

The Combination of Pregnancy with Disease.*

By GIBBON FITZGIBBON, M.D.

(Concluded from page 488.)

RENAL DISEASE.

The next disease I would like to refer to is one not of an infectious nature. It is Renal Disease, and is perhaps the commonest pathological condition found associated with pregnancy. It may arise in several ways, and is divided into different classes according to the way in which it commences.

It may be a chronic disease of the kidneys which has existed for some time before the pregnancy started. It may be an acute nephritis coming on during pregnancy in the same manner as it occurs in a person quite independent of pregnancy. In these two cases there is no connection between the renal disease and the pregnancy, their occurrence in the same subject at the same time is quite accidental. The occurrence of acute nephritis during pregnancy is relatively rare. When it does occur it is very serious, and is very likely to cause death of the foetus, and when this has occurred, labour may follow at any time, the death of the foetus or labour coming on, does not influence the case much, and there is no extra tendency to acute nephritis developing in subsequent pregnancies.

The combination of chronic nephritis and pregnancy is much more common, and this is only what would be expected, as chronic nephritis is a fairly common disease, and when it is once established it generally persists through life. In these cases the nephritis practically always pre-exists; the pregnancy occurring in a woman who is the subject of chronic renal disease. This disease is one of the most frequent causes of women having miscarriages, or constantly being delivered of dead children, owing to the defective working of the kidneys certain poisons are retained in the blood which have the effect of destroying the life of the foetus. This may happen at any time during the pregnancy, and a curious fact to be noticed is the tendency for the child to die at about the same period of pregnancy in the case of the particular woman—that is, one woman may always abort about the second or third month, while another may always go on to the seventh or eighth month before the child dies, although in both cases the cause of the abortion or the death of the child is found in the diseased condition of the kidneys. In these cases the effect of the pregnancy is to increase

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the signs of chronic nephritis, and to render the action of the kidneys more defective until the end of the pregnancy when they return to about the same condition that they were in before pregnancy. Another form of kidney disease, and one more closely connected with pregnancy is that variety of nephritis, which has its origin as a direct result of the pregnancy. It is known by the name of kidney disease of pregnancy. In it the woman is quite healthy at the commencement of pregnancy, but about the fourth or fifth month albumen begins to appear in the urine. This goes on increasing in quantity, and gradually other signs of renal disease develop showing that the condition of the kidneys is getting worse. The increase of the nephritis goes on until the pregnancy ends either at full term or prematurely, and then the signs of disease commence to diminish, and in a week or ten days have completely disappeared, showing that the kidneys have returned to their normal state, but the nephritis reappears in subsequent pregnancies.

This variety of nephritis may, and very often does, cause death of the foetus, in which it resembles the chronic nephritis which existed before pregnancy, but there is another effect which the kidney disease of pregnancy may have, and which is specially liable to occur in this variety, and is very serious for the woman. It is the production of what is known as eclampsia. Eclampsia is a condition in which the woman develops fits followed by a state of unconsciousness; it is due to the imperfect action of the kidneys, and the retention in the blood of certain poisons; it is not known what these poisons are, or where they are formed, but it is probable that they are also responsible for the production of the nephritis. The kidneys at first are able to get rid of the poisons, but in doing so they become injured, and then the signs of kidney disease start. When this has commenced the kidneys are no longer able to excrete the poisons, and so they increase until finally they produce eclampsia. There are other fits which may occur during pregnancy, as epileptic fits, which must be distinguished from eclampsia, but this is not difficult, eclampsia occurs in connection with pregnancy generally late, the patient has previously had, and at the time of the attack has marked signs of kidney disease, such as œdema occurring in the face and hands. It is important to notice it in these parts, as that is the chief distinction between œdema due to nephritis, and that due to other causes. The quantity of urine is diminished, and contains marked albumen. There is con-

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