

ON VAGINAL HÆMORRHAGE DURING PREGNANCY, LABOUR, AND THE PUERRERAL PERIOD.

Spontaneous hæmorrhages, the source of which is in the vagina, are upon the whole not very frequently met with during pregnancy, labour, or the puerperium. They owe their origin to the rupture of a vein, (unless they are—a still rarer accident—the consequences of foreign bodies in the vagina, a case which we leave out of consideration for the present; we likewise disregard in this place those hæmorrhages which have been caused during labour by extensive rupture of the vagina.)

In the affection under consideration, the blood either escapes outwardly, directly upon the rupture of one or more vessels taking place; or if a deeper seated vessel is ruptured, a tumor is formed in the labia, and in the walls of the vagina, which is generally known by the name of thrombus vaginæ. (*McClintock* calls this blood-tumor pudendal hæmatocele.)

All authors probably agree at present that the blood escapes chiefly from veins, without asserting, however, that arterial vessels *cannot* participate, which happens but very rarely. The occurrence of such a hæmorrhage, or the production of a thrombus, during labour and immediately afterwards, as well as in the puerperal period, is sufficiently explained by the considerable obstruction of the venous circulation in connection with excessive dilatation of the genitals during the passage of the child. (When the affection shows itself in the puerperium, its origin must, nevertheless, be referred to the time of labour.) During pregnancy, however, we cannot speak of such a dilatation, and the venous stasis, also, is not as considerable as during labour, although this agency must not be left out of consideration altogether. We find the cause of these hæmorrhages, in the period of pregnancy, in the greater fullness of the blood vessels of the pelvis, where some unusually thin-coated vessel can no longer withstand the increased pressure of the blood. We believe that we must assume such a predisposing thinness of the vascular coats, because hæmorrhages from ruptured veins must else be more frequent during pregnancy than they are really observed. Thrombus vaginæ, and spontaneous bleeding from ruptured veins of the vagina, during pregnancy, are among the rarest occurrences. Most frequently this affection occurs during labour, or rather immediately upon the expulsion of the child; but it is, in either case, one of the most perilous accidents, and demands, as such, the energetic interposition of art.

Regarding the state of the vessels upon which this affection is based, an opinion still prevails generally, which is by no means confirmed by practice. It is asserted by many that the anomaly in question is favoured by a varicose dilatation of the vaginal veins, although the fallacy of this