

whether the only one or not I cannot say, in the causation of "missed abortion." This lack of uterine susceptibility is rare. The tendency of the average uterus is to part easily with its contents, especially at certain recurring periods during pregnancy.

The interference with the foetal circulation incidental to threatened abortion from hemorrhage I take to be the most frequent cause of the death of the ovum. The large majority of the cases which I have found recorded give a history of early pregnancy, then one or more hemorrhages, followed by the arrest of the symptoms and development of pregnancy—without expulsion of the uterine contents. The knotting of the umbilical cord or the coiling of the cord about the neck of the foetus may sometimes be a cause of its death. In one of my cases, and some of those which I found recorded, there is no history of hemorrhage, merely a history of feeble health, normally as well as during pregnancy. The maternal constitution is apparently unequal to the added task of sustaining the life of the foetus, and it dies from inanition. But, while these and various other reasons might be given to account for the death of the ovum, it is much more perplexing to account for its retention by the uterus, contrary to the normal habit of that organ. None of the authors to which I have had access discuss the etiology, much less give any satisfactory reason for its occurrence, and to myself the relative non-irritability of the uterus in exceptional cases is the only reason that appeals to me.

It is noticeable how generally no trace of the foetus is found, the ovum having either been absorbed or casually expelled. The placenta usually remains intact, and is found intimately adherent to the uterus. Mummification only takes place when the membranes have remained unruptured. If the membranes are ruptured or absorbed, maceration and latterly putrefaction takes place. This happens because the vernix caseosa is no longer secreted for the protection of the foetus.

I have not gone into the subject of differential diagnosis in this paper, and I have not made any distinction between "missed abortion" and "missed miscarriage," nor have I discussed that still rarer occurrence, "missed labor."

I am inclined to think "missed abortion" occurs oftener than is usually supposed, as doubtless many cases are not detected, since nature sometimes empties the uterus spontaneously in cases of "missed abortion," the expelled product never coming under the observation of doctor or nurse. As there is no known limit to the duration of "missed abortion," the subject is one not only of medical interest, but of moral and medico-legal importance as well.