

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Evil Results of Electricity in Gynecology.

TO THE EDITOR, DEAR SIR: I am greatly pleased to learn that a new journal, devoted to Gynecology and Obstetrics, is to appear in the West. Not that these subjects are in need of more light in the West than in the East, but that the new journal means a new luminary for the spread of the latest and best in medicine and surgery throughout the land.

You have in the West many advanced thinkers; men of deep surgical thought and practical knowledge regarding the subjects to be treated of in your journal. But, as you have requested my views on the subject of electricity as a curative agent, I shall give them to you briefly and purely from an every day and clinical standpoint and from observation in a large experience at the operating table. Patients come to me almost daily, giving histories of longer or shorter periods of ill health, and tumors, and troubles for which they have been urged to give, and have given, electricity most a long-continued and thorough trial only to find themselves worse at the end of months, and more likely years, and bankrupt in health and purse.

I operate in a few days on a patient who was urged six years ago to come to me for surgical interference, by her physician. She wished to try electricity first, and has been doing so this length of time with the disastrous results above mentioned, and in addition will have the risk of undergoing one of the most trying and complicated operations known to surgery. Six years ago it would have been comparatively simple. In cases where electricity has been used I invariably find adhesions of the most complicated and stubborn kind.

Too many prominent gynæcologists and surgeons, both at home and abroad, who have made a thorough study of electricity and electrical appliances, have given it a perfect trial and find it wanting, to need further corroboration on my part. I need only mention a few of this class. John Homans, of Boston, Stansbury Sutton, of Pittsburg, who has attained the acme of perfection in diagnosis and surgical detail, also Wm. Goodell, of Philadelphia, and many more have given it a most complete trial and have had abundant opportunities to study the

results of others and now denounce it in most unqualified language. Many of Apostoli's pupils in this city alone have put their batteries to one side and are returning to sound surgical methods, others who have not attained a practical training in surgery are seeking it, or taking their patients to specialists for surgical interference.

To illustrate the standing of some I will give the following brief extracts from recent correspondence. An operator in a neighboring city writes: "I have had a case which would interest you. A woman who has had a fibroid tumor for some years with repeated attacks of suffering. She has been under my care for two years, and I, poor idiot, had been treating her with electricity, using no punctures, however, and no strong currents, the highest being 100 to 125 milliamperes, and more usually not over 75. As she always remained a sufferer she finally made up her mind for an operation, which I agreed to do. * * * * I found a great angry pus tube and abscess sac as big as my fist glued on to the large intestine, and just in process of perforation. The other tube and ovary were removed with extreme difficulty as the tumor, although not large, was firmly bound down and I did not try to remove it. It will interest you to know that the omentum was firmly adherent to the anterior wall above, and to the surface of the tumor and the region of the bladder below, causing a very formidable complication, as it was thick, congested and widely adherent. *But mark, the adhesions were just exactly under the surface where my abdominal pad had rested and where my electricity had been passing through.*

A Philadelphia surgeon speaking in a letter of some operations done recently, says: "Another case last week was one of old adhesions treated by electricity. I could do nothing but break up some of the adhesions—omental, intestinal and pelvic." Again, a physician in a distant state writes: "I have a case that I may be able to turn over to you. It is a lady 35 years old with a large fibroid that extends above the umbilicus. She is ex-sanguinated and very miserable; spends about half her time in bed; has just returned from ——— hospital where she was in charge of a Dr. ———. You will probably know him, who intended to cure it with electricity, but did not succeed. *It makes the impression on me of being adherent to the anterior abdominal wall.*"

Please mark the uniform observation by the writers of the first and last letters of the plain uncontrovertible fact that adhesions were most directly under the point of application of the electric current. This testimony gains additional strength from the fact that the writer of the first letter is but a very recent convert from the electrical folly, and has, I regret to say, till very recently been disposed to feel that there are "two sides to the question." I wish particularly to call attention to his attitude as typical of that of many of these would-be "broad-minded" brethren among us who are so very anxious to "prove all things" that they must needs run after all the "lo heres!" and eagerly accept as facts statements and theories far from proven.

The writer of the second extract is also a recent convert to sound surgical principles, having given a most thorough and stubborn trial to electricity as far as complete apparatus and a hospital clinic could give means and material.

The author of the third extract is an intelligent general practitioner. His easy diagnosis and sound reasoning are a most encouraging sign of what may be expected in the future of an enlightened profession when this electrical folly has taken its place in the long, if not honorable, list of medical crazes that have held a credulous part of our brethren in temporary bondage, and through them have taken an unfortunate hold on many of the laity eager to temporize and put off a so-called evil day.

If our venerable professional brother, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, were to issue a final edition of his famous and fascinating work, "Homeopathy and its Kindred Delusions," its closing and most remarkable chapter might be "Electricity, its Experimenters and its victims."

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