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ANÆSTHETIC MIDWIFERY:

REPORT

1857

EARLY HISTORY AND PROGRESS.

BY

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— " I do think you might spare her,
And neither heaven nor man grieves at the mercy."
Memento for Mothers.

EDINBURGH:
SUTHERLAND AND KNOX, GEORGE STREET.

MDCCLXVII.

(556)

the unmingled gas in rapid successive doses, or by preserving a permanent atmosphere, containing different proportions of nitrous oxide and common air, by means of a breathing chamber.* That single doses nevertheless, are capable of producing permanent effects in some constitutions, is evident, as well from the hysterical cases as from some of the details—particularly that of Mr. M. M. Coates.

As nitrous oxide in its extensive operation appears capable of destroying physical pain, it may probably be used with advantage during surgical operations in which no great effusion of blood takes place.

From the strong inclination of those who have been pleasantly affected by the gas to respire it again, it is evident, that the pleasure produced, is not lost, but that it mingles with the mass of feelings, and becomes intellectual pleasure, as hope. The desire of some individuals acquainted with the pleasures of nitrous oxide for the gas has been often so strong as to induce them to

* See R. IV. Div. I. page 478.

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breathe with eagerness, the air remaining in the bags after the respiration of others.

As hydrocarbonate acts as a sedative,† and diminishes living action as rapidly as nitrous oxide increases it, on the common theory of excitability‡ it would follow, that by differently modifying the atmosphere by means of this gas and nitrous oxide, we should be in possession of a regular series of exciting and depressing* powers applicable to every deviation of the constitution from health: but the common theory

† R. IV. Div. I. page 407.

‡ That of Brown modified by his disciples.

* Supposing the increase or diminution of living action when produced by different agents, uniform, similar and differing only in degree; it would follow, that certain mixtures of hydrocarbonate and nitrous oxide, or hydrogen and nitrous oxide, ought to be capable of supporting the life of animals for a much longer time than pure nitrous oxide. From the experiments in Ref. III. Div. I. it appears however, that this is not the case.

It would seem, that in life, a variety of different co-ordinate changes are capable of producing phenomena apparently similar; so that in the absence of living action, we are incapable of reasoning concerning causes from effects.