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INDIANA JOURNAL OF MEDICINE.

Vol. III.

MAY, 1872.

No. 1.

Original Communications.

BIBLICAL MEDICINE.

BY G. W. H. KEMPER, M. D., MUNCIE, IND.

UNDER the above title I propose to submit a digest of the medical, surgical, and obstetrical cases and diseases enumerated in the Bible. I have aimed to have my article accurate and complete, and yet concise as possible. My work is gleaned from a careful reading of the Bible, and occasionally I have availed myself, also, of such collateral aid as might give additional light.

The pathography of biblical diseases is quite meagre. Occasionally the disease is named, but more commonly we meet with simply the vague expression, "fell sick," or "very sick." Such cases will be collected under the heading of "Unknown Diseases." I prefer to accept the name of each disease as given by the sacred authors.

The several cases mentioned are, doubtless, but a small proportion of either numbers or varieties of diseases extant in Egypt and Palestine. Among the curses mentioned for disobedience in Deut. xxviii, are "great plagues" and "sore sicknesses." "Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou

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(Concluded.)

MASTURBATION.—One case is recorded, Gen. xxxviii, 9. Onan spilled his seed upon the ground, "lest that he should give seed to his brother." Our term *onanism* is supposed to have derived its name from this man. The thing displeased the Lord, and he slew him.

UNKNOWN DISEASES.

ABIMELECH.—This King of Gerar sent and brought Sarah to his harem, and as a punishment his house had become sterile. On restoring her to Abraham, "God healed Abimelech." Gen. xx, 17.

NABAL.—"But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabul, and his wife had told him of these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, the Lord smote Nabul, that he died." 1st Sam. xxv, 37, 38. It may have been a case of catalepsy.

DAVID'S CHILD.—"And the Lord struck the child that

Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
And gladly praise the merit of a foe;
Blessed with a taste exact, yet unconfined,
A knowledge both of books and human kind;
Generous, converse, a soul exempt from pride,
And born to praise, with reason on his side."

In conclusion, permit me to state that the writer would not have been recalcitrant had he been fairly criticised; but when he considers the motives, together with the incompetence of the reviewer, he feels that to let him off without showing him in his true colors, would be encouraging a sciolist.

BIBLICAL MEDICINE.

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(Continued from June Number.)

MIDWIFE.—The duty of conducting labors, was originally assigned to females, although the first case of labor was undoubtedly attended by a male. The term midwife is first used in Genesis, xxxv, 17, in connection with the last labor of Rachel. Whether she was a professional midwife or not, I have no means of ascertaining. She seems to have had some idea of the process of labor, and understood the art of cheering the drooping spirits of suffering Rachel, for she tells her, "Fear not; thou shalt have this son also." Midwife occurs again in Gen. xxxviii, 28, in connection with the labor of Tamar. In Ex. i, 15.21, two midwives are mentioned by name, "One was Shiphrah, and the name of the other, Puah." The Bible says they were Hebrews. Josephus says they were Egyptians, and his translator (Whiston) aptly remarks that this is more probable, as Pharaoh would hardly trust the Israelites to carry out so barbarous a command against their own nation. These were evi-