

**A TREATISE ON THE EMPLOYMENT
OF THE SPECULUM IN THE
DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF
UTERINE DISEASES: WITH THREE
HUNDRED CASES**

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THREE HUNDRED CASES.

BY
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following observations on the Employment of the Speculum in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Uterine Diseases, are presented to the Medical Profession, with the hope that they may contribute in some degree to the Correction of those erroneous and pernicious doctrines respecting the Diseases of the Uterus, which have recently been introduced into England from Foreign Countries: and if possible to curb the licentious use of the Speculum.

ROBERT LEE.

1 January, 1858.

4, SAVILLE ROW, BURLINGTON GARDENS.

A TREATISE ON THE SPECULUM.

WITH THREE HUNDRED CASES.

THE *speculum matricis* is said by Ætius to have been invented in the days of the Emperor Domitian, but it must have been known to the Romans at an earlier period. In 1818 a bronze instrument, consisting of three branches, with two handles and a screw in the centre, was dug out of the ruins of Pompeii, and has been preserved in the Museum at Naples, and of which there is a description and delineation in Vulpes's work entitled 'Illustrazione di Tutti gli Strumenti Chirurgici,' Napoli 1847.

This instrument is called, *Speculum magnum matricis*, and there can be no doubt that it was intended to dilate the vagina and bring the os uteri into view. It is a complicated machine, but probably one of the most safe and perfect trivalve speculums that has since been invented.

Paulus Ægineta described an instrument which he called *διωπτρα*, composed of two branches and a screw handle, which was employed for the purpose of dilating the vagina. Avicenna is stated to have described, under the title *vertigo*, two sorts of specula with three branches, which were opened by means of a screw handle. Spachius has given four delineations of the uterine specula of Ambrose Parè, which had three branches, and were expanded by means of a screw. These instruments are figured and described in chapter xii., which is entitled 'De Verrucarum Cervicis Uteri Curatione.' The following passage contains an account of the diseases to which it was considered applicable: "Quæ in uteri cervice succrescant verrucæ, siquidem minime malignæ sint, filo

constringendæ erunt aut exsecandæ. Quæ altius in utero delitescunt, speculo matricis immisso, oculis et digitis venient subjiciendæ." Spachius has likewise given a representation of the *Vertigo* of *Albucasis*; and it is probable that the instrument, being described along with others which were employed for the purpose of extracting the fœtus when dead, in difficult labours, that it was not used as a *speculum uteri*, but dilator of the vagina. That the *speculum matricis* of *Joannes Ruffius*, also figured by Spachius, was a midwifery instrument employed in difficult labours, is certain from the following passage at p. 179: "Apertorium inquam, unctum at compressum obstetrix leniter per collum matricis ad portam interiorem dirigit: quo sufficienter facto, utraque manu apertorium infra comprimat donec quantum sufficit os matricis diduxerit. Vel si placet altero instrumento speculo inquam matricis, eodem modo utatur, uti de apertorio modo dictu est. In hoc autem vertebram toties circumvolvi oportet donec sufficere propter dilatationem intellexeris. Eo autem modo diducto matricis orificio, obstetrix manibus infantem leniter apprehendat et si possibile est cum secundis educat."

M. Recamier, of Paris, states, that in 1801 he began to treat ulcers of the uterus and vagina with topical applications like those of the throat. By means of a slender tin tube, five inches long, he applied to the ulcerated surfaces charpie steeped in *mel rosarum*, and certain vegetable syrups with or without the collyrium of *Lanfranc*, the laudanum of *Rousseau*, and the extract of opium. "I owed to these dressings," said M. Recamier, "the amelioration of all the ulcers of the uterus and vagina to which they were applied, the prolongation of the lives of several women afflicted with uterine and vaginal cancers, and finally the cure of divers obstinate ulcerations which were not cancerous."* How the application of such simple substances as honey of roses, and syrup of carrots, could have produced such striking effects, it is difficult to imagine.

* *Recherches sur le Traitement du Cancer.* Par J. C. Recamier, M.D. tom. i. p. 317.—Paris, 1829.

In the year 1816 a case of cancer uteri occurred, which led M. Recamier to enlarge the diameter of his conical tube, that the morbid parts might be rendered more visible, and cauterization employed without compromising the surrounding structures. He called this tube the *speculum uteri*, which he says has now passed into general practice, to perfect the diagnosis of ulcers of the uterus and rectum, which is indispensable in all cases where dressings require to be applied to the *os uteri*, and where vesico-vaginal, and recto-vaginal fistulæ exist. At that time it was an opinion entertained by some French pathologists that cancer of the uterus is a local disease produced by, or in some way connected with, inflammation, and that the tissue of the uterus was almost always healthy two or three lines beyond the part affected; that there was an analogy between *noli me tangere* of the skin and cancerous ulceration of the uterus, and that this latter disease might be arrested by escharotics applied over the whole extent of the ulcerated surface. The unsoundness of these views was demonstrated by the result of the first case in which it was tried, the malignant disease having returned again and again; and at last, having proved fatal, though the fungoid tumour of the *os uteri* had been cut away by Baron Dupuytren in the first stage of the disease, and the entire *os* and *cervix uteri*, and a great part of the body of the uterus, had been destroyed, not by cancerous ulceration, but by twenty-seven cauterizations made with the acid nitrate of mercury.

From 1816 to 1829, M. Recamier employed escharotics in many cases of cancer uteri, by means of the *speculum*. In several of these, he said, the disease had never returned, but he admitted that in all, where the *cervix* was affected with cancer, the disease had never failed to reappear, and prove fatal whatever care was taken to carry the caustic beyond the diseased part. Although the total inefficacy of this treatment was soon satisfactorily proved, it continued nevertheless to be extensively employed in Paris; and not only were arsenical paste, nitrate of silver, acid, nitrate of mercury, *potassa fusa*, *creosote*, *muriate of gold*, and compression had