

DESCENT *or* BEARING DOWN of the WOMB, and
PROTRUSION of the VAGINA.

THE connexions of the womb, it was formerly observed,* are so loose, that it readily changes its situation.

From

+ The ordinary dose of laudanum for *grown persons* is from twenty to thirty five drops, according to the temperament and strength.

† Viz. a drachm dissolved in a gill of vinegar and half a pint of rose water.

* Page 73.

From this circumstance it will be understood, that if the vagina be very much relaxed or enlarged, the womb will fall lower into it than it naturally does.

When this happens, it presses on the neck of the bladder and the lower part of the straight gut, which excites a disagreeable sensation in these parts.

The symptoms of this complaint in its incipient state, are, bearing down pain, especially when using exercise, frequent desire to make water and go to stool, and a discharge of a slimy fluid from the vagina.

When these symptoms are disregarded, the disease continues to increase in proportion to its duration. In many cases the womb protrudes entirely without the vagina, and then becomes highly troublesome and painful. It also in that state, from its connexion with the bladder, renders the unfortunate subject of it unable to make water, without lying down and pushing up the protruded tumour.

The causes of the descent of the womb ought to be universally known, as it is certainly often in women's power to escape entirely from the miserable and uncomfortable state to which they must be reduced if subject to that complaint.

Every disease which induces weakness of the habit in general, but more especially of the passage to the womb, will lay the foundation for the *Bearing down* or *descent* of the uterus. Irregularities of the periodical evacuation, frequent miscarriage, improper treatment after labour, and too early or violent exercise after lying in, are the most common circumstances to which this disease must be attributed.

The cure of *Bearing down* of the womb, if attended to early, will often be easily accomplished.

The tone of the vagina must be restored by the cold bath, and astringent lotions thrown into it three or four times a day, while at the same time internal strengthening remedies should be taken, and the patient confined very much to a horizontal posture.

When, however, the disease has proceeded so far that the womb *descends*, the cure will be attended with considerable difficulty, and will require time in proportion to the duration of the complaint, and the state of the patient's general health.

Young married women, troubled with descent of the womb, may expect to be entirely relieved from it if they become pregnant, provided they be *properly treated after delivery*.

In cases where there is no probability of pregnancy, the womb should be kept up by means of a piece of sponge adapted to the passage, moistened with any mild astringent liquor, and the remedies advised for *bearing down* of that organ should be carefully employed.

When, however, the descent of the womb is very troublesome, and has continued for a considerable time, the only relief which can be obtained must be procured from the use of an instrument called *Pessary*.

Women in general are prejudiced against such instruments, and many practitioners have recourse to them with great reluctance: Some indeed have absolutely prohibited their use, and have alledged that they can never answer any good purpose, but on the contrary, will always increase the malady, and produce other bad effects.

That pessaries have often been the cause of many very troublesome as well as dangerous symptoms cannot be denied, but this can only happen when they are *improperly managed*; for these instruments,

when judiciously employed, always contribute very materially, at least to the ease and comfort of the patient, and can never do any harm.

I know at present many women who are enabled, by the use of a pessary, to make every exertion necessary in active life, without feeling the smallest pain from the instrument; while the few who, in the course of my practice, have refused to try that expedient, suffer all the disagreeable effects which can originate from a weakening disease and want of exercise.

PROTRUSION of the VAGINA.—This disease is not so frequent as descent of the womb; but when it occurs, it is fully as troublesome. It appears in the form of a tumour hanging out without the passage, with the mouth of the womb at the upper and forepart of it, which distinguishes it from the protrusion of the womb.

When the vagina is very much relaxed, and at the same time narrow, the weight of the womb bearing down on it will push out that part of it which is most loosely connected to the contiguous parts,* and consequently occasion the appearance already described.

The cure depends on the protruded part being replaced, and the weakened state of the vagina remedied. These purposes will be accomplished by the means recommended in cases of descent of the womb. As, however, protrusion of the vagina is often the consequence of general weakness of the habit, the Peruvian bark, and mineral waters, with steel, should be taken internally, and a suitable plan of diet and exercise ought to be followed.