

INDIAN HEMP: ITS POWER OF INCREASING UTERINE
CONTRACTION DURING LABOUR.

DR. ALEXANDER CHRISTISON, in a series of papers upon the *Natural History, Action, and Uses of Indian Hemp*, has made a most important addition to our knowledge of therapeutic agents. He establishes its remarkable power of increasing the force of uterine contraction during labour. After subject seven cases, he makes the following remarks:—

“There can be no doubt that the *intensity* of the pains was greatly augmented by the hemp, except in the last case, where, after the effects of the first dose passed off, no action followed the repetition of it. This case was an exception to all the others.

“It is worthy of remark, that in none of these cases were the ordinary physiological effects produced; there was no excitement or intoxicating action, and there did not seem to be the least tendency to sleep in any of them.

“In conclusion, I may state what appears to be the most obvious difference between the action of ergot of rye, and that of Indian hemp. First,—While the effect of ergot does not come on for some considerable time, that of hemp, if it is to appear, is observed within two or three minutes. Secondly,—The action of ergot is of a lasting character, that of hemp is confined to a few pains shortly after its administration. Thirdly,—The action of hemp is more energetic, and perhaps more certainly induced, than that of ergot.

“There appears little doubt, then, that Indian hemp may often prove of essential service in promoting uterine contraction in tedious labours.

“More extended experience will show how far these effects may be depended on, and to what cases hemp is most applicable.

“MODE OF ADMINISTRATION. Indian hemp may be administered in several ways. The extract, in the form of pill, produces the most gradual effect, and the disagreeable taste of the solution is avoided; but its action in this form is very uncertain. The following emulsion has been recommended:—A scruple of the extract rubbed in a warm mortar with a drachm of olive oil, to which are added half an ounce of mucilage, and seven ounces and a half

of distilled water (Bromfield). But the simplest method is to use the tincture, which should be dropped into a little water, and immediately swallowed. The water may be sweetened with sugar, or an aromatic, such as compound tincture of cardamoms, may be added. The usual strength of the tincture is three grains of the extract to a drachm of rectified spirit.

“The extract may be given in doses of one to six grains; the tincture in doses of ten to thirty drops, for ordinary purposes. Less than thirty drops is of little service in promoting uterine contractions; and greatly larger doses, as much as one or two drachms repeatedly, must be used in the treatment of tetanus, in which disease there is very great tolerance of the remedy.