

THE PORRO OPERATION.

Among the recent outcomings of the antiseptic system of Prof. Lister, the Porro modification of the Cæsarean section may be considered as one of the most important. The rationale of this operative procedure is based upon the well established fact, that the removal of the uteri of pregnant animals after ligature of the cervix or vagina is attended with far less danger to life than the Cæsarean section.

The credit of having first conceived this modification of the classical Cæsarean section seems to belong to Dr. Cavallini, who, in 1769, performed a series of very elaborate experiments upon the lower animals, with the view of determining the comparative mortality of simple incision and removal of the contents of the gravid uterus, and the extirpation of the uterus after ligature of the upper part of the vagina or of the cervix. He was led to the conclusion by the results of these experiments that the latter

method was worthy of trial in the human female. These experiments were subsequently repeated by Blundell, of London, and the results obtained by Dr. Cavallini's experiment confirmed.

In spite of these experiments and the suggestions which they naturally called forth, it was not until more than a century after the first recorded experiments of Cavallini that Prof. Porro, of Pavia, Italy, emboldened by the magnificent record of the Scotch and English surgeons in ovariectomy, the successes of Péan who saved seventeen out of twenty-four cases of uterine ablation by abdominal section, and above all by the valuable results of Listerism, deliberately planned and first executed the operation which now very justly bears his name.

It has been claimed in this country, and with some show of reason, that an American surgeon, Prof. H. R. Storer, of Newport, Rhode Island, was the first to perform ablation of the uterus after removing the child by the old Cæsarean operation. True it is that Dr. Storer did remove the uterus in the manner claimed for him; it was not a part of his plan so to do however, but was simply a *dernier ressort* to arrest the hemorrhage following an incision into a uterus incapable of contracting because of a thickened and diseased condition of its walls.

So far as the difficulties of the operation itself are concerned the argument is altogether in favor of the old operation, inasmuch as shoemakers, ignorant midwives and various persons other than qualified practitioners have been known to successfully perform the Cæsarean section. With ablation of the uterus added however, nothing short of that skill and courage born of a thorough knowledge of the anatomical relations of the parts involved in the operation will suffice to assure the operator of success. Although these considerations would lead us to conclude that the new operation is a very much more hazardous procedure than the old method, yet a comparison of statistics shows that the Porro modification has the lesser mortality.

This operation may now be regarded as established as one of the legitimate operations of surgery. The days of the simple Cæsarean section with its awful fatality are numbered. Lives that would otherwise have been lost will be saved, and still more this operation will have removed from the poor rachitic creatures, which have been its most usual subjects, the possibility of their incurring its dangers a second time. The successes which have crowned the Porro operation demonstrate brilliantly the possibilities of abdominal surgery and add increased renown to the antiseptic method.