

THE
OBSTETRICAL JOURNAL

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

NO. XIV.—MAY, 1874.

Original Communications.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EARLIEST ENGLISH
WORK ON MIDWIFERY AND THE DISEASES
OF WOMEN.

By J. H. AVELING, M.D.

Physician to the Chelsea Hospital for Women; Honorary Member of the
Obstetrical Society of Dublin, &c.

IN the British Museum, among the Sloan Manuscripts, is one of the fifteenth century, vellum in quarto, beautifully written and illuminated, two hundred and thirty-four pages of which are devoted to Midwifery and the Diseases of Women.* From a note at the beginning we learn that it belonged to Richard Ferris, who was Master of the Barbers and Surgeons Company in 1563, and Sergeant Surgeon to Queen Elizabeth, and that at his death he bequeathed it to John Felde, who was to pay the executors for it "xxxxviii. iiiid." Who the author of this interesting MS. was is not known. It is certain however, that he was well acquainted with the medical writings of Rogerius of Parma, who lived some time after Albucasis, and whose book was first printed in 1490. The arrangement of the chapters is almost exactly similar, and in some instances the text is a verbatim translation from Rogerius.

* Sloan MSS. 2463. A duplicate copy exists of later date, not perfect, 249.
NO. XIV.—VOL. II.

The introduction, with its quaint spelling and obsolete words, runs as follows, the only alteration from the original being the extension of contractions.

“For as moche as ther ben manye women that hauen many diuers maladies and sekenesses nyhg to the deth and thei also ben shamefull to schewen and to tellen her greuances to any wyght Therefore I schal sumdele wright to herre maladies remedye Praying to god ful of grace to sende me grace truly to write to the plesaunce of god and to all womannes helpyng ffor charite ayeth this that euery man schuld trauaile for helpyng of his brotheryn and his susteryn after the grace of God that he hathe underfongyn And though women haue diuers evelles and many greet greuances mo than all men knowen of as I seyde hem schamen for drede of re- preving in tymes comyng and of discouryng off uncurteys men that loue women but for her foule lykyng and yf women be in dissese suche men haue hem in despyte and thinke nought how moche dysese women haue or than they haue brought hem in to this world And therefore in helping of women prevy sikenes the helpyng and that oon woman many helpe a nother in her sykenesse and nought discuren her preuitees to suche vncurteys men

But neuerthles who so euer he be that displesith a woman for here sekenesse that sche hath of the ordynaunce of god he doth a gret synne ffor he dispisith nought allonely hem but god that sendith hem suche sekenesse for her best and therefore no man shuld dispise other for the disese that god sendith hym but to haue compassion of hym and releuen hym yef he myght

Therefore ye schal vnderstonde that women haue lesse hete in here bodies than men haue and more moistnesse for defaute of hete that shuld dryen her moistnesse and her humors But netheles of bledyng to make her bodies clene and hoole from syknesse And they haue such purgacions from tyme of twelue wynter age into the age of fyfty wynter But nethelesse somme women haue it longer as thei that ben of high complexion and both norissed with hote metes and wit hote drynkes and leven in moche reste And they haue this purgacion in euery moneth ones but it be women that be with

childe or ellis women that be of drie complexion and trauayle moch ffor women after thei be with child for to they be deliuered thei ne haue nought this purgacion for the childe in her wombe is norissed with the blood that thei shuld be purged of and yf thei haue purgacion in this tyme it is a token that the child refusith that blood and than that childe is fallen in to sume sikenesse or it wyl dey in his moder wombe Women that be of an high complexion and faren wel and leven in moche ease hauen this purgacion ofter than ones in a moneth and this blode that passith from women in tyme of hir purgacion cometh oughte of the veynes that ben in the marice that is cleped the moder and norisshe to the childern right conceyved in hem The moder is a skyn that the childe is enclosed in his moder wombe and many off the sekenesses that women hauen comen of grevaunces of this moder that we clegen the marice

¶ The first is stoppyng of the blode that thei sculde haue in her purgacion and be purged as I haue sayde

¶ The seconde is to moche flowyng of suche blode and in vntyme and that syknesse febleth women full moche

¶ The thirde syknesse is suffocacion of the moder

¶ The fyrth is precipitacion of the moder

¶ The fyfte is whan the moder is flawe fro with inforth

¶ The sixte is whan ther is a posteme of the moder

¶ The seuenth is the swellynge of the moder

¶ The eght is of trauaylyng that women haue in the childyng and the harde greuances that they haue or they ben deliuered

¶ The nynthe is the goyng oute of the moder be nethenforthe.

¶ The tenth is withholdyng of the secundine and ache of the moder

¶ To make a woman able to conceyve chylde yf god wyll

¶ Of bledyng ouermoche after that sche hath hadde her chylde

¶ Ffor swelling of womennes legges whan thei be with chylde."

These headings give a good notion of the contents of the manuscript. To enable the reader to form an estimate of obstetric knowledge and skill four hundred years ago, the following chapter is given in extenso.

"Of the Greuances that Wommen haue in Beryng of her Chyldren.

"Greuances that women haue in bering of her children comyth in two maners that is to say kyndely and vnkyndely. Whan it is kyndelich the chyld comyth forth within twenty throwes and the child comyth in fourme as it shuld ffirst the heaed and sithen the nek and with the armes and sholders and with his other membres fourmeably as it shuld.

And also in the seconde maner the chyld comyth forth vnkyndely and that may be in 16 maners as ye shall fynde in hyr propre chapters and fyrst thus



Whan the childe hede aperith as it were hedelings and all the other parte of the chylde levith in the moder syde. The help herof is that the mydwif with her honde anoyned in oyles in oyle of pulioll and in oyle of lillie mesne or oyle musc ellen and as it nedith that honde so anoyned and put in and fourmably dressyng the child with her hondes from the sides of the moder and the orifice of the marice so anoyned well that the childe may come forth evenly—



The seconde maner is vnkyndely also whan the childe comyth with his feete joyntly to geder but the mydwif shall never haue it forth whan he comyth so douneward. But when he begynneth to come so the mydwif with her hondes anoyned and yn put shove hym up agen and dresse hym so that he may come forth on the moste kyndely maner that he sqwat his hondes in the moder sides.

The third maner vnkyndely is yf the childes hede be so moche and so grete that he may not come forth The mydwyf than schal shove hym ayen and anynt with May butter that is freshe or with oyle the orifice and the mouthe of the prive membre and than the mydwif ys honde put in so anynted first and that membre made larger than brynge hym forth, holding the hed of hym.



The fyrth maner yf the child come forth ayenst kynde she that trauallyth schall be brought in to a schort straye bedde that hath an hygh stondyng and sche put out her hede than the midwif hauyng her honde anynted and put yn after that it is vnkyndeliche and ydressed hym rightliche and than so brynge hym forthe but the bedde that the woman schall lyggen yn schuld be made harde.



The fyfte maner agenst kynde is if the child proferth his hande first forth and his hede be turned ayen and the mouthe of that priuie membre be streyte or schytte thanne with that constreynyng of the handes of the mydwyf that thilk way be larged and that the childis hande be put in agen that the child be noight slayne throughe the mydwifs defaute We commende the mydwifs honde putte in dressynge the childes schuldres to be put bakwards and her hondes rightlyche dressed to her sides and than the hed of the child take than so lete brynge hym forthe.



The sixte maner ayenst kynde is yf the childe profer forth his bothe hondes with his two schulderis and setlyng his two hondis that oon on that oon side and the other on that other side and the hed is turned bakward into the side ayenward



the midwyf with her honde schall put hym ayen as we saide in the next chapter that is sche schal dresse his hondes to his sydes and take the childes hede and esely bryng hym forth yf he haue a little hede and his hondis yf he caste first outward the mydwyf schall ordeyn that the hede may come to the mouth of the priuie membre and so by hyr hands she shall bryng hym forth by the grace of god.

The seuenth is yf the child caste forth fyrste his right foot the mydwyf schall neuer bryng hym forth so But sche shall fyrst sette hyr fyngers and put it vp ayenward and after that sche schall putt yn honde and amende that fote with that other fote so corect hem bothe to geders If it may be and his hondis to his sides, and his fete so as thay out to ben and so bryng hym forth.



The eght is yf the child put forthe bothe feet and the tother dele of the childe left in the body bowande as we said first The mydwyf with hyr hand yshoven yn and she besiliche dressing the chylde and so bryng hym forthe as I said abouen.



The nynthe is yf the childe schewe fyrst oon honde and oon foot and with the tother honde he helith his face The mydwyf setting hyr fyngers of hyr oon honde in the grynde of the woman that trauaylith and with the tother honde put it vp ayen as we have shewid afore and so bryng hym forth yf thou mayst.



The tenth is yf the child schewe first forth his fete departyng and his oon honde bytwene his fete and his hede hanging bakward The mydwyf with hyr honde putte in correctyng the chylde and leying hys oon honde by his other downe



by his sides and mending his hede on the best maner and the feete rightlich dressed and than the mydwif bryngyng hym forth.

The 11 is yf the childes nekke come first foreward than the mydwif hyr honde putte yn and shoue hym vp ayen by the shulders highyng lyft the chyld and so to the orificium bryng hym doune and so bryng hym forth.



The 12 is yf the child shewe fyrst forthe his knees bowed than the mydwif schall put hym vp agen bakward the hondes of the mydwif sette on other in hir gryndes and than hir oon hond anynded and put yn and ther with amending so the knees and hym take by the schulders and so bakward softely bryng hym forth and so whan his fete be amended puttyng hym vpward vnto he be right as he schuld be and than bryng hym forth by the grace of God and the mydwifes connyng.



The 13 is yf the child schewe first forth his thyes and his comyng forth so erselyng Than the mydwif with hyr honde put yn ayen by the fete she shal bryng hym to the orifice and evyn haue hym forth.



The 14 is yf the childes hede and the soles of his fete come togeder we bydde than the mydwif in to that prevyn membre her hondes in shove and he taken and borne vp in to the wombe ayenward than the childe taken by the hede and brought forthe.



The 15 is yf the child lyeth groveling or els vpright and his feete and his handes vpward abouen his hede than the mydwif with hyr fyngers put yn and the child evenyd than in as moche as she may lete the hede come forward and so bryng hym forthe.



The 16 is yf ther wer mor than oon as it happith alday and alle tho be comyng to the orifice at ones than lete the



mydwyf putte ayen oon with hyr fyngers the whiles she hathe forth oon of the children and than after another so doyng that the moder be nocht repressed nother the children mysfaren with all as it fareth often tyme.

For to delyueren a woman of childe and for to sle it yf it may nought be brought forth Take rue saveyn sothernewode and gladon and lete hyr drynk hit And also take the jus of ysop of dyptayn an. zij quyksylver zij and this medecyn is proved Also take the jus of yreos and boles galle an. ziiij of mete oyle zij medle all these to geders and do it in a pissorie and serue the woman ther with and this medecyne will deliuer alle corrupcions of the marice and it delivereth hyr of a dede chyld and it wyl deliver hyr of her secundines and hit bryngith forth his menstruis.

And the greuances that women hauen in beryng of children comyth other whiles of the greuance of the childe and that may be for the childe is well ywoxen in his moder wombe to fore sche hathe kaught the ydropesye and this the mydwif may alles well knowe and the woman also and other whiles it comyth through the feeblenesse of the moder that sche nys nocht myghty to putten the childe oute from hyr and this may be in two maners as for gret sikenesse that the woman hathe hadde, and that hathe febled hyr moche Or for gret thought of the woman and if she conceyued in the fyrst of the twelve yeres Otherwhiles it comyth of the stoppyng of the moder and that may be in two maners as of fatnesse that stoppith the mouth of the marice and that withholdith the blode that she shuld haue ben purged of er that they hadde ben conceyued. Or otherwhiles it comyth for the

chylde is dede in his moder wombe and tokens ther ben Oone is that thei fele no steryng nor mevyng of the chylde within-forth Another is the secunde day of hir traualyng hyr mouthe stynketh and another is that thei felen gret ache and greuance aboute hir navell Another is dissolution of hir face and of all hir body Another is that they desyren thynges that ben contrarious to hir Another is they have watche and litell slepe Another is that thei hauen gret pennance to make water and to go to privy and also that thei have gret pennance aboute the schare and yf the chylde cometh nought ought wardes as he shulde the mydwif may helpen wel yf now with outen any other medecynes as I have her afore tolde But yf her greuance be of ony of these that I haue rehersed make her a bath of hokkes of fenygrek of lynsed of wormode of sothernewode and of pelitorye of fenell and of mugwede soden in water and lete bathe hyr ther in a good whiles and whan she cometh oute of the bath let anynt hir from the navel downward to the priuie member with butter and with deawte and with arragon byfore and behynde hyr Also an sithen make hir a fumigacion by netheforth of spicnard ʒiiss and of the rotes of coste ʒj and also whanne she is comen out of the bath If she be a ryche woman geve hir ʒj of opibalsam with warme wyne If she be a pore woman sethe the rotes of coste and of mugwede in wyne and do ther to ʒij of boles galle and lete her drynke it whan she comyth out of the bath Other tempre borax ʒij with wyne and geve her that to drynke Other geve her the jus of diptayn ysopē an. ʒiiij argenti vis. dp and this wyl casten ought the childe quyk or dede and beter and if it be yoven with a trocisci of mirre after Rasis ordinance take of mirre ʒij lupinus ʒiiss of rue leues dried with wylde mynte of puliol woderofe of sernum of asfetide serapin opopin galbanum gum an. ʒviiij of fyne maluesye as it nedith make balles as it were table meyne of the weyght of ʒij eueryche of hem weiging Geve hir oone of ham with decoction of junipery in wyne for these ben good for hevy birthes and to bringe forth the secundines and destroyeth molam matrices Yeff these may not ben hadde make a plastre of mugwede soden in water and emplastre the woman ther with from the

navel to the priuie membre for it makith a woman sone be deliuered of her child Yf it be quyk other dead in her wombe and it drawith oute the secundine but let it not ligge ful longe for it wyl drawe the moder out also A noble precious pouder for women that ben in trauaylyng of child and for after throwes Take ziiij of the scales of cassiefistula and an ounce of saueray and another ounce of ysope poudre alle these in fere and geve it the woman with the jus of vervayne ywarmed and hit ydronke it maketh hyr sone to be deliuered and it drawith out the secundine also it maketh a woman that is stopped sone to be deliuered by the purgacion of hyr bloode Also ciclamen ystrawed vnder a woman whiles she is in traualyng it makith her sone to be deliuered.

The jus of vervayn doth also ydronke Other lote hyr drynke an ege schell full of the jus of leek other of dyptayne hokkes also sauen hath a gret myght to deliueren a woman of childe and so hath the water of a mannes leer that he hath wasshen in his hondes.

Tokens when a woman shall be deliuered of childe ben gret steryngs and mevyngs in hir wombe and other whiles all the wombe mevith vp to the stomak and makith a woman to haue gret wylle to caste and she hath moche hevenesse about the navell and than the childe sterith faste to passen from his moder than lete stoppe hir nosethrilles that the spirites mowe go downe to the moder and comforte hyr of hir burthen and lete gyrden hyr with a gyrdell of an hertys skyn and yef she swowne lete putt swete smellyng things at hir nose and lete froten the soles of hir fete and the pawmes of hir handes with kene bitynge thynges as with vynegre and salt Baume Opobalsam ymade in maner of a suppositorie maketh a woman ben deliuered of childe and it drawith out the secundine also but it makith hir bareyne euermor after And the jus of rue and of mugwede makith a woman sone be deliuered of childe though it be deede in hir wombe and it is profitable to make hem to snese with pouder of peper and of castory and caste it in her nose and the jus of the saturey ydronke makith a woman sone be deliured of childe and yf the herbe be plasterd to her

wombe it makith the childe come out quyk or dede A precious stone that highte Ysapis hathe a gret vertue to helpe woman that they were deliuered of childe also doue yeven a woman that hath a dede childe in her wombe the mylk of a betche medled with honey and make a plaster of wormote and bynde hit to hir left hype also womans mylk and oyle togeder ydronke makith a woman to be deliuered of childe."

It will be observed that the midwife's duty consisted principally in shoving the child back again when it did not present kindly. If this did not answer, she was to use therapeutic measures. More energetic means were, however, sometimes employed, for in the next chapter we find the following :—" Ther was a woman and she was deliuered by the wyndyng of two towailles aboute hir myddell and two stikkis The oon was wounden on the oone syde off the woman and the other wounde on the other syde of hyr till the wombe of hyr was made right small and the woman hadde right fayre children yet ther after." In cases of retained placenta, the author also says, " The mydwif shuld anoynt her hondes and with hir nayles pullen owte the secundine if she mowe." This manuscript is of much historical interest and should be published.

ON THE TREATMENT OF ANTEFLEXION OF THE UTERUS BY A NEW FORM OF INTRA-UTERINE PESSARY.

By GEO. GRANVILLE BANTOCK, M.D.
Physician to the Samaritan Free Hospital for Women.

(Continued from p. 9.)

IN his recent work Dr. Barnes reiterates his opinion as to the seat of obstructive dysmenorrhea with which I am dealing. At page 219 he says : " Narrowing of the os uteri internum, as brought about by flexion or angulation is not uncommon ; narrowing of the os externum is very common." My experience tells me that the reverse of this is true. At page 228 he says : " If the sound will pass we may be satisfied as to the efficiency of the os uteri internum ; and in my ex-