INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,
ON a cause
Copulation producing of Abortion
Submitted to the
President, Board of Trustees, and Medical Faculty
of the
University of Nashville,
for the degree of
Doctor of Medicine.

By

John M. R. Webster

of
Georgia

1857

Charles W. Smith,
Bookseller and Stationer,
Nashville, Tenn.
From the very highest regard,
From the most sincere and
unblemished 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 flagging energy and
devotion—This Essay
Is most Respectfully
Dedicated—

To

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

John M. R. Westbrooks
Copulation produces 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 above as a direct cause; but I hope you may view it with a lenient eye, and should a prepossession, idea present itself, that you may let it over.

I have chosen the above as a subject for an essay not as an edifice or instrument, for I am well aware that it is far beyond the power of any combinative medical man to advance a single idea
of instructive matter to a diligent and intelligent faculty.

Perhaps this is one of the most important causes connected with abortion 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 afraid. And tho' I have seized upon this subject, I feel almost totally incapable of doing it. The slightest justice, yet in performance of the necessary duty, which 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 uterine 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? If it is independent of such protection, there must be a cause of some
whether direct or indirect. The exact duration of pregnancy, as I believe, not known. The according to the statement of Messrs. 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 lose the advantage.
Mother is but a weak and constitutionally deranged creature, consequently more liable to abort from any cause. What is it that thus reduces her—may not among the many causes be placed position. Undoubtedly it may be; for we have learned that the greater number of severe cases of dermonecrosis dismembration and almost all the distress vaginal discharges are produced in this way. In the non-impregnated state she may thus be rendered debilitated and
moment to this great and wise cause, which by a word might be so easily avoided.

It is a belief, an admitted fact by all medical men, that coitus in the inferior animal will produce abortion. Why will it not then for the same reason produce it in woman? It is true, the inferior animal has its particular time to copulate, the superior now, and I may say not without its evil effect. Why is it that the inferior
animals refrain from evil, during the state of pregnancy. Of this I can only say, it is a work of God, an instinct, an endow'd faculty. To us, (the superior) he has not given instinct, but intelligence. Instinct prompts the inferior to refrain — and Knowledge should thus prompt the superior. It would be proper, perhaps, to remark that the married woman who has borne children is more liable to this misfortune than those who have never.
Conceived.

After the uterus is impregnated 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 and 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 infects the uterine system. In the act of coition, may
inflammation, and ulceration of the neck of the uterus, and this oftentimes causes such an amount of inflammatory congestion of the whole uterine system as to be wholly incompatible with the growth of the child; and as a matter of course the child dies, we have repeated hemorrhages, discase of the placenta and abortion. The sensibility of the uterine system in every woman is more or less great. In some it is so very markedly that inflammation will almost immediately
follow the act of coition. Independent of the inflammation caused by the penis coming in contact with the uterine, the act may produce inflammation. During coition, the inves-
tigation 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 ov-
uli.

Dr. Bennett if I am not
mistaken, in his works. He returns, markedly, says, that inflammation of the cervix is the cause of a greater number of the Diseases of the pregnant and also the greatest cause of laborious pregnancies, severe sickness, abortions and miscarriages. And when we know that 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 inflammation—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 deformed condition of the digestion often causes defective nutrition, consequently depilition 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 hypochoondriac pains, biliousness, headache, 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
intolerable headache,
depressed spirit, often
amounting to temporary
insanity, and abortion.
In the act of evulsion
the muscular motion
may be sufficient to
detach the placenta
or dellicate its attachment
to the uterus; and also
the great pressure on
the abdomen, which is
not doubt sometimes
very violent may detach
the flounces, and too
it is often sufficient
to crimp line the mem-
brane and prevent an
escape of the water and
unavoidably abortion
is the consequence.

Respectfully

J. M. R. Wetthe