

AND

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

ON a cause

Population productive of Abortion

SUBMITTED TO THE

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BY

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OF

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From the very highest-regard,
From the most-sincere and
unblemishable feelings of
love, respect and admiration
as a man of science, learning
and wisdom, and as an
obstetrician of skill, ability
and talent, - and as a teacher
of never-faltering energy and
devotedness - This Essay
Is most Respectfully
Dedicated -

To

John M. Watson, M.D.
Professor of obstetrics and
diseases of women and children
in the University of Nashville
By the Author

John M. R. Westhook

Population ^{a cause} ~~productive~~ of Abortion

Of the almost innumerable Diseases attacking the pregnant female, none are so miserable, disastrous and troublesome as abortion. And too, it is a subject which has met with much attention from the medical world - yet notwithstanding this, and the writings of various Authors, some too who have written extensively and ably, we see nothing, or at least little said of Copulation as a

cause - and it may be
considered by the faculty,
presumption in me to
say any thing of the ab-
ove as a direct cause;
but I hope you may
view it with a lenient
eye, and should a pre-
-ostorous idea present
itself, that you may
look it over.

I have chosen the above
as a subject for an essay
not as an edifier or inst-
-ructor, for I am well
aware that it is far beyond
the power of any ambi-
-tious medical man to
advance a single idea

of instructive matter to the
diligent and intelligent
a faculty.

Perhaps this is one of the
most important causes
connected with abortions
and is without a doubt
a cause of much moment,
and will yet, receive
thorough attention from
the scientific world. Of
this I feel doubly assured.
And tho' I have seized
upon this subject, I
feel almost totally in-
-capable of doing it. The
slightest justice, yet in
performance of the
necessary duty what is

required of me as a candidate for graduation. I hope at least to be able to write an acceptable thesis. I will in the first place ask, what is abortion.

It is the expulsion of the foetus before the seventh month of utero gestation. What is it, then, that causes the uterus to cast off the contents which it has, by the laws of nature, promised so faithfully to shelter, defend and protect till it is independent of such protection.

There must be a cause of course

either direct or indirect.
The exact duration of pregnancy, is, I believe, not known, tho' according to the statement of Meunman and others, it is from the two hundred and fifth to the three hundred and eighth day.

Some they say mature sooner because of the great vital force with which they are endowed - and also because of the strong and able constitution of the mother - while on the other hand, not a few are blessed with but little vital force, and too the unfortunate

mother is but a weak
and constitutionally der-
anged creature, consequent-
ly more liable to abort
from any cause.

What is it that thus reduces
her - may not among
the many causes be placed
coition. Undoubtedly it
may be; for we have
learned that the greater
number of severe cases of
leucorrhoea Dismenorrhoe
and almost all the dreadful
vaginal discharges are
produced in this way.
In the non impregnated
state she may thus be
rendered debilitated and

Diseased— and when impregnation takes place she is almost wholly unfitted to pass through the months of pregnancy without great danger to her own safety and of abortion.

I do not pretend to say that abortion is produced in this way alone; for I know full well that it is brought about by almost innumerable causes; but— why not while we are viewing these causes cautioning the world as to their disastrous thin destructive and their miserable end, look for a

moment to this great and
wicked cause, which by a
word might be so easily
avoided.

It is I believe an admitted
fact by all medical men,
that copulation in the
inferior animal will
produce abortion.

Why will it not then
for the same reason pro-
duce it in woman?

It is true, the inferior
animal has its particular
time to copulate - the
superior none - and I
may say not without its
evil effect.

Why is it that the inferior

animals refrain from
coition during the state of
pregnancy. Of this I can
only say: it is a work of God, an
instinct - an endowed faculty.
To us, (the superior) he has
not given instinct; but
intelligence.

Instinct prompts the in-
ferior to refrain - and
Knowledge should thus
prompt the superior.
It would be proper, perhaps,
to remark that the
married woman who has
born children is more
liable to this misdeed
and siff misfortune than
those who have never

conceived.

After the uterus is im-
pregnated and bears its
fruit, it never returns
to its exact former size.
It is a great deal larger
more vascular and has
much more vitality.

Consequently in the act
of coition it is much
more exposed to this
cause of inflammation—
and when it is again
impregnated it is
perhaps more susceptible.
During pregnancy the
uterus undergoes a decided
change.

It assumes a higher degree

of vitality and increases
greatly in size.

Even the arteries and veins
which were previous to this
state of affairs very small
almost imperceptible, are
greatly enlarged. In fact
the whole uterine system
undergoes a marked and
certain change.

The cervix uteri is materially
changed.

It becomes hard and
swollen and its whole
structure is changed
by the great organic
activity which infests
the uterine system.

In the act of coition may

inflammation and ulceration
of the neck of the uterus,
and this often times causes
such an amount of
inflammatory congestion
of the whole uterine sys-
tem as to be wholly in-
compatible with the
growth of the child; and
as a matter of course
the child dies, we have
repeated hemorrhages, disease
placenta and abortion.

The sensibility of the uterine
system in every woman is
more or less great.

In some it is so very
excitable that inflammation
will almost immediately

follow the act of coition.
Independent of the inflammation
caused by the penis coming
in contact with the
uterus. the act may
produce inflammation.

During coition the in-
-vitation of blood to the
organ may be so great as
to cause an enormous
capillary engorgement, and
produce inflammation.

From vaginitis and
vulvitis, which we are
aware, often occurs from
copulation we may have
inflammation of the os
uteri.

D^r Bennett if I am not

mistaken, in his work on
the uterus, markedly
says, that inflammation
of the cervix is the cause
of a greater number of
the Diseases of the pregnant;
and also the greater cause
of labourous pregnancies
severe sickness, abortions
and miscarriages.

And when we know the
copulation will produce
this inflammation - we can
but place it down as
one of the causes of
abortion.

It does without a single
doubt produce this inf-
-lamination - and the

Digestion we are told is deranged almost invariably when there is inflammation of the cervix. so great is the sympathy between the uterus and stomach.

This deranged condition of the digestion often causes defective nutrition, consequently debility and emaciation follows.

If the stomach be naturally weak, which is often the case. this indigestion may be seriously produced. The functions of the liver are deranged, as well as those of the Kidneys, by the derangement of digestion.

The secretion of bile may be deficient; or it may be copious - owing to the retarded secretion or to irregular activity - we have severe hypochondriacal pains, bilious headaches, and severe vomiting.

The circulation and respiration too do not escape.

We have severe pains in the region of the sternum and all over the chest, therefore difficult respiration.

Through the sympathetic nervous system, the heart may be deranged, and thus the circulation

is disturbed.

It does not simply act upon the sympathetic nervous system, but on the cerebral and spinal, causing the most insufferable headaches, depressed spirits, often amounting to temporary insanity, and abortion. In the act of evulsion the muscular motion may be sufficient to detach the placenta, so delicate is its attachment to the uterus; and also the great vessels on the abdomen, which is no doubt sometimes

very violent, may detach
the placenta, and too
it is often sufficient
to rupture the mem-
branes and permit an
escape of the waters and
unavoidably abortion
is the consequence.

Respectfully

J. M. R. Westbro