

**ABORTION AND ITS TREATMENT, FROM
THE STAND-POINT OF PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCE: A SPECIAL COURSE OF
LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE COLLEGE
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, NEW
YORK SESSION OF 1889-'90**

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Abortion and Its Treatment, from the Stand-Point of Practical Experience: A Special Course of Lectures Delivered at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York Session of 1889-'90 by T. Gaillard Thomas & P. Brynberg Porter

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T. GAILLARD THOMAS & P. BRYNBERG PORTER

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A SPECIAL COURSE OF LECTURES DELIVERED AT
THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, NEW YORK
SESSION OF 1889-'90

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REVISED BY THE AUTHOR

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ABORTION AND ITS TREATMENT.

LECTURE I.

Vagueness and diversity of opinion in reference to the subject—
The views here expressed based on practical experience—
The importance of the uterus in the female economy—Im-
pregnation and conception—The development of the em-
bryo—Formation of the placenta—Definition of abortion—
Distinction between abortion, miscarriage, and premature
labor—The natural history of abortion—Differences in the
way abortion may occur and the necessity of treating each
case according to its individual character and circum-
stances.

GENTLEMEN: I have selected abortion as the subject for this special course of lectures, and I shall treat it entirely from a practical point of view. I have chosen this topic for the reason that, as I look back over my experience in the medical profession—a career of now more than thirty-five years—I recall nothing which in times past has caused me more anxiety and

doubt, or in regard to which I have found it more difficult to get any satisfactory rules from books, than the treatment of abortion. When you come to look for absolute rules in the various authorities on obstetrics, you will find a great deal of uncertainty and diversity of opinion. Only recently a discussion took place on this subject in a public society in this country; and here, again, in reading the reports of it published in the medical journals, one is at once struck with the want of unanimity among the different participants.

I want you to understand clearly that in these lectures I am not going to give you the opinions of the latest authorities in Vienna, London, or Paris, but that I will impart to you all that a thirty-five years' practice has taught me about abortion. To give the results derived from such a practical experience is, as I conceive, and as I have often had occasion to remark in my lectures, the most useful kind of teaching, as such instruction will enable the pupil to commence in his practice at the point

where his teacher left off. There is a vast difference between *learning* and *being taught* a thing. If you have to learn anything from your own experience, it may take you a long time and involve a waste of much honest effort; but if you are taught it at the beginning by one who has thoroughly studied the subject and had much personal experience in regard to it, you can readily perceive at how great an advantage this places you.

The uterus is a most extraordinary part of the female economy. It is the organ which divides one sex from the other. This organ has three entirely distinct and different periods of existence. From birth to the age of thirteen, or puberty, it is undeveloped and unimportant. From thirteen to fifty its career is one of intense activity, and it has a marked influence upon the whole being of the woman. From the age of about fifty to the close of life it sinks into insignificance again, and becomes an atrophied and unimportant organ — of no use whatever.

Not only has the uterus these different phases, it is subject to various distinct influences, and one of the most important of these is ovulation. Without taking up any of the moot questions in regard to this function, I will merely say that it certainly affects the uterus by causing active congestion and hæmorrhage. A still more marked influence, however, is excited by the meeting of the zoö sperm and ovule in some part of the uterine tract. This meeting may take place in the peritonæum, the fimbriated extremity of the Fallopian tube failing to grasp the ovum, and thus permitting it to drop into the abdominal cavity. Next, it may occur in the ovary, next in some part of the Fallopian tube, and next in the uterine cavity. Lastly, it is probable that it may take place in the cervical canal. Impregnation and conception, it should be understood, are two entirely different things. Ova may become impregnated twelve times a year, and yet conception may not result. Conception is the fixation of the impregnated ovum, and instantaneously on its

occurrence a communication is set up through the nervous system, while the whole economy of the woman begins to change. In the uterus the muscular fibres commence to grow, and the mucous membrane undergoes rapid development. Formerly many authorities held that the non-pregnant uterus had no mucous membrane; but the microscopic researches of recent times have demonstrated its existence.

I do not propose to give you a disquisition on generation and embryology; but there are a few essential points with which it is quite necessary that you should be familiar if you wish to comprehend the subject of abortion. After conception has taken place the whole of the mucous membrane becomes thickened, forming the *decidua vera*, while a portion of it grows upward around the ovum. In olden times it was supposed that the latter was a false membrane, but more careful investigations proved that this was not the case, and that it was merely a hyperplasia of the membrane in this part. The ovum having attached itself to