

**SPECULATIONS ON THE MODE AND
APPEARANCES OF IMPREGNATION
IN THE HUMAN FEMALE: WITH AN
EXAMINATION OF THE PRESENT
THEORIES OF GENERATION**

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Speculations on the Mode and Appearances of Impregnation in the Human Female: With an Examination of The Present Theories of Generation by R. Couper

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R. COUPER

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BY A PHYSICIAN.

[R. Couper].

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SPECULATIONS
ON
IMPREGNATION.

THERE is frequently an ambiguity in words, which very accurate definitions, and the most cautious and candid conduct, cannot, in every paragraph, guard against. Whatever may be the ideas affixed to Conception, Generation,
A ration,

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ration, or Impregnation, we shall take the freedom of using them as synonymous; and as implying and including that period in the female constitution, from the injection of the prolific semen into the canal of the uterus, till the ovum, capable of becoming a living creature, is completely disengaged from the ovaria. This period is perhaps the busiest, and most important in female life; and on account of its intricate and mysterious phenomena, and of the utility which Medicine and Philosophy must derive from a rational and convincing explanation of all its circumstances, it always hath interested the attention and ingenuity of every physiologist.—We look back with veneration, as well as restless curiosity, to that seemingly humble and unapt state from whence we date our material origin; and we contemplate what appears to us as a shapeless embryo, with as much wonder and embarrassment, as the stupendous fabric, which it afterwards evolves, can possibly extort from us. Notwithstanding, however, of every inducement to an acquaintance

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acquaintance with our origin, and of all the ingenuity which has been lavished upon the enquiry, we have still to regret the obscurity in which the process of generation is involved; and at the same time we cannot help lamenting the facility with which eminent men have adopted and decorated very vague and visionary theories. But though these men have incautiously given way to the suggestions of imagination, or rashly adopted the unsubstantial and groundless ideas of others, they have, by accurate and ingenious observations and discoveries, added greatly to the stock of useful knowledge, and rendered the path much easier to others. The anatomist, who was long content to number the human bones, and to inform us, with much sagacity, where they were scabrous and where they were smooth; who traced, with edifying precision, the direction of a muscular fibre, or an evanescent artery; and who overwhelmed us with an elaborate dissertation on the right which our canine teeth gave us to tear and swal-

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low the flesh of living creatures; sometimes turned the edge of his knife from these idle and unavailing exercises; and, though his labours were not always skilful, nor his deductions unequivocal and firm, we generally follow him with improvement and gratitude.

It were well for us, and creditable to Science, if we could, without further observation, thus close the general account of the inclinations and progress of our predecessors. But however unpleasant and invidious the reflection—and we are too well justified in the assertion—it remains for us to add, that fanciful and disingenuous men, by torturing to their purposes real facts and observations, have thrown an additional darkness and perplexity upon this subject; and, by their speciousness, have left the candid at a loss where to allow their confidence. These men, as their ingenuity acknowledges none of the usual bounds of prudence, and meets with no difficulties, have created or misrepresented facts, as best suited the theories they were determined to support;

