

The Birth of Mankind

Encharius Roesslin

The Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer* included a service for women to offer thanksgiving after childbirth. The ceremony, called the "churching of women," was held some weeks after the delivery and required the mother to "give hearty thanks unto God" who had given "safe deliverance" and "preserved [her] in the great danger of Childbirth." At the end of the service, the congregation likewise offered thanks "for that thou hast vouchsafed to deliver this woman thy servant from the great pain and peril of Child-birth." The dangers alluded to in the churching were symbolic and physical. The trials of giving birth and raising a child might strain one's faith, while the hazards of delivery and recovery could be life-threatening, with the maternal mortality rate possibly as high as twenty-five per thousand through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Eccles 125).

Medical knowledge in the sixteenth century was based on the work of classical writers, with Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle being considered the chief sources. Woman was broadly regarded as an imperfect version of man: "Because of lack of heat in generation, her sexual organs have remained internal, she is incomplete, colder and moister in dominant humours, and unable to 'concoct' perfect semen from blood" (Macleon 31). As the following sections from two popular midwifery books show, the views of the ancient writers continued to be rehearsed in medical texts. The emphasis on tradition was only beginning to change during the sixteenth century, with increasing value applied to anatomical observation and study of dissected bodies "as a site of discovery rather than a means of confirming past authority" (Sawday 120). The excerpts below are an amalgam of reliance on classical texts, the benefits of personal observation and experience, and the influence of cultural beliefs and folklore about gender on scientific "facts": "What we call sex and gender are in the Renaissance bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substratum is impossible" (Laqueur 128). The weight of social

attitudes to gender roles and relationships bore heavily on the understandings of male and female bodies, and to some modern historians it has appeared that "Seventeenth-century gynecology was a combination of ignorance about internal medicine, bias against women, and an almost total reliance on the ancients" (Smith, "Gynecology" 99).

The human body was regarded as operating through the mixture and relative balance of four humours which were based on the elements of earth, air, fire, water, and the qualities of cold, heat, dryness, and moisture: blood, yellow bile or cholera, black bile or melancholy, and phlegm. As noted above, the male body was accepted as the norm, and women were considered to be in constant danger of experiencing an imbalance of humors requiring diagnosis and cure. The aim of treatment was to restore natural harmony, and to this end various therapies were used to reduce or supplement humors through techniques such as bleeding, purging, enemas, sweating, and vomits, and diets, complex medicines, and herbs. All the treatments included in the midwifery texts adopt this approach, and the extracris represent the sorts of regimens applied to women's bodies. (The other main component of such texts, not included below, is to explain how to perform deliveries of babies, with great detail being given on handling irregular or abnormal births which were almost always life-threatening for mother and child.)

Humoral medicine involves endless decoding of physical signs. In these treatises, women's bodies emerge as complex texts which are interpreted in terms of natural balance or unnatural disruption. In themselves these bodies are considered mysterious or reticent (Maus 271-72), and they require a learned gaze to uncover their secret meaning. Treatment both restores nature and asserts the correctness of expert (usually) male readings of the female body.

The Birth of Mankind is the earliest printed midwifery textbook in English. It was translated from a 1532 Latin translation of Eucharius Roeslin's German work, which was first published in 1513. Roeslin was the state physician at Worms and Frankfurt-am-Main. His work was extremely popular in England, appearing in thirteen editions up to 1654 (Eccles 11-12). Its success was followed up, especially in the seventeenth century, by a number of other works on gynecology and midwifery including Guillemeau's *Childbirth* (in the next chapter), Jacob Rueff's *The Expert Midwife* (1637), Nicholas Culpeper's *Directory for Midwives* (1651), Nicholas Fomannus's *The Woman's Doctor* (1652), and Culpeper's *The Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged* (1659). The following excerpts are taken from the first English edition of Roeslin's work, published in London in 1540 (STC 21153; Reel 142).

THE BIRTH OF MANKIND

After What Manner and Fashion the Birth Lieth in the Mother's Womb, and How Many Cauls It Is Compassed and Wrapped in

In so much as our intent is in this booke following to entreat and speak of the birth of mankind and of such things which happen and chance to the mother in her labor and travail in the deliverance of the same, it shall be first very necessary to show after what manner and fashion the infant lieth in the mother's womb and in how many cauls the same is lapped and wrapped. To the farther knowledge and perseverance of such things the which we shall entreat of hereafter.

Wherefore, ye shall understand that the birth lieth in the mother after this manner. First, it lieth round in manner as a bowl, the hands being between the knees and the head leaning on the knees, either of the eyes joining upon either of the knees, the right eye upon the right knee and the left upon the left, the nose depending¹ between the knees so that the face and forepart of the infant is toward the inward parts of the woman, lying in manner upright in the mother's matrice.²

Farther, ye must understand that there be three covers or cauls in the which the birth is contained and lapped. Of the which the one compasseth and embraceth round about the birth and the other two cauls also. And it is called the secundine, second birth, or the after-birth, the which defendeth the birth from noisome and ill humors increasing in the matrice after conception by retention of the flowers,³ otherwise wont to pass and issue further once in the month. The which ill humors, if they should touch or come near to the birth, would greatly perish and hurt the same. But after the deliverance of the principal birth these humours, also with the foresaid caul or secundine, issue further and is called the after-birth.

The second caul with the which the birth is covered compasseth the same birth from the navel downward, covering all the inferior parts of the infant. And this skin or caul is as it were full of pleats and wrinkles. And through this caul the birth is defended and kept from ill and sharp humors as urine or piss issuing from the infant, and sweat, etc. For so long as the child is in the mother's womb it sendeth further urine not by the due members but by the vein which proceedeth out of the navel.

The third suiting or caul likewise containeth all the birth in it, defending also the same from humors and urine and from the boisterousness of the secundine or first caul, and this is called the armor or defence of the birth.

This is the manner of the situation and lodging of the infant in the mother's belly, and these be the three cauls containing and enclosing in the birth. Now will we speak of the time of birth.

Of the Time of Birth and Which Is Called Natural or Unnatural

And when the time of birth approacheth near, most commonly these signs following come before, by the which the time of labor is known to be at home.

First, certain dolours and pains begin to grow about the guts, the navel, and in the reins⁴ of the back, and likewise about the thighs and the other places being near to the privy parts, which likewise then beginneth to swell and to burn and to expel humours, so that it giveth plain and evident token that the labor is near.

But ye shall note that there is two manner of births, the one called natural, the other contrary to nature. Natural birth is when the child is born both in due season and also in due fashion. The due season is most commonly after the ninth month or about forty weeks after the conception, although some be delivered sometimes in the seventh month and the child proveth very well. But such as are born in the eight month, either they be dead before the birth or else live not long after, as the noble medicine Avicenna⁵ doth testify.

The due fashion of birth is this, according as witnesseth Albert the Great.⁶ First, the head cometh forward, then followeth the neck and shoulders, the arms with the hands lying close to the body toward the feet, the face and forepart of the child being towards the face and forepart of the mother, as it appeareth in the first of the birth figures.⁷ For as Albertus writeth, and as we have rehearsed before also, before the time of deliverance the child lyeth in the mother's womb, the face and breast being towards the back of the mother. But when it should be delivered it is torn clean contrary, the head downward, the feet upward, and the face toward the mother's belly, and that if the birth be natural. Another thing also is this, that if the birth be natural the deliverance is easy without long tarrying or looking for it.

The birth contrary to nature is when the mother is delivered before her time, or out of due season, or after any other fashion than is here specified before. As when both legs proceed first or one alone, with both the hands up or both down, or else the one up and the other down, and divers otherwise as shall be hereafter more clearly declared.

Of Easy and Uneasy, Difficult or Dolorous Deliverance and the Causes of It, with the Signs How to Know and Foresee the Same

Very many of the perils, dangerous and strong, which chance to women in their labor which ensue and come in divers ways and for divers causes such as I shall here declare.

First, when the woman that laboreth is conceived over-young, as before twelve years or fifteen years of age, which chanceth sometime though not very often, and that the passage be over angust,⁸ strait or narrow, other⁹

naturally. Or else, for some disease and infirmity which may happen about that part as apostumes, pushes,¹⁰ piles, or blisters and such other, through the which causes nature cannot (but with great dolor and pain) open and dilate itself to the expelling and deliverance of the child. And sometimes the vesica or bladder or other entrails being about the matrice or womb be also apostumate and blistered, which being grieved the matrice or womb likewise is grieved with them, and that hindereth greatly the deliverance. Also sometimes in the fundament are hemorrhoids or piles, and other pushes, chappings, or chimes¹¹ which cause great pain, also hardness and difficulty or binding of the belly. Which things, for the grief and pain that ensueth of them, can see the woman to have little power to help herself in her labor.

Furthermore, if the party be weak and of feeble complexion, or of nature very cold, or too young, or very aged, or too gross and fat, or contrariwise too spare and lean, or that she never had child before, or that she be over timorous and fearful, diversely wayward, or such one as will not be ruled, removing herself from one place to another, all such things causeth the labor to be much more painful, cruel, and dolorous than it would otherwise be. Also, ye must understand that generally the birth of the man is easier than the birth of the female.

Item, if the child be of a fuller and greater growth than that it may easily pass that narrow passage, or contrariwise, if it be so faint, weak, and tender that it can not turn itself or doth it very slowly, or if the woman has two children at once; other else, that it with the which she laboreth be a monster as, for example, if it have but one body and two heads, as appeareth in the seventeenth of the birth figures, such as of late was seen in the dominion of Weidenberg.

Again, when it proceedeth not in due time or after due fashion, as when it cometh forth with both feet or both knees together, or else with one foot only, or with both feet downward and both hands upward. Other else (the which is most perilous), sidelong, arse-long, or backlong; other, having two at a birth, both proceed with their feet first or one with his feet and the other with his head, by those and divers other ways the woman sustaineth great dolor, pain, and anguish.

Item, if the woman suffer abortment,¹² that is to say, bring forth her child in the fourth or fifth month after the conception, which is before the due time. In this case it shall be great pain to her, for so much as (according to Galen's¹³ saying) in that time the entrance of the womb is so firmly and strongly enclosed that scarce the point of a needle may enter in at it.

Also, if the child be dead in the mother's belly, it is a very perilous thing for so much as it cannot be easily turned, neither can it wield or help itself to come forth; or if the child be sick or weakened, so that it can not for feebleness help itself. The which thing may be foreseen and known by

these tokens: if the woman with child has been long sick before her labor; if she have been sore laxed¹⁴, if after her conception she have had daily and unwontly her flowers; if straight after one month upon the conception her breasts yield any milk; if the child stir not nor move at such time as is convenient for it. These be tokens that it should be very weak. By what tokens ye shall know it is dead, I shall show you in the ninth chapter hereafter.

Also, there is greater peril in laboring when the secundine or latter birth is over firm or strong, and will not soon rive or break asunder so that the child may have his easy coming forth. And contrariwise, when it is over weak, slender, or thin, so that it breaketh asunder before that the child be turned or apt to issue forth, for then the humors which are collected and gathered together about this secundine or second birth pass away sooner than it should do, and the birth shall lack his due humidity and moistness which should cause it the safer to proceed and with less pain.

The birth also is hindered by over much cold or over much heat. For in over much cold the passage and all other powers of the laboring woman be coaced¹⁵ and made narrower than they would otherwise be. Likewise over much heat debilitateth, weakeneth, and fainteth both the woman and the child, so that neither of them in that case can well wield or help themselves for faintness.

And further, if the woman have used to eat commonly such meat or fruits which do exicate or dry and constrain or bind, as medlars, chestnuts, all sour fruit as crabs, chokepears, and such other, with over much use of verjuice¹⁶ and such like sour sauces with rice meal and many other things, all this shall greatly hinder the birth.

Also, the use of cold baths after the fifth month following the conception or to bathe in such water where aloin¹⁷ is, iron or salt or any such things which do coact and constrain, or if she have been often times heavy and mourning or ill at ease, or if she have been kept over hungry and thirsty, or have used over much watch and walking. Other, if she used, a little before her labor, things of great odor, smell, or savor, for such things attract and draw upward the mother or matrice, the which is great hindrance to the birth.

Also, if the woman feel pain only in the back and above the navel and not under, it is sign of hard labor. Likewise, if she were wont to be delivered with great pain in times passed is a sign of great labor always in the birth.

Now, signs and tokens of an expedite and easy deliverance be such as be contrary to all those that go before. As for example, when the woman hath been wont in times passed easily to be delivered and that in her labor she feel but little thronng or dolor, or, though she have great pains, yet they

remain not always in the upper parts but descend to the nether parts or bottom of the belly.

And to be short, in all painful and troublesome labors these signs betoken and signify good speed and luck in the labor: unquietness; much striring of the child in the mother's belly, all the throngs and pains tumbling in the fore-part of the bottom of the belly; and when the woman is strong and mighty of nature and such as can well and strongly help herself to the expelling of the birth. And again evil signs be those when she sweateth cold sweat, and that her pulses beat and labor over sore, and that she herself in the laboring faint and swoon. These be unlucky and mortal signs.

Of Conception and How Many Ways It May Be Hindered or Letted

There is nothing under heaven which so manifestly and plainly doth declare and show the magnificent mightiness of that omnipotent living god as doth the perpetual and continual generation and conception of living things here in earth, by the which is saved, prorogued, and augmented the kind¹⁸ of all things. And where that this almighty lord and creator hath so instituted and ordained that no singular thing in itself (here upon the earth) should continually remain and abide, yet hath he given from the beginning and instinced such a power and virtue unto these mortal creatures that they may engender and produce other like things unto themselves and unto their own similitude in the which always is saved the seed of posterity. Were not this provision had by almighty god the nature and kind of all manner of things would soon perish and come to an end. The which virtue and power of generation many times doth halt and miss by defect and the contrary disposition in the parts generative.

As ye may evidently see in the sowing of corn and all other manner of seed, so that there be in all manner of generation three principal parts concurrent to the same: the sower, the seed sown, and the receptacle or place receiving and containing the seed. If there be fault in any of these three then shall there never be due generation unto such time as the fault be removed or amended. The earth unto all seeds is as a mother and nurse, containing, clipping, and embracing them in her womb, feeding and fostering them as the mother doth the child in her belly or matrice, until such time as they come unto the growth, quantity, and perfection due unto their nature and kind.

But if this seed conceived in the bowels of the earth do not prove or fructify, then be thou sure that either there is let in the sower, in the seed, or else in the earth. The earth may be over waterish, dank, or over hot and dry, or else full of stones, gravel, or other rubbish, or full of ill weeds which may strangle and choke the good corn in his growing. Also, the seed may be putrefied or otherwise viciate and corrupted, and so the life and spirit of it vanished away and destroyed. The sower may inordinately strive

and cast the seed on the earth, etc. So that if there be let in none of these three parts concurrent to generation, or that the lets be removed and done away, then doubtless will ensue multiplication and increasement of that kind of the which the seed cometh, according to the natural inclination the which almighty god hath implanted and set in the kind of all things.

How Many Ways Conception May Be Letted, and How the Causes May Be Known

Everything, then, the which doth increase in his kind must first be conceived in the womb and matrice of the mother which is apt and convenient for the recreation of such seed. And as I said before, as there may be defect and lack in the mother receiving the seed, so may there be fault and defect in the sower and in the seed itself also.

And in woman there may be four general causes by the which the conception may be impeditie¹⁹ and let: over much calidity or heat of the matrice, over much coldness, over much humidity or moistness, and over much dryness. Any of these four qualities exceeding temperancy may be sufficient causes to let due conception.

Wherefore the right excellent physician Hippocrates, in the fifth book of his *Aphorisms*, sayeth, "All such women, the which have cold and dense matrices, cannot conceive. Nor such as have moist and watery matrices can conceive, for the power of the seed is extinguished in it. Also having dry matrices conceive not, for the seed perisheth for lack of due nutriment and food. But that matrice the which hath all these qualities in temperancy, that is fruitful."²⁰ This is Hippocrates' saying, the which thing also may be well perceived by a familiar example of the sowing of corn.

For if it be sown in over cold places, such as be in the parts of a country called Scythia, and in certain places of Almanie,²¹ or in such places where is continual snow or frost or where the sun doth not shine, in these places the seed or grain sown will never come to proof nor fructify but, through the vehement coldness of the place in the which it is conceived, the life and quickness of the grain is utterly destroyed and annihilated.

And farther, as concerning over much humidity: if ye sow your grain in a fen or marish²² and watery ground, the seed will perish through the over much abundance of water, which extinguisheth the liveliness and the natural power of the grain and seed.

Likewise, if it be sown in such a country or place where is over great heat, not tempered with water and rain, or if the year be so dry that there came no rain at all to allay the extreme and fervent heat of the sun, then shall the seed sown wither and dry away and the power of it be consumed and burnt.

Also, if it be sown in dry places where never cometh rain, or on the sand and gravelly places, in such a place the grain can never take nor prove, nor be conceived in it to come to any fruit or profit.

Wherefore, if the matrice be distempered by the excess of any of these four qualities, then must ye reduce it again to temperancy by such remedies as I shall show you hereafter. Likewise, may there be defect and lack in the man as if the seed be over hot, the which the woman shall feel as it were burning hot; or too cold, the which she shall feel as it were in manner cold as ice; or too fluey²³ or thin, etc. Divers other ways also it may be letted which shall not need here to be rehearsed.

Now, if the woman cannot conceive, the cause coming of over much frigidty and coldness in the matrice, that shall she know by these tokens: she shall feel great cold about the sides, the reins of the back, and the matrice. Her urine shall appear white and thinnish, and sometimes also somewhat spiss²⁴ and thick, and all manner of cold things shall annoy her, hot things shall greatly comfort her.

But if it come by over much humidity of the matrice, that shall she know by these signs: if the body of her be of a fat and gross disposition; if with her flowers issue forth at the beginning and the latter end of them certain viscous and watery substance, and that her urine be white, thick, and sometime, as it were, milky. Also, that she feel great cold and pain about the matrice and privy parts, and much dolor in her sides and in the reins of her back.

And when over-much heat or dryness in the matrice is cause of the hindrance of conception, then is the urine high-colored red or yellow, being thin with certain moles appearing in the water, the woman hath great thirst and bitter rising or belching out of the stomach into the mouth. And many times they that are in this case are very spare and lean in all their body, having also but small quantity of flowers, the which thing may happen other by over-much watch or over-much fasting, labor, travel, sorrow, sickness, etc. But such women, which naturally are thus spare and lean, may very hardly be brought to a temperancy again and be made apt to conceive. And this shall be sufficient for this time to know which quality by his excess causeth sterility. Now will we show how it shall be known whether lack of conception be in the woman or else in the man, and how to know whether the woman be conceived or not, according to the mind of right expert doctors of physick.

How to Know Whether Lack of Conception Be of the Woman or of the Man, and How It May Be Perceived Whether She Be Conceived or No

If ye be desirous to know whether the man or the woman be hindrance in conception, let each of them take of wheat and barleycorns and of beans, of each seven, the which they shall suffer to be steeped in their several urine

the space of twenty-four hours. Then take two pots, such as they set gillyflowers²⁵ in. Fill them with good earth, and in the one let be set the wheat, barley, and beans steeped in the man's water, and in the other the wheat, barley, and beans steeped in the woman's water. And every morning, the space of eight or ten days, let each of them with their proper²⁶ urine water the said seeds sown in the forenamed pots and mark whose pot doth prove and the seeds therein contained doth grow. In that part is not the lack of conception. But see that there come no other water or rain on the pots.

Item, according to Hippocrates' writing, if ye will know whether the fault be in the woman or no, then let the woman receive into her body underneath, being well and closely closed round about, the fumes of some odoriferous perfume as laudanum, storax, calamint, lignum aloes, musk, amber and such other, and if the odor and savor of such things ascend through her body up into her nose, ye shall understand that sterility cometh not of the woman's part; if not, then is the defect in her.

Item, if she take garlic, being pilled²⁷ out of the husks and convey of it into the privy parts, and if the scent of it ascend up through the body unto the nose, the woman is faultless; if not, then is there lack in her. These are signs to know whether the lack be in the man or the woman.

Whether she be conceived already or no, ye shall know by these signs: first, the flowers issue not in so great quantity as they are wont but were less and less, and in matter nothing at all cometh from them. Also, the breasts begin to wear rounder, harder, and stiffer than they were wont to be. The woman shall long after certain things otherwise than she was used to do before that time. Also, her urine waxeth spiss and thick-like by retention of the superfluities. Also, the woman feeleth her matrice very fasty enclosed and shut in, so much that as Hippocrates saith, the point of a needle may scarce enter.

Item, to know whether she be concerned or not. According to Hippocrates' mind, in the fifth book of his *Aphorisms*, give unto the woman when she is going to bed a quantity of melicratum to drink, and if after that drink she feel great pain, gnawing and tumbling in her belly, then be ye sure that she is conceived; if not, she is not conceived. This melicratum is a drink made of one part wine, another part water, sodden together with a quantity of honey.²⁸

But if ye be desirous to know whether the conception be man or woman, then let a drop of her milk or twain be milked on a smooth glass, or a bright knife, or else on the nail of one of her fingers. And if the milk flow and spread abroad upon it by and by, then is it a woman-child. But if the drop of milk continue and stand still upon that the which it is milked on, then is it sign of a man-child. Item, if it be a male, then shall the woman with child be well-colored and light in going, her belly round, bigger toward

the right side than the left. For always the man child lyeth in the right side, the woman in the left side.

Of Certain Remedies and Medicines which Shall Cause the Woman to Conceive

All sterility, then, for the most part ensueth and cometh of the discrepancy of one of these four forenamed qualities. Wherefore, the remedy and cure of the same when it chanceth must be done by such things the which have contrary power and operation to the excessive quality. For by that shall it be reduced to his temperancy again.

As, if that coldness and moistness exceeding temperancy in the matrice be occasion of sterility, then must she apply such things to that place the which be of nature hot and dry, the which may calify and warm the place, and also dry up the ill moistness and humors contained in the same, hindering conception.

Wherefore, take of savine, bay tree leaves, the flowers of camomile, melliot, majoram, caprifolium, herba paralytis, citron leaves, and such other things of aromatical and hot nature. And seethe these in water together and let the woman receive the vapor and fume hereof underneath, into her body through some conduit or pipe made for that purpose, her clothes being close about her that none of the vapor or air issue out. And over this, let her sit all a night, if she may, receiving ever the fume hereof into her body. And in the morning let her accompany with her husband, and she shall conceive.

A bath also for the same purpose. When the time of her flowers, about the end of the last quarter of the moon, is almost finished, let her bathe herself in a bath wherein is decoct²⁹ and sodden caprifolium, mallows, French mallows, hollyoak, roses, juniper berries, paritary, wild mints, bay leaves, myrtles, savine, camomile, pimpernell, mints, majoram, citron leaves, basil, pennyroyal, and such other. But before that she bathe her in this water, it shall be best for her to be purged and cleansed from the cold humors with the odoricon or with benedicta, or with the pills which be called *sinequib esse nolo* to be had at the apothecary's, and then let her enter into this foresaid bath. And when she cometh forth of the bath again, then let her take of diamargariton or of muscat, to the quantity of a nut, drinking it with good and odoriferous or well-smelling wine. Other else, let her take of this electuary³⁰ following, which is very excellent for that purpose.

Take of spike, nutmeg, cloves, zedoarium, galingale, long pepper, dry roses, storax, alipta muscata, of each of these like much, then take of the root of tormentil as much as of all the other forenamed things together, and beat all these to powder, tempering them with a sufficient quantity of clarified honey, to the which also add a little of pure musk. Of this

electuarium, both evening and morning the space of ten days, let the woman take to the mounenance³¹ of a nut with good odoriferous wine, bathing herself also every day the space of the said ten days. At her coming forth of the bath, receiving of the foresaid electuary, then also let her perfume her privities with the savor and fume of laudanum, frankincense, xiloloes, storax, amber, alipta, xilobalsamum, and such other things. And after this let her make a suppository anointed with magna trifiera or esdra, with the powder of oilbanum and the oil of bays mixed and tempered together. And let her retain this suppository in her privities all the day time the foresaid space of ten days. And then at the ten days' end, the man and woman accompanying together, god willing, she shall be conceived. And these be the remedies of the defect and lack of conception come by reason of coldness and moistness.

But if it come by distemperance of the matrice in hot and dry, first let the humor which is cause of it be purged by convenient medicines. And then every night, the space of ten days, let her bathe herself in warm water, nothing else being put unto it. And in this bath let her remain not long. And at her coming forth give her to drink of trifiera magna with watered wine, and after this receive she the vapor and fume of the decoction of these herbs underneath into her privy parts: take violets, bearsfoot, paritary, and pennyroyal. Seethe them in water, and then convey into the same place a suppository of trifiera magna with the powder of oilbanum.

Item, a suppository which is wonderful good in expelling and dowing³² away such things which let conception. Take of silver montanum beaten to powder, two drams; of the rennet³³ of a hare, the fourth part of a dram; and temper these together with clarified honey and the oil of bays and anoint herewith a suppository, the which let the woman retain in her secrets the space of a day and a night.

Item, a suppository made of hare's dung and honey tempered together is very excellent for the same purpose. But let the woman abstain from all manner of salty and sharp meats, and use to drink good odoriferous and pleasant wines allayed with water.

Also, to drink of the wine in which is dissolved musk, or else viscus quercinus³⁴ is good to help to conception. Also the heart bone of a hart and the scraping of ivory is very good for the same.

Item, a suppository for the same which hath been many times well proved for that purpose: take garlic pilled and cleansed from the husks, and seethe it in the oil of roses or else the oil of marjoram unto the time that it be dissolved and that all the moistness be departed from it. Then take it out of the oil again and stamp it, and then wrap it in wool and convey it suppository-wise into the privy parts, and there keep it the space of a day. This thing is marvelous good for conception and hath been well proved.

Divers other lets of conception and remedies for the same might here have been declared which for brevity and shortness we for this time do let pass, making here an end of this treatise, the which we have composed and translated out of Latin, to the honor of God, the utility and profit of all honest matrons.

NOTES

1. Hanging down.
2. Womb.
3. Menses.
4. Kidneys.
5. Avicenna, 980-1037, Arab physician and philosopher; medicine: doctor.
6. Albertus Magnus, 1193-1280, German philosopher.
7. Illustrations accompanying the text.
8. Tight or narrow (from Latin *angustus*, narrow or strait).
9. In other cases.
10. Apostumes: abscesses; pushes: pimples or boils.
11. Chafed or dried skin.
12. Miscarriage.
13. Claudius Galen, A. D. 130-200, Greek physician and writer on medicine.
14. Incontinent.
15. Constrained.
16. Medlars: type of sour apple; crabs: crab-apples; verjuice: acidic sauce made from crab-apples and unripe grapes.
17. Bitter purgative derived from the aloe plant.
18. Species; protogued: prolonged.
19. Impeded.
20. Hippocrates, 46-357 B. C., Greek physician, considered to be the founder of medicine; the reference is to his *Aphorisms* 5.82.
21. Germany; Scythia was the ancient name for the region north of the Black Sea, where southeastern Europe runs into the western edge of Asia.
22. Marsny.
23. Pluffy.
24. Dense.
25. The clove pink or carnation.
26. Own.
27. Peeled.
28. *Aphorisms* 5.41.
29. Boiled down.
30. Medicines usually made of powder mixed with syrup or honey.
31. Amount.
32. Pressing or squeezing.
33. Part of the stomach.
34. Oak oil.