

PLUGGING NOSTRILS WITH COTTON AS PROTECTION AGAINST DISEASES CONTAGIOUS BY INHALATION.

Dr. Henry Albert writes in the *Nurses' Journal of the Pacific Coast* there is little doubt that the causative agents of most infectious diseases, and especially those that are highly contagious, enter the system by being inhaled, and invade the tissues primarily through the mucous membrane of the nose or other portions of the respiratory tract. Recent investigations have also proved that a person who has never had a certain disease may be a "carrier" of the germs of that disease otherwise than by the long-recognised modes of carrying the bacteria about on hands, clothing, etc. For instance, a person exposed to diphtheria may have his nasal cavity or throat infested with diphtheria bacilli even though not affected by the disease, and such person may transmit the germs to another in whom the disease may develop.

The peculiar distribution of cases of epidemic cerebro-spinal meningitis and poliomyelitis—viz., the development of cases in different portions of a locality in individuals who have been in no way associated with each other, while at the same time persons directly exposed often remain unaffected—suggests, first that only a relatively small number of persons are susceptible to infection with these diseases, and, second, that the infective agent is carried about in the nasal cavity of individuals who are themselves not susceptible to the disease but in whom the germs may remain and multiply for a long time. Such indeed has been proved by bacteriologic examinations to be the case with the meningococcus. Association with a susceptible individual may cause the transmission of the disease. Inasmuch as drying readily destroys meningococci as well as other bacteria, or at least attenuates their virulence, it is much more probable that cases developing at long intervals of time may be better explained by coming from the nasal or buccal discharges of a carrier than from the clothing of a person exposed.

It would seem, therefore, that we should make a special effort to prevent pathogenic germs from being inhaled, both to protect ourselves from such germs and to prevent our becoming a "carrier." The efficacy of cotton as a bacterial filter is well known. That it is quite as efficacious for the nasal cavity as for a test-tube may be demonstrated by simple experiments. There would seem little reason why physicians and those nursing patients who have diseases which are contagious by inhalation should not protect themselves and others by placing a piece of cotton in their nostrils while in attendance on such patients.

The History of Cæsarian Section.

Undoubtedly the operation of Cæsarian Section is a very ancient one, but there is little or no record of its performance on the living subject in the early ages, though Ovid's references to it lead to the inference that this was put into practice before his time. He sings of the wondrous birth of Æsculapius, the God of Physic, who was cut out of the womb of his mother, Coronis, who for her infidelity was destroyed by Apollo; he tells, too, how Bacchus, the God of Wine, was miraculously saved after the death of his mother, Semele, who was overwhelmed by the embrace of Jupiter. The poetic fancy, which threw a halo of romance round the birth of these gods, was probably stimulated by the knowledge Ovid had of the operation as practised in those days. The earliest writers on medicine, Hippocrates, Celsus, and others, however, make no mention of the subject. The Jewish records testify to its age, but the date of its first performance is absolutely conjectural; it is generally testified that Cæsarian Section was at first only performed after the death of the mother in order to save the life of the child.

In that part of the Talmud which was compiled in about the second century of the Christian Era there are three passages concerning the operation, which obviously infer that not only was it performed on the dead subject, but also in cases of very difficult labour, and, furthermore, that some of the women survived. One passage lays down orders as to the disposal of lambs cut out of the womb, and then proceeds to discuss the right of a child delivered by incision from his mother, if she later should have children, "per viam ordinariam."

Tradition says that the second King of Rome made a law that no female should be buried undelivered; the child was first to be removed by incision.

The earliest account of the operation extant is that of the celebrated Guy de Cauliac (1363), but both he and Paré, who also mentions it, speak of it as performed on the dead subject. The first well-credited operation was performed in 1500 by one Jacob Nugee on his own wife, but the account of this was not published till 80 years after, when Rousset's book appeared, 1581. He gave instances of successful operations in which both mother and child were saved; it was largely through his advocacy and the wide circulation of its Latin translation by Bauhine that Cæsarian Section began to be practised on the Continent. The strong Catholic belief that the destruction of the

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