that applying pressure by means of a compress was more convenient, and more completely effected the object sought to be obtained. This was taught by Dr. Davis three years prior to Mr. Searle's questionable discovery of it, and six years before Mr. Searle shone upon the medical world, with the reflected light of Drs. Ramsbotham and Davis. For rendering justice to these gentlemen, I have incurred Mr. Searle's resentment, and obtained for your readers the favour of another letter from him, which, with the exception of additional evidences of his very superficial acquaintance with the subject, is full of "damnable iteration." I cannot hope to be indulged with room to analytically answer his dispatch; but, in the justice and impartiality of THE LANCET, I, in common with even its enemies, have the most unbounded confidence. I am consequently induced to again intrude upon your notice some remarks suggested by Mr. Searle's last letter.

I give him full credit for sincerity, in saying he would have withheld from the world his imaginary glory, could he have foreseen the consequences of relating it. Is not three successful cases sufficient to justify a practice? Perhaps Mr. Searle is not satisfied with Mr. Wardrop's success in tying the carotid, because he has not done it thirty times; and although that gentleman's merit and success are alike self-evident, they may be questioned, because he has only had three or four cases. Mr. Searle obliges us with a quotation of his own words, on which I am obliged to be the commentator; for, he says, although

gentle pressure with the hand is useful to excite contraction of the uterus, it is doubtful whether it be of the least utility in uterine hæmorrhage. Now I think it is not doubtful, for anything that excites uterine contraction must diminish hæmorrhage, by lessening the calibre of the open mouths of the vessels of that part to which the placenta has been attached. And if pressure can be so applied as to produce this effect, it matters little how it be performed, whether by "grasping the uterus" "by gentle pressure," "sitting upon the patient's belly" "on a compress of bowels," or "sticks and tablecloths" forming "the arcs of a circle," "or quarto volumes," or, for lack of these, perhaps he might not object to "two octavo volumes neatly bound." Whichever of these means restrains the discharge upon the principle before alluded to, may, I think, (although Mr. Searle does not) be deemed efficient pressure, for its efficacy is proved by its success. Cases may occasionally occur where the uterus may have no specific power of contraction, where it is flaccid and inert; these are cases where added to pressure plugging must be useful, although Mr. Searle cannot perceive it. As the case of epistaxis, supposed by Mr. Searle, is neither a parallel nor an exemplification, I pass it by. I omitted to describe Dr. Davis's improved mode of applying pressure, because Mr. Searle did so when he "committed" his first letter; it consists in tying a compress firmly over the uncontracted uterus, by means of a sheet or tablecloth; he usually employs a pillow rolled into a hard pad; the Doctor suggested it might be sat upon, but he did not prudently direct that the person should be a "light weight." This mode is infinitely superior to the "quarto volumes," because the means are always at hand, which the "quartos" may not be, unless the patient lie in a library. Mr. Searle is unfortunate in never being right even by mistake; how can he reconcile his practice with reason, when he says he gave the laudanum to lessen the "force and quickness" of the heart and arteries? Mr. Searle also gave wine and brandy—did he give these also to lessen the quickness of the heart and arteries, or did he expect that they would aid the "acidity and coldness of the vinegar and water," in "constringing the vessels," and checking the hæmorrhage? The fact is, that the treatment of Mr. Searle's case, with the exception of the pressure and the stimulants, was as exceptionable as the last mentioned means were appropriate.

With many thanks for your impartiality,

I have the honour to remain, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

W. A. WALFORD.

Judd-street, Sept. 3, 1827.