

Prolapsus Uteri Incisione curatum enarravit
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A Practice no less courageous than uncommon, seems to have given rise to the dissertation now before us. A woman of singular fortitude, about fifty years of age, was much afflicted with prolapsus uteri. After trying many remedies in vain, and being tired out with the continuance of her complaint, she at length cut into the substance of the uterus with a common kitchen-knife. A considerable hæmorrhage ensued; after which the uterus gradually contracted, and she had neither a return of the prolapsus, nor was she afflicted with any other symptom. Having boasted of her success, many women in the neighbourhood

afflicted with the same complaint, applied for her assistance, and by a similar operation were effectually cured.

In this paper, Mr Berchermann proposes to consider how far the method of cure mentioned above may be applied to every case of prolapsus, either of the uterus or vagina. The common practice in both cases, he observes, is, first to reduce them, and afterwards to keep them in their place by proper contrivances. These however, in most cases, serve rather to palliate than to remove the complaint, as they must in general be persisted in through life. If, therefore, this method of cure should prove radical, he is of opinion, that it would be a most valuable discovery; and, on that account, he proposes to offer some observations, first, upon the incision of the uterus, and then, upon the scarification of the vagina, when either of them suffer a prolapsus.

He sets out with some observations on the nature of the uterus. Anatomists, he tells us, have demonstrated, that it consists of membranes and fleshy fibres, supplied with numerous vessels. From considering the manner in which it is connected with the neighbouring parts, it would scarce seem credible, that a prolapsus could happen.

Such a disease, however, is well known to occur, not only with married women, but even with virgins. This, he observes, can happen only in consequence of its substance suffering expansion and relaxation. To corroborate which it may be remarked, that the uterus is capable of suffering greater expansion than any other part of the body. It comes, therefore, to be a question, whether, by means of incision, this uncommon laxity happening to the uterus can be corrected?

That, upon an incision of the uterus, such an effect will happen, Mr Berchermann thinks is very evident. The wounded vessels will pour forth their contents, and, by this means, latitude will be afforded for contraction, which will happen both to the blood-vessels and to the substance of the uterus itself, in consequence of the stimulus from the cutting instrument. Nor is there, in his opinion, any reason in this case, to apprehend danger from the wound, as, from the contraction of the uterus, its edges will be closely applied to each other, and the external air will have no access to it. He allows, however, that this method of cure will have no effect when prolapsus happens merely in consequence of laxity in the ligaments, as the diseased part is then out of reach, and will

not be affected by a wound given to that which is found.

After these observations on prolapsus uteri, strictly so called, the author observes, that the prolapsus vaginae is a much more frequent disease: To determine the propriety of incision in the cure of it, the nature of the vagina must also be considered. Anatomists agree, that it is copiously supplied with blood-vessels; that it is more membranous than the uterus; and, from its numerous nerves, more exquisitely sensible. Taking it for granted, therefore, that, in this case as well as the former, prolapsus proceeds from relaxation, incision will here be useful upon the same principles. And this method of cure he thinks superior to that which is in general recommended; because it has a better chance of proving radical.

Having thus considered the advantages which may be supposed to arise from incision, he concludes with some observations tending to shew, that they may with less danger be obtained from scarification. In proof of this, he adduces two cases of hydropic tumours, the one of the praecutium, the other of the nymphae, in which it proved successful. As in these cases it had a good

effect, he thinks there can be little doubt that it will be attended with still greater advantage in a disease of a membranous and fleshy part, proceeding intirely from relaxation. This opinion, however, he refers to be determined by these two great criterions which should regulate the judgement of all physicians, Reason and Experience.