

ARTICLE XV.

FATAL BURNS DURING ADVANCED PREGNANCY. THE BURNS OF THE MOTHER APPARENTLY IMPRESSING THEMSELVES ON THE CHILD IN UTERO. By WILLIAM HUNT, M.D., Surgeon to the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia.

I GIVE the facts of this case, and the illustrative drawings, without comment.

Anne L., aged 30, was admitted into the Pennsylvania Hospital Wednesday, May 8, 1880, for very extensive burns caused by her clothes catching fire from a kitchen grate. She was eight and a half months pregnant. She was finely developed, and had no evidence whatever about her of having had specific disease. Her husband was healthy, and so was a child of theirs, of about six years old, who came to the hospital while her

mother was there. I saw the patient a short time after admission. As the case was evidently to be a fatal one, I immediately auscultated for foetal heart sounds, with the intention, if the child was alive, of leaving directions, if I should not be present myself at the time, for abdominal section to be performed at once upon the death of the mother, in the hope of saving the child.

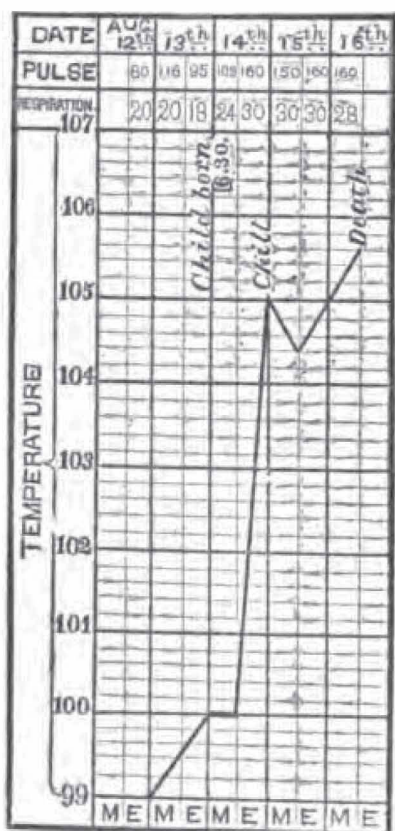
The foetal heart sounds were very distinct, and I asked my assistant, Dr. Wetherill, to time me with his watch, while I counted. The effort was a failure; it was impossible to count, so rapid was the action. At the same time the mother's pulse was 116. She had warmed up somewhat, as will be seen by the chart (Fig. 1), for on admission her pulse was 88, and she was in a condition of shock. The burns were treated in the ordinary method, and the patient was made as comfortable as possible. At the same time the child's condition was carefully ascertained by repeated auscultations. The excessively rapid action of the heart continued, and it was clearly heard at any time up to 12 o'clock P. M. on Thursday. At 2 o'clock

it was found that the heart had ceased to beat, so that within these last two hours death must have taken place.

At 5.20 P. M. on the same day, labour came on actively, terminating at 6.30 P. M. in the birth of a well-formed, but dead female child. The mother lived until Saturday afternoon, May 15, when she died.

The annexed pulse and temperature chart, taken at the time, will give the best idea of the progress of her case.

Fig. 1.



So much for the history. Now the important fact to record is, that *the child was apparently blistered and burnt in extent and in places almost exactly corresponding to the injuries of the mother!* The drawings (Figs. 2, 3, and 4), will have to answer for those who did not see the subjects of them. They are made from sketches taken at the time by Drs. Packard and Wetherill, entirely independent of each other.

Fig. 2.

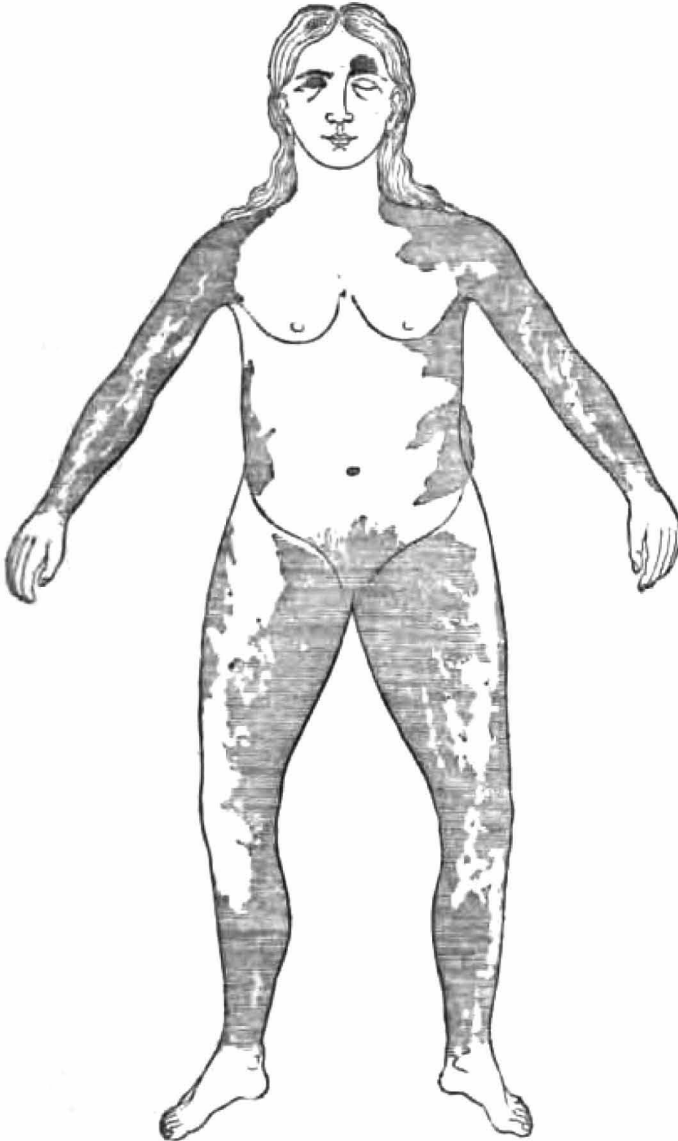


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



The blisters on the child were standing out fresh and full, as though recently formed, and in places the derm was deeply involved, as on the mother. The back of the mother was not sketched, for want of time, as her friends were in a great hurry to remove the body. It is sufficient to say that it was the seat of one continuous burn, as is shown upon the child. Of course, all ordinary explanations were suggested—pemphigus,

syphilis, maceration, etc. etc., but upon examination I think all, or nearly all, agreed that none of them fitted the case.

Besides the officers of the hospital there were many witnesses, amongst them I mention Prof. Penrose, Drs. E. A. Spooner, Albert Fricke, R. P. Harris, W. S. Forbes, W. B. Atkinson, J. C. Wilson, and the well-known dermatologists, Drs. Duhring and Van Harlingen.