

CORRESPONDENCE.

PRESSURE FORCEPS VERSUS THE SUTURE IN VAGINAL HYSTERECTOMY.

EDITOR AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS.

DEAR DOCTOR:—On September 19th last, I read before the American Gynecological Society a paper on "Pressure Forceps versus the Suture in Vaginal Hysterectomy." This article was published in the Transactions of the Society for 1888, Vol. XIII.

On the question of priority in the use of pressure forceps, the article contained, with his permission, a letter from M. Péan. A few days ago, I received from Dr. Richelot a reply to the letter of Péan with a request that it be published.

The following are translations of the letters of Drs. Péan and Richelot, who may speak for themselves :

VERY DEAR AND HONORED CONFRÈRE:—You will find in the five volumes of the "Leçons de Clinique Chirurgicale de l'Hôpital St. Louis" all the information you desire on the subject of temporary and permanent hemostasis by pressure forceps in all surgical operations.

At the end of vol. i. you will find the lessons which I have given for many years, and which have been reproduced by my internes, M. Deny and M. Exchaquet. In vol. ii. you will find many clinical lessons which I published to establish the history and determine the applications. In vol. iv. the second and third lessons are devoted to vaginal extirpation of the uterus. You will see that, as in all my operations, I practise what I recommended at that time regarding hemostasis. These lessons were read at the Académie in July, 1883. In the same volume you will find the description of my method applied to vaginal hysterectomy (in lessons 11, 12, and 13). In vol. v. you will find the reply which I made at the Congrès Français de Chirurgie to Dr. Richelot when he sought to appropriate to himself my method, which my internes had communicated to him (on page 213, lesson 14), as well as the letters of Dr. Buffet d'Elboeuf. The applause of the entire assembly prevented Richelot from continuing to go on in this way so lamentable for his reputation. In 1887, my interne, M. Secheyron, received the prize of the Académie de Médecine of Paris for his essay on "Vaginal Hyster-

ectomy." In this work all my rights of priority are established. M. Richelot, who presented an essay on the same subject, received no recompense at all.

This year, 1888, you will find in the *Gazette des Hôpitaux* a part of the lessons on morcellement and hemostasis by pressure forceps which I had communicated in 1873 to the Académie de Médecine of Paris. I there used illustrations in order that those might better understand my method who, being foreigners, would better understand a description illustrated by pictures than the French alone.

My interne, M. Secheyron, is now publishing besides an important work upon vaginal hysterectomy, in which you will soon find all the information which would interest you upon this subject.

Believe in my entire devotion.

(Signed) PÉAN.

PARIS, August 1st, 1888.

PARIS, April 14th, 1889.

SIR AND HONORED CONFRÈRE :—I have before me your interesting article on "Vaginal Hysterectomy," which closes with a letter in which M. Péan accuses me of wrongfully claiming priority in the method of hemostasis by pressure forceps.

This letter cleverly mixes up the subject of forced-pressure in general with its special application to vaginal hysterectomy. It does not give dates, and it refers to articles written by obliging students. It contains also a series of inaccuracies to which I do not consider it necessary to reply in detail. But, as I value the good opinion of my confrères, allow me briefly to recapitulate the facts. My friend Terrier, surgeon to the Hôpital Bichat, who saw me operate during his service in 1885, will bear witness to my American colleagues as to the accuracy of my statements.

After my communication to the Société de Chirurgie, November 11th, 1885, in which I advocated the entire abandonment of the ligature in vaginal hysterectomy, and the securing of permanent hemostasis in the broad ligaments by the use of pressure forceps, which should be allowed to remain for a time, I received the following letter from M. Péan :

MARCH 1st, 1886.

MY DEAR RICHELOT :—I do not think that you intentionally forgot to mention in *L'Union Médicale* the first operations of vaginal hysterectomy which I performed at Paris, although they were reported to the Académie de Médecine in 1883 and mentioned in several journals. You have, doubtless, not consulted the library of the Académie. It also gives me real pleasure to send you the clinical report in which they were mentioned.⁺ It is an extract from volume iv. of the "Clinique de l'Hôpital St. Louis," which will appear in a few days.

My first operation was performed at Paris before our confrère Demons had done his first vaginal hysterectomy at Bordeaux.

My two succeeding operations were also done in 1882. You see that they interested the statisticians of Paris. Since that time I have done three other similar operations, of which two were successful. This makes six operations that I have had in my private practice, four being successful and two unsuccessful. I have at your disposal all the notes of the cases, and the anatomical specimens to verify them, if they will be of use to you in your researches.

Your devoted colleague,

(Signed)

PÉAN.

You will see that in this letter not a word is said about forcipressure. In the three communications to the Académie, of the existence of which I was not aware, the author does not utilize the forceps for permanent hemostasis; he expressly recommends—I have his article now before me—that all the forceps which have been used in the course of the operation be removed and replaced by ligatures, and that the wound be closed by bringing together the margins of the peritoneum.

After this appeared the thesis of Gomet ("De l'Hystérectomie Vaginale en France," Juillet, 1886), in which were reported six new cases of M. Péan, up to that time unpublished. In one of these, bearing the date of June 19th, 1885, the author thus expresses himself: "It would have been impossible for me to remove these forceps, because they were applied so high up. I decided, therefore, to leave them in place, and did not apply a suture to the wound." In the same paper is described the procedure of M. Péan, which consists in turning the uterus, in tying each broad ligament in two portions, and in closing the wound by from ten to twenty sutures.

Prior to this, Baeckel, on October 26th, 1882, had left *in situ* two large forceps upon vessels which could not be reached by the ligature. Jennings, of London, did the same on October 30th, 1885, after a ligature had slipped.

These facts being known to me, I made a formal declaration to the Congrès Français de Chirurgie on October 19th, 1886, that, in the use of pressure forceps for permanent hemostasis in vaginal hysterectomy, I had not made "any invention," and that my rights of priority reduced themselves to the following formula: "Systematic employment of pressure forceps for permanent hemostasis and the abandonment of all ligatures, not as a matter of expediency or in difficult cases, but invariably and as a matter of preference." This phrase is certainly not ambiguous, and even at the present time it seems to me a sufficient answer to the accusations which have been unsparingly heaped upon me.

Since that time, I have published my reports and have not entered into any controversy at all. I have frequently given my opinion as to the shape of forceps, but have never given any one authority to call any instrument whatsoever by my name.

Notwithstanding this reserve, M. Péan has not ceased to complain of me in terms which betray the most violent indignation.

He has almost gone so far as to say that I claimed to be the inventor of *forçi-pressure*.

I do not desire to take up in detail what M. Péan has caused to be written during the last three years upon a subject which touches him to the heart, but the zeal with which he has pursued me even to America does surprise me. Meanwhile I remain quietly here in Paris, and—as I at least think—without bearing him malice.

Accept, very honored confrère, the expression of my best wishes.

(Signed)

DR. G. RICHELOT,

*Professeur agrégé à la Faculté de Médecine
de Paris, Chirurgien de l'Hôpital Tenon.*

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS for October, 1888, contained a very complete résumé of my article. The operation is attracting so much attention that the question of priority is of considerable interest. I therefore have taken pleasure in sending you the statements on that question of the two principal claimants.

Yours truly,

E. C. DUDLEY.

70 MONROE ST., CHICAGO, ILL., June 14th, 1889.