

though it is not wise to assume that this is the case. Admitting, however, that these organisms are present in the lochia it will be understood that any extensive laceration of the cervix, or of the perineum, increases the susceptibility of the patient to septic trouble by absorption. A condition which so much resembles puerperal fever, as to be indistinguishable from it, is the septic condition due to the absorption of chemical products caused by the presence in the uterus of retained placenta or decomposing clots. If this condition is recognized early, the removal of the cause generally results in an immediate improvement of the condition of the patient. Should the progress of a patient towards recovery not be absolutely satisfactory, a medical practitioner should at once be called in. Some medical men make it an invariable rule if the temperature of a lying-in woman is over 100° Fahr. two evenings in succession, to order an intra-uterine douche, and the administration of this is often followed with the best results, but the obstetric nurse must not assume the responsibility of administering this without direction. On the other hand if living organisms once effect an entrance into the blood they usually multiply and so produce puerperal fever and pyæmia, which too often end fatally. These organisms may be introduced by the obstetric nurse by want of care in cleansing her hands before attending to a lying-in woman, by imperfectly cleansed instruments, such as a vaginal tube which has been used for a septic case, or by infected linen. Post-mortem poison, as well as that of scarlet fever and erysipelas, appears to be specially dangerous to a lying-in woman. An obstetric nurse must on no account lay out a dead body, or expose herself to infection of any sort, and should she accidentally come in contact with it she must at once cease all visits to lying-in patients.

The premonitory symptoms of puerperal fever, if present, are rise of temperature, tenderness of the abdomen over the uterus, and offensive lochial discharge. Sometimes the attack is apparently ushered in suddenly, with a rigor, about the third day, no premonitory symptoms having previously caused alarm. It must be remembered that in any case in which puerperal fever is suspected, hours and even moments are of importance, and precious, in securing medical advice, and proper treatment for the patient.

(To be continued.)

## Medical Matters.

### BALLOONING A BABY.



A CASE is reported in an American contemporary which recalls the famous report given in the *Hospital* newspaper some years ago, and which has ever since been a standing joke in medical and nursing circles. We refer to the description given in our contemporary of the gallant feat of "a brave nurse" who cleared an obstructed tracheotomy tube in a choking child by "blowing violently down it!!" Naturally enough, our contemporary was not aware of the results which would have followed to the poor victim if the heroic efforts narrated had ever taken place. In the American case, a small boy inserted a bicycle pump into a baby's mouth and forcibly injected air. In a very short space of time the baby's body became enormously distended, both chest and abdomen swelling to a great size, and then the infant it is not surprising to learn, became unconscious. The mother, however, arrived upon the scene before any further injury was done, and the child recovered. Our contemporary, not unnaturally, expresses the hope that the small boy was well blown up in his turn.

### INCREASING LONGEVITY.

THE insurance companies of the United States are much more closely controlled than are similar undertakings in this country. They are all under the supervision of a Government Department, and are compelled, each year, to furnish detailed reports, and to submit to close criticism of their financial concerns by Government auditors. One consequence of this State control is that the statistics, which are published each year, are most valuable and trustworthy. Two remarkable facts have recently been elicited from these reports: that the average life, both of men and women in the United States, seems to be growing appreciably longer. It is possible that there may be other causes to explain the result, but it is only in accordance with well-known facts that, as American institutions become more established, and the

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