

AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

The Signs of Pregnancy."

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Signs of Pregnancy.

From time immemorial women have regarded the barren womb as a great calamity. All their hopes of happiness are centered around the hope of giving birth to children. Their great anxiety on this point often causes them to seek the advice of their Physician, in regard to the earliest signs which may appear. This class does not embrace all cases of pregnancy have occurred, where the woman has desired to make a concealment of the fact, and to get the impression out that she was affected with Ascites, a disease which simulates preg-

nancy very much. Such women are so "Modest and bashful" that an examination can scarcely ever be made. This, with other reasons, might be brought forward to stimulate the Student of Medicine to become thoroughly acquainted with all the changes which take place during Pregnancy,

Authors divide the signs into rational and sensible signs. The first sign I will notice is, Suppression of the Menses. This, though not infallible, possesses considerable importance as a diagnostic sign in cases of Pregnancy. As a general rule, all women menstruate

when in good health, unless Pregnant. This being the general rule, should we find a case where the Menses fail to appear at the regular period, and the general health of the woman remains pretty good, Pregnancy may be strongly suspected. This rule does not, however, hold good in all cases. There are some women who always menstruate while Pregnant. Another exception to this rule is in newly married women, who fail to menstruate, not on account of their being Pregnant, but from "congestion of the parts, on account of too frequent copulation, or

upon excitement in the generative organs, consequent upon their new condition, I am of the opinion that there are not a great number of these cases; yet, as such cases have occasionally been met with, it will be necessary to be guarded in giving an opinion, where it has to be based alone on the suppression of the menses. In the early periods of Pregnancy, it is as good a sign as any we have. The exceptions already given, are sufficient to render it of but little importance, in cases where this is the only sign, it should

be pronounced a doubtful case.

Depraved appetite. There are some Women, who during Pregnancy, have very strange appetites. They desire things which are entirely unfit for food, and they look with disgust on many articles of food. Such as meats, &c.. This is what is called "longing," in common phraseology, and many persons think that the child will be marked with something resembling the article longed for. This, I think partakes more of superstition than of science, though sub-

sequent observations may change my opinion. A depraved appetite generally accompanies Pregnancy, yet where character is at Stake, it will not do to give a decision, based alone on this sign. It may be put down as an equivocal sign, yet it should never be overlooked.

Morning Sickness, and Vomiting. There is no question but that Morning Sickness, and Vomiting, are signs of some importance, and when found in connexion with other signs, (such as suppression of the menses, & depraved appetite,) if the

woman be married, we may with some degree of confidence, pronounce it a case of Pregnancy. In regard to Vomiting, some Authors think that Pregnant women can vomit much easier than non-pregnant women can; but be this as it may, I only give it for what it is worth. Morning sickness, and Vomiting, can not be relied on, in the absence of other signs.

Variations in Temper. This cannot be regarded as a sign of much importance. It would require a knowledge of their Disposition, and Temperament, before Pregnancy;

to enable us to form any thing like a correct opinion. Some women are always ill whether Pregnant, or not. It would not be amiss to watch them at such times, As a sign of Pregnancy, it is almost without Value.

Ptyalism. This is an affection of rare occurrence. it is unlike ptyalism produced by the use of Mercury, and may readily be distinguished from it by the absence of the spung gums, & the Mercurial fetor. It may, however, be mistaken for Ptyalism arising from Scurvy, Hysteria or Mania. Its rare

occurrence, and the chances of confounding it with Ptyalism arising from either of the diseases already mentioned, gives it quite an unimportant place among the signs of Pregnancy.

Changes in the Mammae.
 The changes which take place in the Mammae are represented as being very perceptible, according to some authors, of reputed merit, the mammae begin to enlarge about the second month, the nipple projects, becomes more erectile, and assumes a deeper hue. The areola becomes very dark, and the sebaceous glands, seated

under the skin, enlarged, causing a rough, and uneven appearance. Great stress has been put on these changes, and Old Physicians, who have had extensive Obstetric practice, assure us that this sign is almost infallible. It is the duty of the Physician to examine the breast closely. When called to a doubtful case, it will hardly be possible for a young Physician, always to ascertain with certainty, that these changes have taken place, as they are unacquainted with the appearances of the mammae, of women before Pregnancy, further than

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what they have gained from books. This sign is of sufficient importance to demand the particular attention of the Physician. As a sign of Pregnancy, it is one of the best we have. There are cases recorded, where women have been pronounced Pregnant in the absence of all other signs, and time has proved the correctness of the decision.

The Abdomen. The appearances of the Abdomen in the early part of Pregnancy, is quite different from what it is after Pregnancy has advanced a little further. In the early part of Pregnancy,

The abdomen is somewhat flattened, on account of the increased gravity of the womb, its weight causes it to sink down into the pelvis, and as a consequence, there is flatness of the abdomen. This flatness is not of long duration, as the womb increases in size, it rises up above the pelvic cavity, into the abdomen, and thereby it is enlarged. The common people want no other sign; they would be willing to depose on oath, that a woman is pregnant, if she presents an enlarged abdomen. This is their only sign. And when

a woman comes within the range of their vision, they are sure to make use of the chance to ascertain — whether she is Pregnant, or not, especially if she is a newly "Married woman." As a diagnostic sign in Pregnancy, it is not always sure, there is a possibility of confounding it with those diseases with which women are sometimes affected, viz, Ascites, and diseases of the Ovaries. In both of these diseases the Abdomen is enlarged. The best way to distinguish these diseases from Pregnancy is, by the shape of the Abdomen,

which, in Pregnancy assumes the form of the uterus, which is of a pear shape, As Ascites, and Ovarian diseases are not Very common, the enlarged Abdomen is a tolerably correct sign of Pregnancy: but in giving an opinion, we should not be too positive. as there chances of being mistaken. Where there are any doubts in regard to the case, a careful examination should be made, and if it proves to be a case of Ascites, or disease of The Ovaries, curative means should at once, be employed. An error in such a case, might lead

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to the loss of the patient,
and to the disgrace of the
Physician.

"Changes of the neck of the
Uterus." The changes which the
neck of the uterus undergoes,
in form, and Volume, are
Very important signs of Preg-
nancy, The neck of the womb
is analogous to the fibrous tissue,
Soon after conception, it be-
comes softer, which extends
itself from below, upwards,
so that by the sixth month,
one half of the neck has
undergone this process of
softening. The last three months,
the whole of the neck be-
comes softened. In first

Pregnancies, the process of softening, is slower than in those who have been pregnant several times. In the next place, the os dilates as the softening proceeds. The external orifice of the neck remains closed, until near the end of Pregnancy, when it becomes patulous, and in some cases, so much so, as to admit the end of the finger. During the last weeks of Pregnancy, the whole of the neck disappears; as a sign of Pregnancy, this is valuable in the advanced stages. but is of no consequence in the early part.

Quickening. This is a fluttering motion which takes place in most cases, during the fourth month, but there are great variations in this respect. I am of the opinion that there is a movement in the uterus, nearly, if not the whole time of Pregnancy. But up to the fourth month, it is too feeble to be distinguished from other motions in the abdomen, such as the peristaltic motion of the intestines, partial, & irregular contractions of the abdominal muscles, and the pulsations of large arteries, pressed on by some tumor. These are the

principle things Authors caution us against confounding with Quickening. Where the motion of the Foetus is strong, no Physician need be mistaken, as the active motions of the Foetus is quite different from the motions already named. The absence of perceptible motion does not prove that Pregnancy does not exist. Frequently the movements of the Foetus is not felt for a long time, and the woman may give birth to a living child. And in other cases, it may be dead, and then there can not be any motion. Where

The advantages, and disadvantages are taken into consideration, quickening becomes a sign of but very little importance.

Ballottement. This is a sign upon which great reliance has been placed by many, especially the French, by whom it was first described. It is regarded as being a very good diagnostic sign. The manner in which the examination is to be conducted is, to place the patient in an erect, or semi-erect position, place the left hand on the abdomen, over the uterus,

to steady it, then introduce the index finger of the right hand into the Vagina, against the cervix Uteri, then gently, but quickly tilting it upwards, when if a Foetus be present, a sensation will be felt, as if something floating in water, receded, which in a moment, will descend to the lowest portion of the cavity, communicating a very inttelligible sensation to the finger, which cannot be mistaken. It is therefore one of the best signs of Pregnancy.

Kiestiene. At the present

time, Kiestiene is considered as one of the best signs of Pregnancy. The manner of obtaining it is, by placing the Urine of the woman supposed to be pregnant to be Pregnant, in a tall, narrow, Glass Vessel, and expose it to a heat of about 70° Fah $^{\circ}$, in two, or three days, (if the woman be Pregnant,) the first indication is turbidness, in two, or three days more, a thin pellicle forms on the surface, and this generally acquires consistence up to a fortnight, It has a peculiar odor, compared by some, to "Beef beginning to putrify,"

Others say it is "cheesy," Like all general rules, it occasionally fails, it is, however, one of the best of the early signs of Pregnancy.

Auscultation. By auscultation, we sometimes detect the pulsations of the Foetal heart, which, when present is proof positive, of the existence of Pregnancy, but which, when absent, by no means proves the contrary, for the Foetus may be dead, very feeble, or surrounded by a superabundance of liquor Amnii, obscuring, or entirely preventing the sound.