On the Speculum as a means of diagnosis.

On Ulcerations of the Os and Cervix Uteri.

Among the many varied branches of study required for a general practitioner to be fully accomplished in the healing art, a careful and special attention to female disease, is, in the present day, most important and perhaps more so than many are willing or inclined to believe until they find out even by a small amount of experience.
That there are objections & in some cases to
the modern means & auxiliaries for
diagnosing disease of the uterus may be
quite true; but such maybe decidedly put
in the back ground when we consider the
benefits and satisfactory results derived
from such means by giving rise to
improvements in treatment; and when
one sees the good that can be done and
the relief afforded even in trivial cases,
we ought certainly to give our attention
and consideraton to the now enlightened
subject of Uterine Pathology.

In the present day the continental
schools afford perhaps more opportunity
for investigating this subject than
elsewhere and consequently have done
more to advance this branch of medical
science by proposing new means of diagnosi;
or rather reviving old ones - the speculum
being the chief one - while on this side
the channel the modern & perhaps quite
new invention of the uterine sound is an
invaluable adjunct in the way of Uterine
diagnosis.
Safely we have had here most invaluable and more extended opportunities of daily seeing, and being examined, disease of the uterus, and it is surprising that at first many students were shy and backward in embracing those advantages, which, if they thought such things were not worth their notice, fancying that in practice they might be so fortunate as not to meet with them, they will certainly be painfully mistaken. It is true that even experienced practitioners avoid making any examinations even of a married person labouring under uterine symptoms even of a grave nature. It may be that they happened to study where no opportunities were afforded for attendance on uterine cases, and therefore not being accustomed to the use either of the speculum or the sound or even of the finger, and not seeing them used, had naturally a dislike to these modes of practice from a delicacy or modest propriety, or because they required experience to open their eyes to the importance
and necessity of such means of diagnosis and would think the uterine speculum a
horribly dangerous and criminal instrument. Of course those who are specialists in
uterine diseases must not allow any objections to the means above spoken of
and they find that with all due decorum the female patient will not object if
really suffering from disease.

Since there has been established new
means of physical examinations of the
several organs of the body we have had the real nature, character and extent
of their disease revealed, creating an
advancement in pathology as well as in
practice.

To examine the diseased state of the Os
Uteri by the touch is evidently from records
very ancient and perhaps the ancients used a
speculum as it is supposed they made
ocular examinations as well. It is well
authenticated that the Greeks and Romans
were familiar perhaps with quite as
much on many subjects, therefore probably
on this, as we are in the present day.
It may be here stated that from laws existing then it is plain that they practiced passing instruments into the uterine cavity and abusing the use of them by criminally bringing on abortion by puncturing the membranes, and this became quite a habit among the Roman ladies, so that their figures might always be preserved but at last laws were made to prevent such practices. One may go back and turn up several ancient authors such as Hippocrates, for information. They we know were familiar with inflammations and ulcerations of the uterus, therefore we may infer they examined by the sight, that is, saw these affections. Discoveries at Pompeii bring to light many things similar to those in use now, or things for the same use, which we suppose to have been original. That is supposed to be a speculum has been found. "The speculum matrici," was said by Albinus to have been invented in the days of the Emperor Domitian; but that it must have been known to the ancients at
in earlier period. In 1818 a bronze instrument consisting of three branches, two handles and a screw in the centre, was dug up out of the ruins of Pompeii which has been preserved in the museum at Naples, described in Vulpe's work. This instrument is called the Speculum magnum matrixio, is thought by F. R. Lee to be undoubtedly to bring the Os uteri into view, and probably a most perfect bivalue speculum ever invented."

The Dioptra is said to be the instrument used by the ancients & a Latin author of the 7th century makes mention of it. But as it is made of bronze and the sides open & shut by a screw, it may have been only a dilator as that kind of metal is thought not to have taken a polish & therefore could not be a speculum in the ordinary sense of the term. Yet dilating may have been used as a means to allow of the possibility of seeing a hidden diseased part, such as Os uteri.

Attention to Uterine diseases after the Romans seems to have undergone a total eclipse for a
lengthened period & owing to a peculiar state, especially a religious condition of the world after the fall of the Roman empire, this class of disease was put out of medical literature and midwifery in general never made any advancement until a comparatively recent date and then the works of ancient authors were handed down in their primitive condition. But perhaps it was not the handing down of ancient records that gave rise to the study, or caused any advancement in the science of midwifery or in the treatment of female diseases, but that a certain few men made an especial study of this branch of medical science and therefore as a natural course of events the subjects have gradually become enlightened because this a rapidly progressing age in which there are new inventions of every description and of means to produce effects which we know were produced in ancient times but perhaps by different means and those of which we are not aware.

All history, and very recent history, too plainly & painfully testifies to the objections and stumbling blocks that are
raised when anything new, especially the way of treating disease, is proposed. Indeed he is thought by many as bold a man who goes out of the usual course and does anything that his forefathers have not done. Perhaps from habit or from not having good opportunities of seeing anything, newly proposed, put into practice. They fear attempting it themselves and are inclined to oppose on ill-founded grounds.

The speculum has had as much or more opposition than anything yet it has maintained its stand and affected an introduction for itself. How many old practitioners there are still opposed to chloroform; because perhaps they have had no opportunity of seeing it used, and from ignorance on the subject they fancy more dangers than there really are and no doubt wisely on the grounds of not having practical experience to be able to safely give it themselves. A few years ago there was quite a paper war, called the battle of the Speculum, shewing as it was with vaccination and many other things that
there are always many who oppose any
thing that is to be introduced which may
be of service, raising their objections
chiefly on what may be termed the abuse
rather than the use of any means either
for diagnosis or for the treatment of diseases
in the world generally operating there seems
a natural inclination for mankind to carry
on to abuse what we have for proper and
beneficial use. What a man chiefly
gives himself up to, either in proposing
or newly inventing anything, it very
often happens that he is prone to ride his
hobby too fast.

For any unprejudiced person to consider
well the use of the speculum, he must or
ought to come to the conclusion that it is the
safest and wisest plan not to discard it
altogether but to make up his mind,
to give up its use entirely. The only precautions
necessary to be remembered are— not to
get into the habit of too often using it;
and not to go to extremes either too
either the one way or the other, but to
use it with all due discrimination and
judgment according to the nature of the case, and with due regard to the patient's feelings and wishes. Because what seems at first moment or consideration to be objectionable, and so it is necessary to study the peculiar opinions and idiosyncrasies of patients. And besides the practitioner being guarded and judicious in the use of the speculum, he must also make it his duty to prevent any morbid desire that a patient may sometime have for examination by the speculum when there is no real cause for its use.

In speaking of the use versus the abuse of the speculum, I quote a letter in the Lancet of 1850 giving what may be considered proper remark on its use—Mr. Moon thus says, "I have for some time adopted it in my practice and have found it so valuable an aid to diagnosis and treatment that I consider its use in uterine diseases as indispensable as is the stethoscope in affection of the chest. In proof of this assertion I would cite the following case which remarkably illustrates not only its utility but its necessity—
I was consulted about four months since by a married lady who presented symptoms of uterine disease, and on stating this to be my decided opinion, I was requested by her mother at once to ascertain the fact. On examining the fingers per vaginam, the labia uteri presented that velvety feel described by Dr. Henry Bennett as indicating existence of ulceration and also considerable invagination. The diagnosis was afterwards confirmed by the speculum. I last saw of this patient until very recently, when she again requested my attendance; I found her again with all her symptoms much aggravated. She said she had been under the care of one of the obstetric physicians who are now taking so prominent a position in the present anti-speculum crusade, who had been occasionally attending during the last seventeen years. This gentleman had always declared that she was labouring under structure of the uterus for which he had been drugging her for during that long period. In his opinion he was strengthened by another eminent obstetric physician of the same school, who
occasionally saw the patient - on becoming worse she again sought my advice, but I declined any interference unless I was permitted to make a thorough investigation of her case. To this she willingly consented. I first passed my finger easily into the rectum, through which it was declared a cow-pilus could not pass. I felt a hard projecting tumour completely filling the hollow of the sacrum. This I discovered on examination per vaginae to be the retroverted fundus uteri much enlarged and excessively tender to the touch. The labia uteri presented unmistakable granular ulcerations with induration extending up the walls of the cervix. Now I would ask, am I to believe the evidence of my senses, or am I to take the opinion of men who would not for the world use that dangerous instrument called Simpson's uterine Forceps, and who are of too pure a school of medical ethics to make a vaginal examination? I would ask the profession in sober earnestness, are we to accept the dicta of such
"men as to the use of instruments which many of us have proved to be of incalculable value, and which have been introduced to us by men certainly of as high professional standing as any who oppose their employment. What value are the opinions of those who either declare that they have never derived any information whatever from the use of the speculum, or who altogether ignore the use of instruments in uterine diagnosis? I would ask if Dr. M. Halle should his opinions became known to the wives and daughters of England, they would repudiate his championship of their morals and would throw back upon him with indignant scorn the sentiments he has dared to attribute to them."

In consideration of this last sentence I will turn to what Dr. M. Halle says in his lecture. He states in a paper entitled "A new and lamentable form of hysteria" written after a discussion on the use of the speculum vagina at the medical club, society, that it is a question not of mere medical or surgical
treatment, but of medical and public ethics; and he says, "I confess myself astonished at the light manner in which a vaginal examination was spoken of by one of the gentlemen present at the Society. He naively the idea of indecency in making a vaginal examination. There need be no exposure of the person of the patient; surgeons make no scruples about an examination of the rectum (as if the two examinations could, morally speaking, be compared). But if there be no exposure of the person and if the examinations of the rectum be frequently made either at first, no wounding of the feeling and is there afterward no deterioration and blunting of those feelings, by the repeated daily or weekly use of the speculum, vagina of the virgin as in the very young even amongst the married? I loudly proclaim that there is such deterioration and that the female who has been subjected to such treatment is not the same person in delicacy and purity that she was before." He says, "I have known the most revolting attachment on the part of such patients to..."
"the practice, and to the practitioner!"

I have known them speak of the womb and the uterine organs, with a familiarity which was formerly unknown, and which I trust will ere long be obsolete. The current of the ideas becomes hypochondrially directed to these organs. The very mind is poisoned. A new and lamentable form of hysteria, that almost cried of furor uterinum is induced, with this aggravation, that the subject of distress is either concealed by the greatest effort or explained at the expense of virgin or female modesty.

There is a case of poisoned mind in the male sex induced by the quack doings of the day, relative to the existence of impotency which all of us must have treated and deplored. A similar case of mental poisoning is now being induced in the other sex by the frequent, constant and undue references on the part of the profession to the condition of the uterine organs. The advocates of the speculum speak of cases which had resisted the efficacy of the usual general and local
treatment and which yielded to the use of
the speculum and the caustic. I have
seen cases in which the above having been
employed and unduly employed as I believe,
the patient remained more miserably
afflicted in mind and body than ever at
this the effect of that treatment, whether
the former supposition be as well founded
as the latter, I will not presume to
determine; but I believe the case in
which the injection of a solution of
bichromate of silver by her own hand may
not take the place of the application
of this valuable remedy in substance
by the hand of the practitioner to be
rare indeed." Dr. Hall says further,
"I will not advert even to the epithets
which have been applied to the frequent
use of the speculum by our French
neighbours, who are so skilled in these
matters: but I will ask, what father
amongst us, after the details which I
have given, would allow his virgin
daughter to be subjected to this pollution?
Let us then maintain the spotless dignity of
"our profession with its well deserved character for purity of morals and throw aside this injurious practice with indignant scorn, remembering that it is not mere exposure of the person, but the dulling of the edge of the virgin modesty and the degradation of the pure minds of the daughters of England which are to be avoided."

This is very strong against the use of the speculum but it is more regarding the abuse of it as it does not put down the proper & legitimate use of it.

Dr. Ashwell stated that as now used he had no hesitation in stating his conviction that the speculum was subversive of female delicacy and safety. He asserted that in nine cases out of ten in which it was now employed its use was unjustifiable. He had had a moderate share of practice in the treatment of diseases of women and he could not help thinking that the use of the speculum as practised by some medical men amounted almost to a professional dishonour. This feeling had been slowly
forced upon him, but it was a powerful one
so powerful indeed that if the speculum
be continued to be employed as it now is he
knew not whether to withdraw from the treat-
ment of the diseases of women altogether.
He thought D. Lee deserved well of the
profession out of society, but more par-
ticularly of the female portion of it, for
his efforts to retard the progress of
this most dangerous instrument.
On Murphy's thought, on the other hand,
that a distinction had not been drawn
between the use and the abuse of the
speculum. Its abuse is no argument
against its use. We know of no
sufficient substitute for it in the treat-
ment of those cases of uterine disease
in which its employment was indicated.
With respect to the influence of the use
of this instrument on the female
character, he said, let it be remembered
that the name of Englishwomen in every
age was chastity and it could not be
believed that they would connive at
indecency of conduct in those who went
"about unnecessarily employing this valuable instrument merely to raise their own character. No! it was clear from the way in which they submitted to its use they found benefits from it which they had not experienced from any other plan of treatment." Again, it has been said that there are many lesions which cannot be detected without the speculum, and that there is no more harm in the use of a speculum than of a spoon to ascertain the condition of the throat, but it does not follow that every woman need have the speculum employed. Certainly thousands of women have been made happy and comfortable from the treatment indicated by the speculum and the same still continues.

Dr. Lockheed says thus on the matter. "In our eagerness to denounce the unprofessional use of the speculum we must not lose sight of its very great advantages. We would be very sore not to continue the use of this instrument for he knows of no substitute for it. As to the talk of the indelicacy of its employment..."
"That is all nonsense. When properly applied, there is no exposure. Dr. Bennett was in the habit of placing the patient on the back, but he placed her on the side. Having done this and having drawn the clothes round the speculum, there is no more exposure to the surrounding parts than there would be of the face in a mask when the throat is examined. He certainly objects to the use of this instrument in unmarried females if there are not sufficient grounds for its employment, but when ordinary means had failed and ulceration suspected, the only means to detect this must be the speculum and then he employs it. As to the breaking down of the hymen, this is necessary sometimes to be done when examination is made by the finger. He considers there is no immorality or danger to female purity by the use of the speculum. The purity is mental and not to be destroyed by a proceeding, as this would be, in some cases of disease. And now there is chloroform to fall back upon if there is any need. "Surgeons are less particular..."
"than accoucheurs in the exposure of the patient in their operations and yet they meet with no opposition. The absence of pain does away with one great indication of diagnosis from touch and is an argument in favour of the judicious use of the speculum. We are not justified in withholding from our patient the benefit of the speculum any more than we should be in withholding a means of diagnosis when applied to other parts of the body. The judicious and cautious use of the speculum is here meant."

Since we find in the present day that neither practitioners nor patient can do without the proper and judicious use of the speculum, we have only by a little practical experience to know when it is justifiable or not, to make use of it. We may by its use either make a more perfect diagnosis or satisfy the patient's mind as to whether there is anything of consequence wrong or not. It no doubt will be the best rule for young practitioners never to have recourse to this instrument.
unless the urgent necessity of the case renders such an examination unavoidable. At that rate, perhaps the speculum would be very seldom required, but often there may occur cases which will require this instrumental interference to get to the root and throw light upon the obscure cause of certain unaccountable and unpleasant symptoms, which the female part of the community are liable to, which had baffled all other treatment, requiring really some local management.

After all that has been said against the use of the speculum, it may be inferred that many are very much prejudiced and some from some peculiar influence, that they have met with, depreciate even its legitimate use; therefore, out of what has been here quoted I will certainly agree with those who uphold the use and value without abuse, and conclude with the words of Dr. Murphy that "the blundering of unskilful practitioners is no argument against the legitimate use of the speculum in the hands of the well-informed."
In uterine pathology, the chief and most frequent cases that come under the notice and inspection of the practitioner are perhaps inflammatory irritation, ulceration with or without congestion and a red granular condition of the or uteri after abrasion of the mucous membrane. Regarding the term ulceration there seems to be a great difference of opinion, some even denying that there is such a thing, and others that it is mere abrasion. But there is a great deal of unnecessary cavilling about words; for one is only an excessive degree of the other. Most abrasions may go on to what may be termed ulceration, if the exciting cause or causes are continued. An inflammatory condition is no doubt caused in the first instance from several causes; sometimes, it may depend upon constitutional and sometimes on local derangement, also on different affections of the sexual system, and on mechanical influence, and morbid lachrymal secretion, parturition, maybe also a cause.

That inflammation should be liable to occur at all periods of life is not peculiar when
Laid to be by Theller, Brown & Magrier.

J. Buckett's investigation.
we know something of the structure of the os and cervix uteri, muscular fibres are found to be less abundant in the cervix, this is lined by many glands either simple or compound, follicles situated beneath the mucous membrane through which the secretion of the glands is excited. It is a thick glutinous fluid increased by inflammation, as there is an erectile tissue in the vagina, so there is also in the cervix. The microscopic investigation of Mr. Buckett shew the disposition of the minute vessels in the os uteri. "They are looped and distended at certain points, more particularly at the branching off of blood vessels one from another, which is characteristic of erectile tissue as it is in the lips and nipple" and in the erectile tumours or neums. This condition is only found during the menstrual period of a woman's life time.

The frequency of the existence of tuberculosis is much doubted by many authorities. Those who find it in such a majority of uterine cases recorded, it must have been in many cases of slight degree, tho' I quite believe
that inflammatory induration and ulceration, and
if looked for, the chief of the uterine affil=
ments, along with either retroversion or
prolapse, which bring women to seek
relief from unpleasant symptoms referable
to these uterine affections.

The recorded frequency of ulceration must
then depend upon the fact that that term
has been used indiscriminately for all degrees
and kinds of sore or raw surface of the
of uteri deprived of its mucous membrane
or the latter denied of its epithelium.

To speak in a strictly pathological sense
these latter cannot be called ulcerations because
there require to be a solution of continuity
with a secreting surface, having defined,
regular or irregular, inverted or everted edges
as are found in mucous membranes of all
other parts of the body.

The term ulceration has also been objected
to, because it gives rise to a certain kind
of objectionable heroic treatment which
however, to differ a little from this authority,
is no good founded objection, because there
are several degrees of treatment a mild set
and a stronger set according to the mildness or the obstinacy of the case.

One is very much inclined to believe that these ulcers of the lips are entirely mis-called, and that they have been called such by some because there is no better name for these raw surfaces; including all degrees of it under one head. The ulcerations which many people call such, but are not strictly so, are for the most part mere superficial abrasions of the epithelium and the lip of mucous membrane of the lips of the Osater, either partially or entirely, either one lip or both, chiefly the anterior; the abraded surface is of a vivid red colour and finely granular. Sometimes the epithelium is demised with loss of the membrane or not at all, then the surface is covered with red papule, or with a number of minute, superficial aphthous ulcerations between which the tissue is either healthy or a little redder than natural.

In describing an ulcer Dr. Bennet says, "The margin of an inflammatory ulcer is scarcely ever, if ever, either everted or inverted. So much so that it is very difficult to detect with the finger
the margin of the ulcer. It is always on a level with or above the non-ulcerated tissue that lines it, its margin never presents an abrupt inclination.

The ulcer, hardly ever appears excavated with raised edges, their surface is either smooth or a little raised, they begin at the inner margin of the os uteri and extend outwards. The cervix inside is also denuded of epithelium and slightly granular. The os uteri is generally more open than natural and is said to be a sign of ulceration, if the finger is admitted. Otherwise, the characteristic velvety feel. Sometimes there is softness; sometimes, hardness of the cervix.

The chief part of the leukorrhoeal discharge is from the inside of the cervix and uterus, less from the coccyx abrasion. Sometimes considerable from the latter. The surface of the ulcer may be sensitive.

It is not proper, for the sake of the patient (at least in her hearing) to call abrasions, excoriation, or slight ulcer - ulceration. For she is easily alarmed at the word ulcer; others may arise in panic (which has been spoken of), but when the affection is only slight, keep strictly to the terms abrasion or excoriation, which perhaps are the most
frequent.

On taking all the uterine cases that have been treated here in this Infirmary, for the last five years in one ward and giving the term ulceration to all the degrees, varieties and stages, out of 44 uterine cases including organic and functional disease of the uterus, there have been 22 ulcerations treated. But really there are not all ulcerations but modifications, therefore doing so would increase the number; for at least one-third are only either abrasions, excoriations, or inflammatory eruptions, therefore making these latter more frequent than the real ulcerations and at the same time more frequent than other affection of the uterus. Most of these had inflammatory irritation, hypertrophy with more or less leukorrhoea. The cause seemed to be various, the principal part I think were in women who had a family, some of whom also had a midcarriage or two, some perhaps were syphilitic, two or three from prolapse, and in some, it was difficult to say what the cause was, but they suffered functionally from Menorrhagia.
In the most obstinate looking and worst case, with a great deal of induration and inflammation, giving rise to every unpleasant symptom, pain, debility, unhappiness, discharge, &c. The uterus was destroyed with Potassa jelly; in the milder case, the chloride of zinc and an superficial abrasions and granulation. Nitrate of silver was applied. Injections of tepid water, gradually brought to cold, were used once or twice a day for 2 to 3 weeks, and when much leucorheal discharge was present, alum & oak bark were infusant injections were used. The aluminated iron injection was found useful. The application of the Potassa gave no pain, except when the or was much inflamed & tender. The ureter did not seem to suffer much loss of substance, but after it healed there was always a good or remaining with a cicatrix in it, which gave me the idea that it had the power of reproduction. There has never come under notice here a case that has suffered any bad effects from this treatment, such as contraction of the or, which will give rise to dysmenorrhea
There are cases sometimes which come to this, requiring the Os Uteri to be mechanically dilated; and I was told of a case, fallen in with by an Edinburgh practitioner quite lately, in which there was constriction of the Os, causing dysmenorrhea, after the cure of some months' state or other of the Os with the strong caustic. But it is not fair to argue from this that these means are never to be used even if they do happen now other to cause some secondary affection.

Dr. West, after speaking of the indiscriminate adoption of the local treatment of ulceration being injurious to the patient, gives his objections to the use of the stronger caustics, which he says "are confessedly devoid neither of suffering nor of danger," because if the caustic is introduced within the cervix, as is usual, the pain produced is very intense lasts for two or three days causing nausea, weakness, sometimes, even syncope or extreme depression, so as to prostrate a patient completely for several days. Also because the subsequent treatment of applying the nitrate, even sometimes repeating it, causes it objectionable, confining the patient requiring
the speculum. He even says then that it is devoid of safety, by producing the contraction or obliteration of the cervix, before spoken of, the objects to the three recommendations, viz. painlessness, speed and safety. But there are exceptional cases, which he says, this treatment is justifiable, so local treatment in general.

All I have to say is that so long as high authorities, and higher than Dr. Mead, recommend it, and so long as I know of any good done with this cautery with no deleterious results, I shall wish to employ it when necessary. It may be that even beginning as a general practitioner such an opportunity may occur. I have seen this application several times, have not noticed in these cases in the deformity, any pain or unpleasant after symptoms. Quite the contrary. To mention one case only, in which the uterus was taken down by Potassa fade; the patient was under treatment 5 and 6 days, and came back to show herself a few days since. There seemed to be a very little appreciable difference between the Os Uteri, of one, healthy, that had not any application ever. She has menstruated regularly and quite normally, without pain since.
The late letter, in the Lancet of May 32, of Dr. Shute's shows that in his experience he does not believe in (as he calls it) Dr. Tyler Smith's "amputation" myth. He says he had never in his cases met with this condition which is said to be one of the bad results, and publishes his case for "the benefit of those who may be deterred from using cauteries in proper cases by Dr. S. Smith's dictum, that their application means "amputation."

Dr. Henry Bennett's latest opinion is concerning this that "he has never met with a case of either amputation or of destruction of the cervix uteri"

Therefore, to conclude, it will not be right for us to throw aside our cauteries, and whatever apology is necessary, I readily make, for the incomplete and badly arranged subject which has been more practically spoken of than anything else; being more practically engaged than otherwise and not able to aspire to anything original. I beg to offer this as their

Wm. Wake Clark.

May 4th, 1856. Edinburgh