DILATATION INSTEAD OF SUPPORT OF THE PERINEUM.

DR. H. ERNEST TRESTRAIL, M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S. (Physician to the Glasgow Hospital for Diseases of Women) writes: Large and sound practical experience is a far safer basis for the formation of rules of practice than any amount of theory and argument. Many a useful remedy, mode of treatment, and even surgical procedure, has been written down and passed into disuse, simply because men "full of learning," but of slight personal practical knowledge and experience, could not satisfactorily explain its action in accordance with the theories they had adopted.

From the letters of Drs. Fairland, Swan, Eades, Hebert, and Duke, published in the JOURNAL, and of several others which I have received, there can be no doubt that when the parts have been dilated as suggested by me, a ruptured perineum is a very rare occurrence indeed. My own experience, from a personal attendance upon over 3,000 cases of confinement, has fully satisfied me that dilatation, and not support, is the safeguard of the perineum, and the fact that I hardly ever have a case of rupture is my answer to those who, like Dr. Benington, would warn me against "an attempt to forestall Nature," or who would kindly suggest that "those cases which appear to have benefited by this treatment are those which would have done perfectly well if left alone."' Statistics, however, also prove very much to the contrary.

If this treatment was advocated by the ancients, who possibly were more expert than we now are in the use of manual aid during labour, as they had not the forceps to fall back upon, it is a great pity that their practice has been discredited by modern writers who have so persistently advised the support of the perineum, instead of the gradual dilatation of the soft parts, where interference is really necessary.

All I claim is that I was the first within recent times to advocate dilatation instead of support, and to bring the subject prominently before the profession. Dr. Duke, however, now again attempts to claim a priority, simply because some years later he wrote saying that he confines the use of my plan of dilating to the duration of a pain. As reasonably might someone now claim to have discovered the use of chloroform simply because he administers it according to his own fancy.

The muscles of the perineum are often powerful, resistant, and rigid, and have to be tired out before dilatation can be effected, so that if the pains are short, or we are only called in at a late stage of the labour, as occurred in the case which I reported when I first brought this subject before the Obstetrical Society of London in 1875, dilatation to be of any use must be continued beyond the pains. But under ordinary circumstances it is sufficient if used even occasionally during a pain. It is not enough, however, just to pull back the perineum and to relax it again immediately, and this is what I intended to convey by the expression "continuous extension." Such details of the application of the principle of dilatation will occur to every practitioner.

No management of the head, however excellent in itself, can alter the simple fact that under the most favourable circumstances the external parts have to open up to a certain size. They are generally capable of being gradually dilated to this extent without injury, but very frequently the time the pains allow for the head to effect this is not sufficient, and the weakest point gives way. Support of the perineum has in practice proved to be a failure, but dilatation in the hands of those who have exclusively used it has undoubtedly been a great success.

The number of ruptured perineums one sees in gynæcological practice is really pitiable, and this has induced me again to call attention to the subject.

COMMUNICATIONS, LETTERS, etc., have been received from:

Mr. C. W. S. Barrett, Hinckley; Surgeon I.M.S.; Mr. H. Thomson, Glasgow; Mr. Radley, London; Mr. J. R. Williams, Victoria, B.C.; Mr. H. A. Kidd, London; Dr. Cranstoun Charles, London; Surgeon C. E. Faunce, Dalhousie, India; Dr. A. C. Bernays, St. Louis; Dr. H. Campbell, London; Dr. Coleman, Kingston-on-Thames; Dr. Steele, London; Dr. M. Lamb, London; M.B., C.M.; Dr. M. Skerritt, Bristol; Mr. Wagstaffe, Sevenoaks; Justitia; Mr. D'Arcy Power, London; Mr. A. E. Barrett, London; Dr. R. Bell, Glasgow; Dr. R. T. Lyons, Rugby; Dr. A. G. Blomfield, Exeter; Dr. T. C. Railton, Manchester; Mr. Lawson Tait, Birmingham; Dr. Hale White, London; Dr. W. J. Thomas, Cardiff; Dr. T. C. Donaldson, Hounslow; Mr. M. A. Veeder, Lyons, U.S.A.; Dr. A. W. H. Walker, Harrogate; Mr. G. Fisher, Harrogate; Mr. R. T. Howlett, London; Mr. H. G. Wharry, London; A. B.; A Thirty Years' Subscriber; Staff-Surgeon W. W. Rae, Inverness; Dr. J. Ormsby, Dover; The Liquor Carnis Co., London; Dr. J. W. Springthorpe, Melbourne; The Secretary of the Evelina Hospital for Sick Children, London; Mr. S. G. Harrison, Sheffield; Mr. C. B. Lockwood, London; Mr. W. Thorn, London; Dr. W. Sykes, Mexborough; Dr. A. Fraser, Dublin; Mr. H. Dummere, Brasted; The Secretary of the Sanitary Institute, London; Doubtful; Retired; Mr. J. D. Mortimer, London; F.R.C.S.; Messrs. Petty and Co., London; Mr. H. E. Knight, London; The Chairman of the Childrens' Country Holidays Fund, London; Mr. L. Strong, Cosham; The Secretary of the London Hospital, London; Mr. G. J. Lough, Hastings; Mr. W. H. Patten, York; Dr. Ralph Stockman, Edinburgh; Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome and Co., London; Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Ord, London; Dr. A. H. Hassall, London; Messrs. W. J. Bush and Co., London; Dr. J. C. Thresh, Chelmsford; Mr. J. Odling, London; Mr. W. M. Rae, Inverness; Disgusted; The Registrar of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin; Mr. G. Meadows, Hastings; Mr. R. H. Morris, Swansea; Mr. E. Merck, Darmstadt; Dr. E. Haughton, Upper Norwood; Delta; Dr. Rentoul, Liverpool; Mr. A. E. Muncaster, Ampthill; Dr. J. W. Moore, Dublin; Dr. W. E. Hadden, Portadown; A Member; Dr. Ward Cousins, Southsea; M.D.Oxon.; Mr. T. A. Hind, London; Dr. T. F. Pearce, Southsea; Messrs. S. G. Clements and Co., Bristol; Mr. Jebb, London; Mr. J. G. Dunlop, Wisbech; Dr. Major Greenwood, London; Mr. J. Hutchinson, London; Mr. W. R. H. Stewart, London; Dr. J. Jones, New Orleans; Dr. Fenn, Dover; Surgeon T. H. Parke, London; Mr. G. Munkett, Norwich; Dr. Danford Thomas, London; Dr. Willoughby, London; Mr. N. Walker, Carlisle; Mr. W. Thwaites, Bristol; Mr. H. Young, London; Mr. L. M. Hungerford, London; The Treasurer of the South London Ophthalmic Hospital; Mr. C. H. Byers, London; Dr. Constable, Leuchars; Dr. B. Kuhn, London; Sir Dyce Duckworth, London; Messrs. Hulse Brothers, London; Mr. A. Hulme, Birmingham; Mr. H. V. Palmer, Wrexham; Mr. W. E. Bremner, Walmer; Dr. R. Esler, London; Mr. F. B. Jessett, London; Dr. Louis Parkes, London; Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver, London; Mr. H. Brailsford, Buxton; Mr. R. D. Pennefather, Liverpool; Dr. J. Davies, Maesteg; Dr. Grimshaw, Carrickmines; Messrs. Charles Griffin and Co., London; J. K. Tomory, M.B., Paisley; Mr. J. M. Horsburgh, London; Mr. J. P. Aston, Bradford; Mr. R. Freeman, London; Our Paris Correspondent; Dr. J. Brown, Bacup; Dr. H. C. Pope, London; Dr. E. White, Stone; Dr. C. R. Illingworth, Accrington; J. C. Dunlop, M.B., Edinburgh; Mr. J. Lloyd, Birmingham; Mr. J. R. S. Robertson, Dublin; Mr. L. Knaggs, Leeds; The Dee Oil Co., London; Mr. C. A. Patten, Ealing; Dr. H. Cooper Rose, London; Dr. T. M. Dolan, Halifax; Dr. Mickle, London; Mr. G. P. Field, London; Dr. O. Wood, London; The Secretary of the Zoological Society of London; Mr. B. Miller, Chislehurst; Mr. C. J. Evans, Northampton; Mr. J. Bullivant, Derby; Mr. C. J. B. Johnson, Wetherby; Mr. R. Owen, Brecon; W. MacLennan, M.B., Glasgow; T. M. Bonar, M.B., Probus; Mr. A. C. Davis, London; Mr. T. Turley, Whitby; Mr. St. Vincent Mercier, London; Mr. N. H. Nixon, London; Dr. W. H. Fenton, London; Mr. Custance, London; Mr. E. Bellamy, London; Dr. E. Seaton, London; Mr. A. P. Fiddian, Cardiff; Mr. F. J. Allan, London; Mr. J. R. Whitley, London; Mr. T. A. Collinson, Hanwell; Mr. J. A. Arrowsmith, Bristol; Dr. M. Sympson, Lincoln; Mr. G. H. Hopkins, Swansea; Our Liverpool Correspondent; Mr. J. L. A. Aymard, Ipswich; Mr. Trimmer, London; Messrs. Mintern Brothers, London; Query; The Secretary of the National Athletic Grounds, London; Mr. J. S. Nairne, Glasgow; Our Manchester Correspondent; The Director-General of the Army Medical Department, London; Dr. J. F. Gordon, Maghull; Dr. J. Cagney, London; M.S.; Mr. H. P. Dean, London; Dr. Hugh Woods, London; Mr. E. P. Furber, Oxted; Mr. Adams Frost, London; Mr. P. S. Hutchinson, London; Mr. A. W. Mayo Robson, Leeds; etc.

BOOKS, ETC., RECEIVED.

Practical Chemistry for Medical Students. By Samuel Rideal, D.Sc. London: H. K. Lewis. 1890.

A Laboratory Course of Pharmacy and Materia Medica. By William Elborne. London: Charles Griffin and Co. 1890.

Massage and the Original Swedish Movements. By Kurre W. Ostrom. London: H. K. Lewis. 1890.

The Elements of Sanitary Science. By Surgeon-Major C. J. McNally, M.D. London: H. K. Lewis. 1889.

A New Medical Dictionary. By George M. Gould, B.A., M.D. London: H. K. Lewis. 1890.

On Aphasia. By Frederick Bateman, M.D. Second edition. London: J. and A. Churchill. 1890.

Sketch of the History and Progress of District Nursing. By William Rathbone, M.P. London: Macmillan and Co. 1890.

Die Chirurgische Behandlung des Kropfes. Von Dr. Anton Wölfler. II. Theil. Berlin: August Hirschwald. 1890.

Medical and Surgical Memoirs. By Joseph Jones. M.D. Vol. III. Parts 1 and 2.

Lehrbuch der Zahnheilkunde. Von Dr. Med. Ludwig Brandt. Berlin: Augus Hirschwald. 1890.