

THE DISEASES OF WOMEN – BOOK ONE

1. These notes concern the diseases of women. I say that a woman who has not had a child suffers more severely and more quickly from menstruation than one who has given birth. For when she has given birth, the small vessels flow more easily in regard to the menses. The lochial discharge and the breaking down of the body cause the flow. In addition, those small vessels, which are closest to the womb and the breasts, have a violent discharge and the rest of the body breaks down. I have already explained how this happens in my treatise *On the Nature of the Child* concerning childbirth. When the body is broken down, the small vessels must dilate more and a better flow occurs in regard to the menses, and the womb dilates more, because the child has travelled through it with force and effort. Thus the facts are the woman gets rid of the menses less painfully when she has experienced childbirth. If some suffering occurs in the woman who has already given birth, so that the menses are not able to discharge, she bears the pain more easily than one who has not given birth. For the uterus and the body have been accustomed to being filled when she was pregnant. At the same time, once she has given birth, there is more space for the blood, in view of the fact that the body has become more fluid; and the blood, since it is in an open space in the body, causes less pain unless the small vessels are filled to capacity and full of tension. But if the woman has never given birth, the body not being accustomed to this, whenever it is filled, it is more resistant, firmer and more dense than if she has experienced childbirth

and, because the uterus is less open, the menses flow more painfully and more symptoms are encountered. This is how menstruation is explained when she has not given birth. Thus it is as I said previously. I say that the woman has a looser texture and is softer than a man, and so, because she is like this, the woman's body draws more fluid from the bowels, and more quickly than a man's body. Here is the proof: if someone should place clean fleece and a clean, thickly woven robe, equal in weight to the fleece, above water, or even in a moist place, for two days and nights, when he removes them he will find after weighing that the fleece is much heavier than the garment. This happens because condensation always goes upwards from water which is in a wide-mouthed vessel, and the fleece, because it is both loose-textured and soft, will absorb more of the emission. The garment, on the other hand, because it is compact and closely woven, is full and cannot receive more of the emission.¹ Therefore, the woman also, because she is looser-textured, draws up more moisture from the intestines in the body and the man draws up less. Because the woman has softer flesh, whenever her body is filled with blood, if it does not leave her, she has pain because the flesh is saturated and warm. For the woman has warmer blood,² and because of this she is warmer than the man. But if the supervening excess blood should be

¹ An agricultural allegory: '...because (a man's) flesh is hard, dense and non-absorbent, like thickly woven cloth, while a woman's body is like the fleece used in agricultural hydroscopy to discover moisture hidden beneath the earth's surface. And it is to such a "thought-experiment," the comparison of the absorptive properties of thickly woven cloth and spongy fleece left for a day and a night (sic) over water, that the writer of *Diseases of Women* 1 urges his readers to turn, should they wish to understand how a woman's body differs from that of a man.' Hanson. 1990:317 and note 42 on that page.

evacuated, the blood does not produce the pain and the warmth. The man, having firmer flesh than the woman, does not become overfilled as much by the blood. Indeed, none of the blood is evacuated from the body each month to cause pain; he draws such nourishment from the body, and his body is not soft because it is not overstrained, nor is it overheated by fullness as with the woman. But it makes a great contribution in this way for the man, because he works harder than the woman. For his toil draws off the moisture.

2. Therefore, when, in a woman who has not given birth, the menses stay away or are not able to find a way out, disease occurs, and this happens – either the mouth of the womb closes, or it doubles back upon itself,³ or a part of the vagina hardens. For if it should be any of these causes, the menses are not able to find a way out, until the womb changes into a healthy position. This disease happens mainly in those who have a narrow-mouthed womb, or where the neck⁴ of the womb lies in front of the vagina⁵. For if it should be one of these reasons, and if the woman does not have intercourse with her husband, and her belly is emptier at this time because of some pain, then the womb displaces itself. For the womb is not wet on its own, because the woman has not had sexual intercourse, and there is an open space, because the belly is emptier, so it turns on itself, and is drier and lighter than normal. And it is after the womb

² It is only while menstruating that the woman's blood is warmer. In Regimen I.34 (*Peri Diaivth~*) the Hippocratic author writes 'The males of all species are warmer and drier, and the females moister and colder' (Jones' translation) Jones.1998:281

³ prolapse

⁴ cervix

⁵ Complete prolapse when the entire uterus prolapses outside the vulva. The whole vagina, or at least the whole of its anterior wall, is inverted. Jeffcoate. 1969:324

has turned it happens that the mouth is displaced further, so that the cervix lies farther into the vagina. For if the womb is wet from coition and is not empty, it does not easily turn. Therefore this is the reason that the uterus closes, because the woman does not have intercourse. In the third month, the patient will be as well as possible if the menstrual lesions draw out everything that had accumulated. And if not the woman will suffer these symptoms; choking will occur now and then, and occasional fever and shivering and painful loins. These symptoms are suffered during the third month, if the blood is not discharged. During the fourth month, if the blood is not discharged, it makes a way out for that which was previously accumulated and, on the one hand, every pain experienced in the third month will hurt more and, most of all, during the time of the menses. Afterwards, on the other hand, the pains are less, and often she will have no pain. And besides these symptoms, there will also be these other signs; occasionally the urine will be thick and copious, and her belly will be hard and larger than before, and the patient will grind her teeth, and will have no appetite and will suffer from insomnia. She will suffer such symptoms during the fourth month. If she is cared for during these symptoms she remains healthy. And during the fifth month, if not much menstrual bleeding has come down, then the pain is more severe. And during the sixth month, she will already be incurable. Also she will suffer the earlier symptoms more, and besides those symptoms, these will be present; occasionally she will wander restlessly and will toss herself about, and she will faint, and vomit phlegm. She will have an intense thirst, because

her belly burns as a result of the excess of blood in the uterus, and when she is touched she will suffer pain, particularly in the abdomen, and she will have an acute fever from time to time, and the womb will rumble intermittently, because the blood gurgles in the womb and does not pass through it, and the bowel will not evacuate in the normal way, nor will the bladder filter the urine, since her womb strikes against the cervix, which is sinewy, and falls towards the belly. The patient suffers pain in the spine and the whole back, and she is tongue-tied, and becomes inarticulate, and she faints; and she is speechless, and there is stinging in her throat, and yellow bile is vomited, and she has irregular breathing; she is restless and tosses herself about, and has inflammation. When these symptoms change, the bladder draws down the thin part of the blood which is from the womb, then the urine is red and the rest of the body suffers, mainly the neck, the spine, the lower part of the back and the groin. If she has come to this point, the womb is swollen, and the lower limbs swell, both the legs and the feet, and death is imminent. When the woman is in this condition, she dies in the sixth month because the menses fail to appear. It also happens like this. For some women, after two months, there is an abundance of menstrual blood in the womb, which goes into the lungs when it is cut off, and it is said she suffers all the symptoms of consumption and such women do not survive. And these symptoms occur, there is suppuration when the delayed menses arrive after two or three months have elapsed. This mainly happens if she is burning up from fever. These are the signs: if there is suppuration, strong, throbbing pains attack the

abdomen and she cannot bear to be touched, and if she expects to improve, the menses burst forth from her through the vagina, and pus and blood flow. This smelly eruption flows for seven, eight or nine days. She suffers as in the earlier time, as previously mentioned. When she is purged, it is best if there are no ulcers. And if ulcers are left behind, she will need more treatment, so that the ulcers will not become damp and ill smelling. But, if she has large ulcers in the womb, the patient will become barren, even if she recovers. If the menses do not flow through the vagina because they have become purulent, they will occur by breaking through below the groin and in the region of the flank, without swelling, since the pus has eaten through, and in that way the menses will flow puslike and stinking. If this should happen the woman does not survive and if she does survive, she will always be barren. For in this case what remains becomes the way out for the menses. For the mouth of the womb has fallen towards this place. This also happens: with certain women, if the menses do not come for two or three months, or even longer, and they fall towards the flank, if there is no suppuration of the menstrual blood, an acephalous, large, red tumour forms above the groin. Many of the doctors, who have not yet become acquainted with what sort of tumour this is, have cut it and, in this way, have brought the patient into danger. As the tumour occurs, it happens in this manner: the flesh shares the blood, because the mouth of the womb lies close to the flank and is filled from it, and becomes separated⁶ because of the flesh filling with blood. And this is

⁶ *ejxivstatai* (*existaté*) could also be translated as 'becomes convex', i.e. 'stands out'

so, if the mouth of the womb should change position and is opposite the vagina and the menses flow through the vagina, the projection is brought against the flank; for the menstrual blood spreads to the womb, which discharges it outside. If the uterine mouth does not turn towards the vagina, it suppurates towards the flank, and through this there is an exit for the menses; the dangers are the same as previously mentioned. The woman can also turn⁷ to vomiting. The patient also has in the region of the anus, as I have mentioned in the *Diseases of Maidens*, the same symptoms and pains exhibited in that description; but the menses are produced less this way in women than in young girls.

3. When the menses stay away, a pain develops in the lower stomach, and it seems as if there is a certain heaviness, and the woman suffers terribly from pains in the waist and the flanks. And if the menses do not occur in their entirety because of disease, or are thick, sticky and viscous, the womb must first be cleansed from the top and from the bottom. Whereupon a pessary is applied to the womb, by which blood is cleansed, and leave an interval, then give a drink, by which the blood is cleansed, and let her drink crethmon⁸ in wine which is from pine. If there is no menstrual flow, it will appear that she is pregnant, and when she has intercourse with her husband, she suffers, and so the pregnancy seems to be a burden, and a weight has appeared in the belly, and the belly bulges and is just as if it longs to be pregnant; and she has heartburn, after fifty

⁷ 'have recourse'

⁸ Another name for 'crethmon' is 'samphire' which is a cliff plant with aromatic saline fleshy leaves (COD). The Latin name is *Crithmon maritimum*

days have passed, and has occasional pain in the belly in the region of the navel, the neck, the groin and the loins. And when two or three months have passed, it is then the menstrual flood bursts forth in the region of the vagina, and it seems as if it is like flesh and the discharge is like that of a miscarriage and is black. Ulcers also form in the womb, and it will be necessary to pay attention to the treatment. It happens to many women that they appear to be pregnant for six months, or a little less time, and the womb bulges, and everything else seems to happen to her as if she is pregnant. Then she sometimes has purulence bursting forth over the groin at the same time during the fifth or sixth month and the purulence has made a way for the menses. The woman also has ulcers forming in the area above the groin, and there is danger of death; if she should survive, she will be sterile. If the menses burst forth around the vagina, and flow from her putrid and puslike, and from these putrefactions ulcers form in the womb, the patient is endangered. It is necessary, lest the ulcers become chronic, that they are treated medically. The woman still becomes sterile, even if she is cured. If her menses should not discharge violently, having been delayed for up to six months, she will suffer all the things which happen in childlessness when the menses are not able to find a way out. If she is treated medically, she will be healthy, but if she is not treated medically, even after holding out until the eighth month, she dies. And it happens in many cases, if the menses should flow full of phlegm, they flow for a long time and are scantier than the healthy menses. The patient becomes healthy after being suitably treated.

4. If the menses should flow from a woman, and they flow less than what is required, it is because the mouth of the womb has turned aside a little from the vagina, or is slightly closed, so that sometimes the menses flow, but other times the passages that carry them through are blocked off; when the blood goes down into the uterus, because it always presses upon the uterine mouth, then it appears little by little. Then, when the days have passed on which she is accustomed to purging herself, and the blood that is left behind in the uterus is retained and a second menstrual flow which comes down does not force out the retained blood, but when it does come down the patient is continually weighed down. The woman does not feel the effect very much for the first month or two or three. But when more months pass, she will suffer even more. She will not be pregnant if she has such symptoms. A slight fever will seize her, especially on the days on which she is accustomed to purging herself; it is likely, and between this time also, that she will have fever and shiver and have heartburn and vomit continually every day, and the body feels occasional pain, especially the lower part of the back and spine and the groin, and the joints of the arms and legs. These pains are not felt at the same time, but sometimes one and sometimes the other, as if the secreted blood is heavy and is not able to remain in the uterus. There is swelling when it settles in the body and strong spasms of the body joints, and one then another of the rest of the aforementioned symptoms appear. If the patient is treated in the normal way, she will become healthy, but if not, the disease of seven months, or even longer, will cause death, or she will

become lame; or the disease causes a certain impotence of the parts. If the blood, through cold and lack of food, should attack there it may affect coagulation around the nerves. But this disease happens more in the unmarried woman. If the disease in question attacks a woman who has borne a child, or such diseases likely to be discussed, they will last for a longer period of time and they will be less painful. Both the symptoms and the results are the same in both the childless and the one who has experienced childbirth, if they are not treated. The treatments must be done at once. If not, the diseases make their appearance.

5. If the menses should flow longer than necessary and thicker, (such as when the body has the pores and passages open naturally and the mouth of the womb is lying close to the vagina), in these circumstances the woman copulates many times with her husband and has instant enjoyment, then, after copious hot meals, the menses, which have come down and are flowing, suddenly dilate the mouth of the womb by force. If, on these occasions, she is not hungry, but eats many hot meals, it makes the mouth wide, and her body, because she is both enjoying and desiring copulation with her husband,⁹ has the pores and passages open towards the uterus, and the hot meals are carried onwards. If such should be the case, the woman will become pallid. If, at a later stage, some disease or suffering should attack her, her body is exhausted and, similarly, the uterus is wide-mouthed in the normal way and her body has its pores and passages open towards the uterus. After these events,

she has a fever, and loss of appetite and is distressed, and emaciated and weak from the menstruation. She has pain in the lower part of her back, and when the time has passed, if she is not treated, everything pains her more over the interval of time, and there will be the danger of her becoming sterile, or becoming exhausted by time and the disease. If some other disease should attack her at the same time, she could die from this.

6. The menses flow thickest and most abundantly during those days in the middle, beginning and ending lesser and weaker. The monthly periods flow moderately in every woman, if she is healthy, being enough to fill two Attic cotyles¹⁰ or a little more or less, and this appears for two or three days. But a greater or lesser period of time for menstruation is unhealthy and the woman could be barren. One should conjecture that the woman's body is barren, and question, regarding the menses compared earlier, whether the flux is unhealthy or not. For if they recurred for less or more days than is usual, or if the menses should be less or more, they are unhealthy; or if not, the constitution itself would be diseased and barren. And if it should be this reason, and it changes to the healthier condition, it is better. The blood flows like that from a slaughtered animal, and coagulates quickly if the woman is healthy. For the women who naturally menstruate for more than four days, and whose menses flow abundantly, become thin, and their embryos are

⁹ 'This is one of the rare places in the Corpus where women are described as having a conscious appetite for intercourse, and it is part of a pathological condition.' Dean-Jones. 1999:134

¹⁰ An Attic cotyle is ± 250 ml, so to lose 500 ml of blood during menstruation is excessive. 'The total loss of blood is difficult to estimate but is said normally to vary from 5 to 100 ml with an average of 25-30 ml.' Jeffcoate 1969:108

thin and weakened. But those women whose discharge appears for less than three days, or flows a little, are stout and have a healthy complexion and are also masculine in appearance, but they are not philoprogenitive, nor do they become pregnant.¹¹

7. If sudden choking is apparent, it happens mainly in women who have not had intercourse with men and more often in older women than the younger ones, for their uterus is lighter. It happens mostly for this reason: when the woman has an emptiness of the vessels, and works harder than is customary, the womb, becoming withered, because it is empty and light, turns on itself because of the hard work. For there is in fact an empty space in which it is able to turn, because the belly is empty; when the womb turns it lies on the liver, and they go together and lie against the abdomen. For the womb runs towards and goes upwards to the moisture, because it becomes unusually dry through the hard work. The liver is moist, and when the womb lies against the liver, sudden choking occurs when the breathing outlet is stopped around the womb. At the same time, when the womb begins to strike against the liver, phlegm also flows down from the head into the abdomen so that the woman chokes. Simultaneously, when the womb goes with the flow of the phlegm, it goes into a position away from the liver, and the choking stops. The womb returns, dragging down moisture and is weighed down. A gurgling sound comes from the womb when it flows into its own place. When it has returned, the womb is moister after these events than it was

¹¹ In *Airs, Waters, Places XXI*, the Hippocratic author describes the Scythian women, whose menses are scanty and late because they are fat and are infertile because the fat closes the womb and does not

formerly, for the head immediately releases the phlegm into the belly. When the womb is next to the liver and the abdomen, the woman also chokes, and the whites of the eyes roll back and she becomes cold. At the same time some women also become livid. She grinds her teeth and saliva flows around her mouth, and she is like those who have epilepsy. And if the womb lingers near the liver and the abdomen, the woman suffocates. Sometimes, when the woman has empty vessels and works hard, the womb, when it turns, falls upon the neck of the bladder and causes strangury¹², but there is no other illness, and the woman quickly becomes healthy if she is treated, and sometimes recovery is even spontaneous. In other cases, from fatigue or lack of appetite, the womb, when it falls against the lower back or hip joints, becomes painful.

8. If the woman has an ailing body, her menses also become bilious, for this is well known. They are very black, sometimes black and brilliant, and come little by little and do not coagulate quickly. The seed is weakened into two parts, one of the male and one of the female, and she will not be pregnant. At the beginning of the disease, the woman no longer purges on the days which are customary. When the menses continue, the more days she purges the less the menses appear every day, and acute irregular fevers attack with shivering, and there is occasional lack of appetite, and heartburn, and most pain is when menstruation is due. When she purges, it flows for a little time

allow the seed access. The men are also blamed for the barrenness of women because their horse-riding causes impotence. Jones:1995.125

¹² Disease in which urine is passed painfully and in drops. – COD.1984

compared to that which flowed earlier, and then it becomes the same again. When she is treated she quickly becomes healthy. If

she is not treated and time passes, much of what has been described earlier is more painful for her. Pain will be suffered, then it will attack the belly in the area of the navel, then the groin, then the lower back and the perineum, then the neck and then violent choking will attack, and there will be darkness before her eyes and vertigo, just as if the purging is sent from above and is released. For if the body should become ill, the menses become less for a woman, and, if her body should be quite full, the menses are similarly full. And if the menses should come, they are bilious, swooning occurs, and occasional lack of appetite, and distress, and sleeplessness, and frequent belching. The patient does not wish to walk about, and she is depressed and does not seem to look at anything, and is fearful. If she is cared for, she will be healthy thereafter, but if time passes, she will suffer even more. The best results happen if bilious vomiting occurs, or the belly is troubled, not excessively, with a bilious nausea, or a flow occurs which is not strong. For if any of these symptoms attack strongly when the body is emaciated, there is danger; but if any or all the pain is purged through moderate biliousness, the woman becomes healthy. But if she is neither cared for, nor any of these symptoms occur, the woman will die. For generally it happens that a bilious flux occurs from this disease. If a flux occurs, sometimes the first appearance will be slight, at other times it occurs continually every day as it mostly occurs all at once. And as time passes, for the main part too, the disease is acute, and

the womb is afflicted from the purging of the bile which has flowed and is ulcerated. Yet, even during this time she becomes healthy if she is cared for, and if the flow is checked for her. If the womb is inflamed from the ulcers, the disease will be even more acute for her, and much malodorous and puslike matter will come from her womb, immediately there is a discharge and each time it is serous like that from flesh, and she suffers more from all the previously mentioned symptoms. The ulcers will become even more malignant until she dies. And even if she recovers, she will be sterile from the scar tissue.

9. If the woman has an unhealthy body and it is full of phlegm, her menses flow full of phlegm. It is common knowledge that it should flow full of phlegm, for the menses appear from her as full of membranous substances, and they are stretched out like spiders' webs, and are whitish. This happens if her body and head are full of phlegm, and this is not purged downwards either through the nose or through the anus or through the urethra, but is expelled with the purging in the menstrual flow and in the disturbance of the blood. If these things happen in this way, sometimes she will not feel the effect for two or three days, but when the time becomes longer and she is not cared for, she suffers more, and is attacked by erratic fevers. She loses her appetite occasionally, and has heartburn and suffers mostly when the menses approach. But when she is purged, for a short time she finds relief compared to that suffered earlier. Then the symptoms return to the same state. If she is not cared for and the time passes, everything will be as it was when the bilious-like menses were flowing, until the time when her menstrual flow is

stopped. And for the woman also it follows the flux is full of phlegm. I will rather discuss other such symptoms a little later. If it should be excessive, the menses always occur every day, sometimes they flood, other times they are scanty, sometimes the menstrual flow is like water that flows from flesh, and then it is like ichor.¹³ Inside the woman many clots of blood develop, and, like vinegar, (the flow) scours the earth and stings the woman, if it should touch her, and ulcerates the womb. After she gets into this condition, she suffers all the same symptoms as before, but that way she will suffer less in the head. The ulcers are neither ugly nor large, nor puslike, nor strong smelling as they were at that time, but are less. When the woman is treated she becomes healthy but, if the disease advances and she is not close to death, it is not possible for her to become fertile while she is in this condition.

10. Whenever women who have intercourse are not able to fall pregnant, it is necessary to enquire whether they have their monthly periods or not, and whether the seed is immediately discharged or only on the next day or the third, sixth or seventh day. If then the woman says it is discharged immediately whenever she has had intercourse, her cervix is not straight, but is bent up and does not catch the seed. If she says on the second or third day, the womb is full of moisture and the seed is washed out. If it is the sixth or seventh day, the seed rots, and being rotten, it departs. Therefore, because it does not accept the generating seed, the cervix must be treated medically at first so

¹³ 'Ichor' is a watery fetid discharge. In Greek Mythology it is a fluid flowing like blood in the veins of the gods. (COD)

that it will be straight; if the seed is washed out on the second or third day, the womb and the head must be treated, and if it rots and departs, both the womb and the entire body, which is damp, must be treated. It is necessary to know each of these cases in this way.

11. The need for purging should be known here. When the menses happen, fold a rag as large as a hand span; stretch it tightly over fine ashes, and then place it so that the discharge flows on to this. Two rags are to be used separately on each occasion, the one in the daytime and the one at night. And the rag used during the day must be washed the next day, and the one for night use must be washed when a day and a night have passed, after having lain in the ashes. After the washing, look carefully at what comes from the laundered rags, after they have dried in the sun; and, even better, look at the dark spot. Then if phlegm is the obstacle to conception, the rags will be full of mucus, but if brine and gall are the hindrance, the rags will be red and somewhat black. Therefore, by looking at these signs, and by examining scientifically with careful judgement, look at the whole body and whether it appears to indicate much purging or not, after examining her skin, age, strength, the season and what is necessary for the diet. Treatment is to be provided for the whole body, and both the womb and the cervix are to be treated. If the cervix should be shut, it must be dilated. If they (i.e. the womb and the uterine mouth) are slanting, it is necessary to straighten them. If they should be wet, it is necessary to dry them, and everything else is done opposite (to what is indicated). Roughly speaking, the main treatment is the same

for everything, except for drawing down the menses. For as long as these occur, nothing is needed to draw them down, unless something harmful is present in the menses, then this must be taken away. When the flow is phlegmlike and full of membranes, bilious, serous and thin, or white and full of clots it must be treated, also when it is black and the colour of coal, or dark-coloured, or pungent, salty, turbid or puslike. All these conditions have to be alleviated from below, for they prevent pregnancy. Inasmuch, therefore, as the menses are phlegmlike and full of membranes, and these women are plump, they have a wet mouth, and much saliva and stickiness. If the woman tastes vinegar or something pungent, the saliva in her mouth is more abundant and is not salty, and from everything that she either eats or drinks, trouble manifests itself in her. The belly becomes swollen and there is nausea and much distress. A discharge flows down from the head and everything is congested and much moisture is drawn in. The parts under the eyes become livid and puffy. For such women it is necessary to give a vapour bath¹⁴ to the whole body and for them to vomit frequently both from food and from fasting, and to completely relieve the area around the lower belly with light drugs, those which draw the least bile, and to eat one meal a day, and exercise frequently and to lead a life having a very dry diet and with very little drink, which is very pure; a relaxed belly is better observed. It is necessary to purge the uterus with pessaries made of non-pungent drugs, if the uterus is not affected by this regimen. She should always take a vapour bath before the purging, firstly

¹⁴ For details on bathing refer to Jouanna.1999:168-9

with a fomentation made from fennel, and then one made from fragrant herbs. The vapour baths and the applications of pessaries are done in order that, when a judgement has been formed, everything will have been done and will be according to custom, during which time the menses should be present. Then if the menses are physically clean, pure and full of blood, without more ado the woman must go to her husband at the start of the menstrual flow, but it is best during the time the menses are finishing and still flowing rather than when they have disappeared. When she wants to go to her husband, she must fumigate with something fragrant and astringent. She must burn incense through the lid of a vessel and through the reed, while sprinkling the medication over warm ashes. When she has sprinkled the medication, and put on both the lid and the reed, she takes a vapour bath sitting down. Whenever it is necessary for her to fumigate herself she must use a lead probe, so that she fumigates up through the dilated cervix. Then whenever she stands up, the probe must again be inserted while she is lying on the bed. Then, after she has withdrawn the probe she must immediately sleep with her husband. If that which is from her husband is not visible to her, she must keep still after stretching out and crossing her legs. During that day a fast is an advantage, but, if she wants to, an unsalted potion may be drunk in water. She is to drink this potion then, whenever she wishes to fumigate herself. If, after having had intercourse with her husband, she should hold back the seed for the next day and even until the following day, she abstains from food and bathing, but drinks unsalted barley groats in water two or three

times a day. This must be the diet for six days, and seven days is better, lest she discharges that which is from her husband whenever she has intercourse. She must go without bathing all the time and she must be capable of lying still. If she wishes to walk around, she must walk in an even, smooth area, neither going uphill nor downhill. She should sit on something soft, if she has conceived, and to keep the remaining diet the same for thirty days. She must not bathe, or else, when she needs to, to wash a little and not in very warm water, and not to wet her head. She may eat food, bread and barley-cake, if she wishes. She may eat flesh from a ringdove and similar fowl, as much sea-food that settles the belly and to abstain from pungent garden herbs. She may have black wine, and meat, roasted rather than boiled, from both domestic and wild animals.

12. If the woman should conceive, it is necessary to do it in this way. If she does not conceive, yet that which has flowed from her husband with abundant moisture should depart on the second or third day, it is clear that the uterus is very moist. Then it is necessary to treat according to the normal method until it becomes dry. And when it seems to be dry, this is the better treatment – an emollient remedy applied both behind and in front until her uterus becomes normal. She must go again to her husband when the menses are no longer abundant, but scanty and of a good colour, and she desires sexual intercourse. During the remaining days she must desire her husband, if the uterus is better. When she has had intercourse in the days that have been

spoken of, if the uterus is ready, and if the woman retains the seed for ten or twelve days, she must not sleep with her husband. If she has not conceived, but the womb is healthy - for, of course, this frequently happens whenever the well-nourished womb becomes weak from pain or from the use of purgatives and excessive fumigation – it is not able to carry the seed before it has become normal and is strong. This is common knowledge. When the seed is discharged from her, and it is discharged on the second or third day and even later, it comes away thick and clotted, like mucus, if it is not bad and the seed is not destroyed by some other disease of the uterus. When, therefore, such a condition is evident, it is sufficient to treat the uterus, but pay attention to the entire body, so that she is in good health, so that when the body is firm it is, at the same time, plump. She must be treated with a few baths and plenty of light exercise. She must abstain from pungent and salty foods, using emetics before the days when she has noticed her menses coming, and, in turn, starving herself and to complete the rest of the regimen as discussed. This is the treatment concerning these complaints.

13. Regarding such women, when they have intercourse, the semen immediately flows through from the man, and for these women, the cervix is the cause. It is necessary to treat in this way. If the cervix is tightly shut, open it up with dilators¹⁵ and lead probes, put her in a vapour bath with a soft fumigant which is from fennel, and purge her with pessaries which make the uterus thin and straightens it. After the purging and the vapour baths, rinse

¹⁵ Lit: pine splinters. Probably used to hold open the cervix in order to insert the lead probe.

out using that which is opposite to the cause. In such women, the cervix is turned back and has struck against the hip-joint, for it happens also when such a situation prevents the womb from accepting the seed. When, therefore, something like this occurs, it is necessary to fumigate with the fragrance of the vapours. After the vapour bath, by gently feeling with her finger, the woman drags the uterus away from the hip-joint and, after it has been detached, the uterus is corrected with dilators and the lead sound, in accordance with the previous instruction. When the womb is both corrected and dilated, purge it with soft pessaries, and do the rest according to the normal method. When the uterus is dilated more than necessary, purging is a necessity. After the purging, use rinses and incenses. And if it becomes more closed than necessary, the uterus needs emetics and a foul-smelling vapour until it goes into place,¹⁶ and to use the regimen and the normal method. If the mouth is fatty and thick, and the woman has not conceived through this treatment, she is to eat boiled mustard on an empty stomach and to drink pure wine afterwards, and to use a red sodium-carbonate, cumin and pine resin pessary. It is better wrapped in a linen cloth. Or use a pessary made from sodium-carbonate with myrrh and pine resin and a white ointment, or burn a deer's horn and mix double-bruised wheat. Let her drink it in wine on the fourth day. If she does not find relief from pain, she must boil leeks and take a hip-bath in this water. Or let her apply bruised acorn, chew fresh garlic and, after drinking a mixture of honey and water, let her vomit.

¹⁶ More of the 'wandering womb' theory! In Chapter 7, the 'dry' womb goes after moisture; here the womb is

14. To those women where the seed remains and putrefies inside and causes trouble, give fruit of harsh orach¹⁷ or juice with honey or a lozenge with cumin.¹⁸
15. And when the menses are ill-smelling, and the woman does not become pregnant, mix purslane¹⁹ and wild goose oil and apply.
16. For such women, where, on the sixth and seventh day, her husband's semen has become rotten, it is likely to be the influx from both humours, bile and brine. It is necessary to treat in this way with hellebore or with scammony²⁰ and wild purslane, for they purge both phlegm and bile from the top and bottom and draw down breaths, but, before the cleansing, use the fragrant vapours. And whenever you put her in a vapour bath, purge with pessaries the same way as previously, and use the emollients after the vapour baths and purging, and the pessary made from mercury²¹ and wormwood²² herb, anemone and white or black hellebore.²³ It is necessary to use those of the medications mentioned here for these women. Regarding the regimen, make an examination of the woman's whole body; whether she seems to be very dry or very fleshy, and if she is very dry she must take plenty of baths and eat all the foods which are boiled, either fish or meat, in watery wine, boiled herbs and everything boiled in grease and sweet to the taste. For

returned to its normal place by applying the foul vapour to her nose – bad smells repel, sweet odours attract.

¹⁷ A wild plant of genus *Atriplex*, especially species used instead of spinach.

¹⁸ A plant like fennel, with aromatic seeds (*Cuminum cyminum*).

¹⁹ A low growing succulent herb of the *Portulaca oleracea* family

²⁰ A gum resin used as a drastic purgative (*Convolvulus scammonia*).

²¹ A herb of genus *Mercurialis*.

²² Wormwood is a perennial herb of the genus *Artemisia*. It has bitter, tonic and stimulating qualities and is not only used medicinally but also in the preparation of absinth and vermouth.

²³ One of the uses of hellebore in ancient times was to cure madness. It obviously has another use here.

these foods generally make her moist both in the entire body and in the uterus. If she is very moist, the uterus has no need of these treatments but the opposite. It is not necessary to touch the womb or to purge afresh or to fumigate, for it is usual for the flux to go towards the disturbed part. And if the womb is saturated more than normal, then it must be dried up and fumigated. If the bile goes towards it the womb, that which purges the bile is to be given. If the flux is salty, give ass' milk and wine and other things that are able to help.

17. It is necessary when you have considered the severity of the diseases, and have studied the circumstances from which they arise, as is required, then to turn to my other instructions and cure the parts. Consider such causes which prevent the women becoming pregnant because of their uterine mouths, then treat the cervixes of these women, as they should be well-opened. In such cases where the moisture causes the cervix to be closed, the doctor should look at this, as the mouth should not close up. Carefully examine the overall condition of the women and see if anything seems to be disturbed from within the whole body, and whether it is from their wombs, or whether it is from both body and womb.²⁴ Treat the womb in this way, so that it is neither wet nor very dry, but juicily drier, so that it is drier with just enough moisture, and so that it will be abundant rather than scanty. Dry the uterus when it is saturated and very wet, so that it is humid when left behind and not too dried up. For the excesses of these conditions are to be altogether avoided. The woman becomes pregnant when she does not have the moisture,

but not when she is dry, if any of these conditions is not in its original state. She must go to her husband, when the conditions have improved from the treatment, and when the monthly periods are ceasing or starting. It is best when they have stopped. It is mainly during these days she should make the attempt, if she is able to conceive; for these days are the most decisive. If she is not immediately pregnant, and she is in good health otherwise, there is no obstacle to her having intercourse with her husband on the other days. For the treatment causes them desire, and the small vessels relax, and if the semen from the man flows together on the same side as that from the woman, she will conceive. For even that is suitable for her, either immediately or at a later time. Enough on the matter about these women.

18. If the mouth of the womb is too wet, it is not able to attract the seed, so use pungent pessaries. For after the cervix has been irritated and inflamed then it becomes firm; it has an affinity with something if it (i.e. the cervix) should become hard. For it is better to apply the pungent pessaries, because they irritate, and being fine and causing inflammation, they disperse the hardened swelling. If the hardened swelling is softened, treat with emollients and it will not sting.

²⁴ The style of writing seems to have changed in this chapter. The writer refers to 'women' in the plural whereas in other chapters it is 'woman' in the singular.

19. If the woman does not conceive after a long time, despite the appearance of the menses, whenever it is the third or fourth day,²⁵ after rubbing on alum, which has been diluted with sweet oil, soak it up with a woollen pessary, then let her have this for three days. On the fourth day, after boiling up dried gall of an ox in oil, and applying the scum which is mixed into a paste, let her keep this for three days. On the next day, let her take out the pessary and have intercourse with her husband.
20. If the woman does not receive the seed, even though her menses come naturally, there will be a membrane in the front, and it comes from other causes. You will know this if you touch the obstacle with your finger. Make a pine resin and copper particles pessary, diluted in honey, and smear a linen cloth, apply a bandage, fastening it to the surface so that it is innermost, and when you draw it out, let her thoroughly wash out with the warm wine, having boiled off the myrtle in wine. It is better to remove the membrane.
21. There are some women who easily fall pregnant, but are not able to carry to full term, because they miscarry their babies at the third or fourth month, although nothing has happened through injury nor from unsuitable food. For these women the cause is one of those discussed earlier, but mainly it is when the womb does not allow the growth in the embryo. The belly itself

²⁵ This is a rather confusing passage. In Chapter 6, the author speaks of the ‘days in the middle’ of the menstrual period. Does the above sentence refer to a woman who has a period of three or four days, or does it refer to the third or fourth day of her period? If it is the former then a pessary made from alum, etc. is inserted on the third day, i.e. the last day of her period and left for three days. If the flow lasts for four days the other pessary, made from ox gall, is to be used. Whatever the meaning, it shows that the Hippocratic doctors knew that a woman had two passages – the vagina and the urethra – because the flow of urine was not hampered by the use of a pessary.

is troubled and at this time there is weakness, a violent fever and lack of appetite attack, at which time the embryos are destroyed. It is for this reason also; if the womb is smooth either naturally or from ulcers appearing in it. For if the womb is smooth, it is because the membranes which envelop the baby become detached from it when the baby begins to move, because the membranes have less hold of the womb than is required, because the womb becomes smooth. One would know each one of these reasons, if one examines them precisely. The smoothness is apparent if another woman touches the womb when it is empty, for otherwise it is not distinguishable. If the menses flow in these women, they come abundantly. It is among those in whom it comes who carry the embryo to full term. With treatment there is hope of childbirth. Here is the report about these cases.²⁶

22. If you wish it to happen that a woman who cannot have children conceives, you must look carefully at the menses, whether they are full of phlegm or full of bile. You will know in this way. Put down thin, dry sand whenever her menses happen and pour it over the blood in the sun, and allow it to dry out. If it is full of bile, the blood, which has dried in the sand, will be greenish-yellow, and if it is full of phlegm, the menses are like mucus. Whichever of these it is, purge the bowel, and it is necessary to do this either from the top or from the bottom, then purge the womb.

²⁶ 'After Chapter 20 Littré's chapters are out of order: the material in his chapters 22, 23, and 24 (which also deal with women who do not become pregnant) belongs before his chapter 21; two of the major manuscripts – theta and V – also place the material in chapter 21 after that in Littré's chapter 24. The chapter which is his number 25 will then follow directly upon chapter 21.' Hanson.1975:579

23. If you wish the woman to conceive, she must take seven grains of ivy, or, each month, drink the leaves in mature wine when the menses are ceasing; or after boiling pomegranate peel in sweet-smelling pure wine, make a pessary and apply it at midday; or after kneading smooth Egyptian alum, apply, after fastening it with wool until the sun sets. After removing it, she must thoroughly wash out her womb with sweet-smelling wine. Do these things when the menses have ceased.
24. This is also the case when the women purge. They fall pregnant mainly because they desire it, and the seed strengthens within them, if they have intercourse when necessary, and the man's semen mixes easily and, if it is superior, it has an affinity in this way. For then, usually, the cervix has opened, and has straightened after the purgings, and the veins attract the seed. During the previous time, the uterine mouth was more closed and the blood-filled veins do not attract the seed in the same way. If the seed runs off in a continual flow, and does not stop, the woman did not copulate gladly with her husband, and did not conceive. She has painful loins and a slight fever and is weak and fainting. It is then the uterus is not in its place. If, however, the flux comes with abundance, it is better. If the uterus discharges, prescribe a coarse regimen, flesh of swine or of ringdove, of black wine and potions such as have been written about against flux.

25. Now I will talk about diseases of pregnant women. I say that a woman who is pregnant for two or three months and more, if the menses flow from her each month she is necessarily thin and weak. It is then also that fever attacks on the days before the menses flow, and while they are flowing. After they flow she will become pale, yet little flows out. For these women the womb is open more than is necessary and does not allow the growth of the embryo. For when the woman is pregnant blood comes down from the whole body into the womb little by little, and, because it is enveloped, the embryo grows. But if the womb is too open, it lets through the blood each month, as it is accustomed to flow, and the embryo becomes thin and weak. By treating the woman, the embryo is improved and the woman herself becomes healthy. But if she is not treated, the embryo is destroyed, and the woman is in danger of having a chronic disease if the menses flow more than necessary after the miscarriage, because the uterus is more dilated. There is danger also if the head of the pregnant woman is full of phlegm, and the acrid phlegm goes down into the womb, and discharges violently from the head into the belly. A slight fever attacks her and she has weak palpitations, which become weaker and weaker or severe palpitations which increase. If she has lack of

appetite also and debility, the embryo is in danger of being quickly destroyed, and the woman will be in danger of succumbing if she is not treated when she gives birth, because the belly has opened passages, but the flow must be restrained immediately. There are many other dangers by which the embryo is destroyed. These are if the pregnant woman is sick and weak, and she lifts a heavy weight, or is beaten, or jumps, or has no appetite, or has fainting spells, or takes too much or too little food, or is alarmed and frightened, or screams or is weak. Food and an abundance of blood are causes of miscarriage. The womb itself has conditions in which it miscarries, when it is flatulent, compact or loose, large or small, and other suchlike conditions. If a pregnant woman suffers with her belly or her lower back, one must dread the foetus aborting, because the membranes which surround it have been torn. There are those women who destroy the embryos if they eat or drink something pungent or unusually sharp, while the infant is small. For if anything unusual happens to the infant, and if it is still small, it dies, especially if the woman ate or drank such items that result in upsetting her belly, because the child is young. For the womb perceives the intestinal discharge. If the woman works harder than usual and her belly is shut off or even becomes large, the child dies because it is warmed by the hard work and is squeezed by the belly. For there are very many babies which are weak when they are small. Even large babies are destroyed. In this case women need not be surprised because

they miscarry involuntarily; for it requires a lot of watchfulness and knowledge in order to bring to term and nourish the child in the womb, and to bring it successfully to birth during the delivery.

26. If a pregnant woman's body should become diseased, she may have biliousness and pain, and feverishness from time to time, a bitter taste in her mouth, a greenish-yellow tongue, jaundiced eyes, bilious-looking nails, and pungent smelling urine, especially if she is feverish. In this case it happens – after she has given birth – that the discharge is bilious, and the child is weak. The lochial²⁷ discharge is either bilious or very black. Fat appears on the surface and the discharge comes a little at a time and does not coagulate quickly. The woman will endure it easier the first time, then with difficulty, and she discharges less than necessary. For if her body should become ill, the lochia flows less from her and is more painful. She will suffer all the same symptoms inasmuch as the menses flow like bile. She will have a less chronic disease, but it will have the same dangers, symptoms and changes. For either she has bilious vomiting or a discharge occurs in the region of the belly and the womb becomes ulcerated. The woman needs a lot of attention whenever something like this happens, so that she does not die or become sterile. If none of these symptoms occur and she is not treated, but the lochial discharge is held back, she will die within thirty-one days in most cases. Let her drink medication to flush out bile. Anise is good (for this) as well as anything that acts as a diuretic. Let her vomit and bring on sweats, and wash

out the womb with juice of barley gruel, or honey and eggs and an infusion of mallow.²⁸

27. When in the case of pregnant women, around the seventh or eighth month, the fullness of the breasts and womb reduces suddenly and the breasts shrivel up, and the milk does not appear, it is said that the child is dead or, if it is alive, it is weak.
28. If in pregnant women menses appear, miscarriages occur if the menses are abundant or bad-smelling, or the embryos become sickly.
29. If a pregnant woman is full of phlegm, and she suffers headaches and is occasionally feverish, the phlegm turns round in her head, and becomes oppressive and cold and passes through into the body and the veins when the head is full. It also happens that the skin looks like lead, and she vomits phlegm, has a white tongue and urine, and disorder of the bowel, is quite white, cold and is lethargic. After childbirth, the discharge flows full of phlegm, and appears full of membranous substances, and will be just as if spiders' webs have been cut up inside her. She will suffer all the same symptoms also as when the menses were flowing full of phlegm. She will be ill for a shorter time, but the illness will have the same dangers, symptoms and changes. For it will be that her vomit will be full of phlegm and she will have similar lingering symptoms to that illness. For the lochial discharge and the phlegm-like menses will be removed in the same way, but they remain for less time than the menses. If the

²⁷ This is the discharge which flows after birth. The belief was that it flowed for 30 days after the birth of a boy and for 42 days after a girl.

²⁸ This plant is of the genus *Malva*. The species has hairy stems and leaves and bears purple flowers.

continuous discharge does not flow from her, she will die within forty-five days. And if the lochial discharge flows full of phlegm from her, it will flow less than the healthy menses, but if the woman is treated she will become healthy, although she will be flatulent from the start of the treatment until she is cured. For this illness is difficult. She must be given medication, one which brings down phlegm, and she must drink boiled goat's milk with honey. If it has no effect, give nose-smart²⁹ or safflower³⁰ or spurge flax³¹ or polypody,³² or whey, or that which is composed of salts, and such preparations that loosen and bring down phlegm.

30. If a pregnant woman has a diseased spleen which is caused from suffering, which is discussed in the disease which discharges water and pituitous menses,³³ the lochial discharge will flow like water, and sometimes a lot will come and sometimes a little, and it occurs when it is like water which runs from meat, as if someone has washed away bloody meat, but then it is a little thicker and does not coagulate. She will suffer all the same symptoms of the women whose menses flow watery, and the disease will have the same dangers and changes. For it will happen that the menstrual flow becomes watery, or conceals the discharge and it turns around the belly and the legs, or goes into the chest or any of these, and the same dangers will be present for her, which have also been discussed earlier.

²⁹ *Lepidium sativum* LSJ provides most if, not all, Latin botanical names

³⁰ *Carthamus tinctorius*

³¹ *Daphne Guidium*

³² *Polypodium vulgare*

³³ cf. Chapter 9

31. If a pregnant woman swells up, give as much nettle seed as possible, and honey and mixed, sweet-smelling wine, twice a day. If a pregnant woman suffers from bile, give a decoction of barley gruel, sprinkled over red sumach³⁴ or the juice from the mulberry tree, but she must swallow it cold, and the pain will settle down.
32. If sudden choking occurs in the pregnant woman - but this happens mainly when the woman is hardworking and has no appetite, because the womb becomes feverish from the hard work and there is less moisture for the foetus,³⁵ because the mother's stomach is emptier at the time – straighten the foetus towards the liver and the abdomen, because these are moist, and it will cause sudden, violent choking. For it stops the outlet near the belly, and speechlessness restrains the woman and she rolls her eyes,³⁶ and suffers everything the same as that which has been much spoken of, when I spoke about the womb choking.³⁷ At the same time the choking begins in the pregnant woman, phlegm flows down from her head into the abdomen, so that it is not possible for the body to draw breath. If, at the same time, with the descent of the phlegm, the foetus goes into its own place so that it draws down the moisture and is carried down by the phlegm, the woman becomes healthy. Gurgling occurs because the foetus returns to its own place and the womb becomes humid as is normal for a woman. If the foetus does not go quickly into its own place then two afflictions affect the

³⁴ *Rhus coriaria*. The leaves of the shrub are dried and ground.

³⁵ The Greek word τῷ ἐμβρυῶν is the same for 'embryo' and 'foetus'. An embryo becomes a foetus eight weeks after conception.

³⁶ Lit: 'throws up the whites of her eyes'

³⁷ cf. Chapter 7.

foetus immediately – the phlegm, which is descending from the head, weighs it down, and chills it into remaining, and the strangeness of the place contributes to this.³⁸ There will be danger if suitable treatment is not quickly prescribed, for the woman will choke. The foregoing concerns the subject of choking.

33. If, for a pregnant woman, the time for delivery has arrived, and she has childbirth pangs, and for a long time the woman is unable to deliver the child by herself, usually it is because the child is coming down sideways or by the feet,³⁹ and it is necessary to make room for the head. The suffering involved can be compared in this way – it is as if someone has put an olive-pit into an oil flask that has a narrow opening and the olive-pit is not naturally situated to being taken out when it is sideways. In the same way then the child also makes it difficult and painful for the woman to give birth when it is lying sideways, for it cannot get out. It is difficult also if it is withdrawn by its feet, and in many cases either the mothers die, or the babies, or even both. A major reason why the baby is not discharged easily is when it is either dead or paralysed or if there are twins.⁴⁰
34. When a woman is pregnant, she becomes completely pale, because the pureness of her blood trickles down every day from her body and goes down into the foetus, and the foetus grows in her. Because there is less blood than necessary in her body she is pale, and during her pregnancy she always desires strange

³⁸ The foetus is not in the womb where it belongs.

³⁹ transverse or ‘a footling’, where one foot comes out and the other leg is doubled up.

foods, and even small amounts make her feel nauseous accompanied by sickness, and she becomes weaker because the blood lessens.⁴¹ I say that a woman, if she is about to give birth, pants frequently and, when the discharge begins, the belly is full and warm when it is squeezed. Generally, when a woman approaches childbirth, she frequently draws breath, and then she mainly suffers pain⁴² in the lower back. For the lower back is also bruised by the foetus and during the whole period she has occasional heartburn, because the belly, and mainly the uterus, is contracted round the foetus. If the uterus should be inflated by wind during childbirth, bury a sheep or goat's liver in ashes, and afterwards boil it and take the liver and wine, if nothing prevents it. If a woman is not yet ready to give birth it is better to drink purer, matured wine for four days. If the woman should suffer around the loins, let her drink anise and Ethiopian cumin,⁴³ and let her wash herself in warm water. If asthma should attack her, prepare cardamom that is equal in size to a bean, and rue and Ethiopian cumin, knead these herbs and dilute with wine.⁴⁴ Give it to drink frequently on an empty stomach, and the woman must abstain from food. If much discharge should flow during childbirth, the uterus is retracting simultaneously with the bladder and the intestine, and neither the faeces nor the urine hold back, but are discharged. In this

⁴⁰ *diplovo~* (*diploos*) may also mean 'doubled up', i.e. presenting the buttocks first, which is a breech presentation.

⁴¹ The desire to eat strange foods is a condition called 'pica'. It appears the pregnant woman has morning sickness and becomes anaemic. Today's pregnant mother is given iron tablets for the anaemia.

⁴² Note the switch to the middle form of *πονέω* - probably a different writer.

⁴³ As *αίθιοπικόν* has no capital letter, it could be translated as 'red-brown (cumin)' or, as in LS, *κύμινον* equals τὸ ἄμι which is ajowan, (*Carum copticum*). Earlier Ἄττικαί is written with a small α so maybe the original ms had no capitals for proper nouns!

⁴⁴ The process would be that of grinding the herbs with a mortar and pestle and mixing with wine.

case give her eggs to gulp down, and bread, baked in the ashes, to chew, and the other remedies that have been written about. If she is dry and with scanty secretions, give her oil to drink, and bathe the parts with warm oil and infusion of mallow and smear all over with a moist salve and an injection of goose fat mixed with oil. If the woman is unable to give birth, make a fumigant using pine resin or cumin or pine bark and let her fumigate with this. Whenever swellings occur in the womb during childbirth, or after childbirth, it is not necessary to use an astringent such as the doctors make. These are the best drugs to apply – a pinch of Ethiopian cumin, and five or six pinches of anise and/or hartwort⁴⁵ and half a scallop shell of peony root, or even the seed – these are to be given in white, sweet wine, generally on an empty stomach – or Ethiopian daucus⁴⁶ root, hartwort, or peony root using the same method; or similarly, the fruits of hipposelinum⁴⁷ and Ethiopian cumin, or pepper, anise, daucus, elder tree berries and peony root. Knead these in wine and give to the patient to drink. Alternatively, two or three twigs of a myrtle-like plant, and Ethiopian cumin and peony root, or, similarly, linseed, the type which they feed gradually to children with coughs, with roasted egg yolk, which has been roasted with sesame. If a pregnant woman suffers thrush on her genitals, boil ground almonds and ox marrow, and a little meal thrown in, to smear all over the genitals, and to wash with an infusion of myrtle berries.

⁴⁵ *Tordylium officinale*

⁴⁶ According to LSJ this is an umbelliferous plant which grows in **Crete** – *Athamanta Cretensis*. The Ethiopian daucus may be a variety of the Cretan plant.

⁴⁷ *Smyrnum olus atrum*

35. Now I will discuss the lochial discharges and those which flow after childbirth. When a woman either does not discharge the lochia, or the menses do not flow, or even that the uterus is hard, she has pain in the lower part of the back, and she suffers sharp pain in the flanks, groin, thighs and feet; and the womb swells up and rigors shoot through the body. The fevers become acute from all these symptoms. Therefore, while she has these symptoms, if there is no fever, treat with baths, and anoint the head with oil of lilies, and boil mallow, or infuse oil made from the flower of the henna plant in water and gently administer a hipbath. In all these diseases, in which a vapour bath helps, it is better that fats are rubbed on last. But if a fever occurs, it is better to refrain from bathing, but put the patient in a vapour bath and treat the lower belly and the lower back with fomentations, and give her medication for the uterus to drink, i.e. a mixture either of the eggs of the cuttlefish or of the beaver. After this give meal boiled with rue, or juice of barley gruel, to swallow.
36. If, during childbirth, the moisture in a woman does not come with the child, as is usually the case, but is less, and if she has the moisture in her head that is drawn down by heat during childbirth and a little before, she will suffer headaches. But if it should flow abundantly in the womb, when it gushes out it will upset the belly and nothing else. In order that the woman shall not suffer from diarrhoea it is necessary to relieve a body which has become ill. If the flux that comes from her head turns into the lochial discharge and a lot gushes out, she recovers. But if the flux is more than moderate, it is necessary to treat her. If the

flux goes into the belly, the exit for the child should become easier. But if the woman's catharsis should flow less, severe pain seizes the loins and the whole area around the genitals, and she becomes swollen and the thighs burn and watery phlegm runs from the mouth and nostrils, and the patient has a headache, and fever and shivering, and she sweats and grinds her teeth, and faints, and her womb and bladder will become tightly shut, and she rolls her eyes, and her vision blurs.⁴⁸ In a woman who has given birth, when there is a discharge it does not flow readily, because the womb becomes inflamed, and its mouth has shut. For the neck of the vagina becomes bent after the child has made its exit. If any of these symptoms should occur, the discharge does not flow from her. If the discharge does not flow from her, she will become feverish, and experience shivering, and her belly will become swollen. If one should touch her, the whole body is painful, particularly if one should touch her womb, and she will have occasional heartburn and a pain in the lower back and no appetite. She suffers from insomnia and has a pricking sensation. Then, on the fifth or seventh day, it happens that the bowel is upset and evacuates black and very malodorous stools, and occasionally her urine is like that of an ass. If these evacuations happen, the woman will feel better, and when treated she quickly recovers. But if the evacuation does not occur, there is the risk that when she suffers a severe attack of diarrhoea, the lochia is hidden in her. But if the bowel is not upset, or the discharge does not flow spontaneously, or if suitable treatment is not administered

⁴⁸ The literal translation is 'they look dark-coloured' signifying that her irises have dilated, causing

speedily, and the situation persists, she will suffer more of the symptoms mentioned earlier, and in these circumstances she will be in danger of becoming livid like lead, and suffering from dropsy. Her navel will protrude from being pushed out by the womb, and it will be darker than the surrounding areas. When these symptoms occur, the woman is not able to survive. Some will die on one day, others on another, depending on their physical condition and the state of their suffering. But the symptoms do not exceed twenty-one days,⁴⁹ at least this is what happens in most cases. If the discharge should burst forth from her, either from medication or spontaneously – for this also happens if the womb allows the mouth to be constricted by the blood that suddenly comes down in abundance - if it should burst forth, the lochial flow is purged, smelling bad and is purulent. It is the same when it is black, yet the patient will feel better and becomes healthy after being treated. Ulcers also occur in the womb, such as when the lochial discharges become putrid. If this should happen, the woman will require lots of care so that the ulcers do not become large and inclined to putrefy. There is a danger of the woman either dying or becoming sterile. These are the signs if ulcers should be present: When the discharge flows, it feels as if thorns are going through the womb, and fever attacks the uterus. This is what usually happens. The woman feels pain when she is touched lightly on the area around the navel, as if you touched a clear, sinewy ulcer. When strong pains occasionally occur in the womb, and fever, which lessens towards the hands, from time to time the

lochial discharge flows somewhat malignant and is purulent and malodorous. These are the symptoms if there are ulcers in the uterus and they require much care. These are all the outcomes concerning this illness. If the lochial discharge should flow for the first three or four days and then suddenly stops, she suffers similar symptoms to those described earlier, but to a lesser degree. If the disease should undergo a change, it will change in the same way to the same sort, but it will become chronic and less intense than previously. When treated the woman survives, if she is cared for at once. This is what can be said about this disease.

37. If there is no purging after childbirth, the uterus, the spleen and the legs swell, and a fever comes on, shivering occurs, and pains shoot towards her loins. But when the pain is also towards the viscera, the patient becomes chilled as well, and has a fever and slight throbbing of the inflamed parts. But when it is acute, sometimes there is swelling, sometimes there is nothing. The woman suffers these symptoms at the beginning of the disease, and they are as follows: Over a period of time the parts under the eyes become red. When this happens administer light foods. If the woman swells with moisture, give her medication to swallow. If, on the one hand, she is bilious, give her something which purges bile, but if she is full of phlegm, give her something which purges phlegm. After this fumigate the womb with sweet-smelling vapours, and apply an emollient daily. If the vagina is solid, fumigate every day, and apply the emollients, then wash with warm water, and insert the lead

⁴⁹ An alternative translation is 'The women do not live for more than twenty-one days'.

probes. Afterwards, having bound coarse salt and myrrh in a cloth and the boiled pitch in wool, and having mixed spices of equal parts, make a pessary equal in size to an oak-gall. Let it remain in place for a day and a night. After this, leave an interval of three days, and fumigate with the same ingredients. Apply also a pessary of peeled berry using as much as two draughts also of pepper, kneaded smooth, mixed with white Egyptian oil and purest honey, plastered into wool and wound round a feather. Apply day and night, and if it seems to you to have purged her, the patient should be better, but if she seems to still require purging, leave an interval of two days and again apply the pessary with the bottle-gourd⁵⁰ day and night, and then apply oil of bitter almonds and oil of roses that is most fragrant, and melted deer fat. Apply in wool for one day, and wash with much warm water, so that the woman is able to feel comfortable. Immediately after having purged the painful parts with cathartics and warm water, anoint the vagina with a mixture of hard fat from a goose, myrrh and warm pine resin, softened by heating. On the next day, let her rinse out the uterus with wine and the oil made from narcissus. If there is no narcissus, rinse out with wine alone. These applications have to be prepared by you in one day before the menses.⁵¹ When the menses appear, in the first three days, after you have kneaded black plantain and coarse salt, smear the mixture on wool. Let her keep this in her body for a little while and let her swallow pure, sweet-smelling wine on an empty stomach. When the

⁵⁰ According to LSJ in this case *sikuvh* [bottle gourd – *Lagenaria vulgaris*] is equal to *kolokunqiv~* [round gourd – *Cucurbita maxima*]. Littré has ‘wild cucumber’

⁵¹ These references to a second person show that Hippocrates was writing for fellow physicians.

menses stop, during the day apply the pessary with pennyroyal⁵² and let her go to her husband. And if she should become pregnant, she is healthy. Let her eat during the purging. Besides this treatment, it is beneficial to boil the mercury, and to mix together leeks, garlic, cabbage and pomegranate seed, and let her swallow the juice. For the rest, she must eat seafood rather than meat. Let her abstain from the foods that are sweet and oily, and instruct her to drink continuously the juice from the pine on an empty stomach until she has purged. She must drink it especially during her menstruation.

38. If the woman's lochial discharge flows a little less because the uterus is narrow-mouthed and displaced to one side, or the vagina is tightly closed through inflammation, the woman has an acute fever and heartburn and the whole body is painful. She is restless and the pain is spasmodic in the joints, hands, legs and the lower part of the back. She will feel pain in the area round the neck, the spine and the glands and there will be some weakness of the limbs. Then there is a slight fever and much visible shivering. Pungent and acrid phlegm is vomited. This is what is relevant about this condition. It happens like this: if she is treated, she becomes healthy, but if not, lameness and weakness of the limbs of the body occurs. The disease does not render the patient completely sterile. If, on the other hand, the womb should have ulcers and the lochial discharge is not present as it should be, the woman will suffer everything. If the ulcers are not large and if she is treated quickly, she recovers. But it is necessary to accurately treat the uterine ulcers. For,

⁵² *Mentha Pulegium*

because the uterine ulcers are soft, sensitive and sinewy, they have a sympathy with other parts, for example, the bregma,⁵³ the throat and the intelligence. They grow, become malignant and do not want to close easily. If the womb should become narrow-mouthed and does not open up a passage for the cathartic lochial discharge, it becomes inflamed. If the woman is not treated quickly, everything causes her more pain, and she has a bad smell and the exit is swollen. In case the womb does not become inflamed, a bad-smelling substance comes out spontaneously and it is livid, or black when it is full of clots, and the woman purges the lochial discharge. But frequently nothing comes out, which means death for the woman, unless someone quickly cuts the veins or relaxes the bowel. But it is much better to make a douche. If the woman vomits easily, one can also encourage vomiting, but it is more effective to urinate and to sweat. The right moment to apply these procedures, whenever it is necessary, is best.

39. If, after childbirth, a woman purges a little more than is necessary - for this also happens – and if the womb should become wide-mouthed and some of the veins, which stretch under the womb, rupture because of the force of the child exiting, she will have a slight fever and will be warm all over her body. Sometimes there is shivering and loss of appetite and she will have a complete loathing for food. She will be thin and weak, pale and swollen, and she will abstain from food. If she should eat or drink anything, it will not be digested. In some

⁵³ This is the anterior fontanel (the soft part on a baby's head which takes 18 months to close)

women both womb and bladder collapse and the shivering increases. This is the case concerning the above.

40. After childbirth, there occurs an obstruction of the vagina due to some adherence, and I have seen the mouth of the womb become ulcerated. It becomes ulcerated during childbirth because of the force exerted by the birthing of the child. It is something resembling thrush, and it becomes very swollen. The labia are stuck together by inflammation and are held together because ulceration is present. There is contact with the labia and a fungus which forms a binding around the labia because the discharge has been suppressed. But if the discharge flows out, the ulcers do not become fungous. The discharge now continues to flow and becomes thick with an unusual fleshiness. Therefore one should treat the labia in the same way as the rest of the body and draw out the fluid in the ulcers, so that the area becomes smooth and uniform in colour. Phrontis⁵⁴ was suffering these ailments that those women who do not rid themselves of the lochial discharge suffer and, in addition, her vagina was painful. When she examined herself she knew that there was an obstruction and told the doctor. After she had been treated she had her lochial discharge, recovered and became fertile. But if she had not been treated, and the purging had not flowed spontaneously, the ulcer would have grown larger, and she would have been in danger. For if she had not been treated, the ulcers would have become cancerous.
41. If a woman's lochial discharge should rush, for example, towards her head, her breasts and lungs – for this also happens –

in most cases they die immediately if there is suppression of the menses. But if the flux should flow well through her mouth or nostrils, she becomes healthy. But if the disease should become a little more chronic, then the woman might suffer just as reported in *On Young Girls* in which the first appearance of the menstrual flow rushed upwards. But an adult woman will hold out for much longer than a young girl, and her symptoms will be less intense up to the time that her lungs become suppured. If the lochial discharge does not flow through her mouth, but should turn upwards after rushing upwards it means the lochia has become concealed and will not flow, that is to say not in the normal way. Coughing and breathlessness suddenly occur and, because the menstrual blood fills up the lungs, the ribs and the back will suffer very much. When she coughs, it will be a dry cough, but occasionally there will be a foamy sputum. As time passes, blackish saliva appears which is also foul, and the breast is more feverish than the rest of the body, as a result of the warming of the blood. The woman is feverish and her womb will be tightly shut. She will not eat and will be sleepless. She will be sick and will not survive, but in most cases will die within twenty-one days. But if the discharge, which has rushed upwards, does not escape through the mouth, nor does it turn into the lungs, the lochia will go to her face. The face will be extremely red, and the head is weighed down. She will be unable to move without pain, and her eyes will become extremely red, and a little blood will ooze from them, and in some cases blood will flow from her nostrils. If this should

⁵⁴ Phrontis was the model patient described as having examined her vagina, recognised the problem and

happen, then the disease becomes more chronic. There is a loss of hearing as a result of the disease. She will have heartburn, will belch, and will be delirious. Paranoia becomes like madness. In some cases the eyes become dazed-looking, wild and squinting. She will suffer all those things as reported when it goes to the lungs, when the discharge goes upwards, except that she will not cough up nor spit out such flux, nor will her back suffer in the same way. When she is treated she becomes healthy. But there is not much hope of surviving. If, by chance, she survives there will generally be injury of the eyes or of the hearing. This is the last I am writing concerning this disease.

42. If, after childbirth, she gets diarrhoea and the food is not retained in the stomach, mix blackened raisins and the pounded inside of a sweet pomegranate, diluted with black-skinned wine, grated over goat's cheese and sprinkled over roasted, hot barley-groats. Give this lukewarm.
43. If blood is vomited after childbirth, a vein of the liver has been damaged, and pain towards the innards may be spasmodic and cause heart spasms. It is necessary to wash this area with lots of warm water, and to apply the fomentations which are the most effective. Give ass' milk to drink for seven, or five, days. After this let her drink milk from a black cow for forty days, and no food, if possible. Towards evening, give her ground sesame to drink. This is a dangerous disease.
44. Regarding the production of milk, it has been explained by me in *On the Nature of the Child*, as has everything else in connection with childbirth. If the milk should dry up, give the

woman pounded leeks diluted with water to drink, let her wash also with warm water and let her eat leeks and cabbage. Boil together tree-medick⁵⁵ leaves, and let her swallow the juice. Give her to drink the fruit and roots of fennel, and winnowed barley and butter which are boiled together and then chilled.

⁵⁵Lucerne – a leguminous plant of genus *Medicago*.

Also horse-fennel,⁵⁶ hipposelinon and tree-medick are good. All these ingredients together make abundant milk and increase it. Scyrian goats make the best cheeses, and to boil it with sage is good; having poured off the juice of juniper berries, or of the fruit of the Syrian cedar and pouring in wine, let her drink this and let her eat, pouring olive oil into the remainder. Keep her away from all pungent, salty, sharp and unripe garden herbs. Drinking nose-smart in wine is good, for it also produces milk. Let her wash in the warm water and drink apothermon⁵⁷. Also give her the fruit of the chaste-tree⁵⁸ in wine to drink. Beet juice, unwashed sesame and three-month old barley,⁵⁹ when everything has been thrown into a mortar and pounded, then squeezed through a linen cloth and mixed with honey or juice of medlar⁶⁰, also produces abundant milk. Give her the mixture to drink in black wine.

45. When a woman has delivered and delivers the afterbirth, it is better to give something which best purges the lochia – boiled or roasted garlic in wine and oil with polypody⁶¹ and a little cuttlefish over charcoal, whichever she may desire of these. Let her drink castoreum or spikenard⁶² and also to drink rue in sweet black wine on an empty stomach, or without the wine. If the wine is not sweet, the rue is best mixed with honey. Also boiled cabbage together with rue and mercury,⁶³ and to drink

⁵⁶ *Prangos ferulacea*

⁵⁷ A kind of drink

⁵⁸ *Vitex Agnus-castus*

⁵⁹ This could be translated as ‘Spring-sown barley’, i.e. barley sown in the Spring to ripen in three months.

⁶⁰ Fruit like a small brown apple.

⁶¹ *Polypodium vulgare*

⁶² *Nardostachys jatamansi*

⁶³ *Mercurialis annus*

any of the little seeds which are good for the womb. If there should be clots and pain occurs in the lower part of the womb, give boiled leeks, both those which grow wild and those which are cultivated. Prepare everything by boiling in grease. The woman must wash throughout the three days in fine weather, for cold weather works against the therapy, and she must anoint herself after the bath. It is better not to use a lot of warm water.

46. When the afterbirth does not immediately come out after the baby, pains occur in the lower abdomen and in the flanks, as well as shivering and fevers. If the afterbirth should be released, the woman becomes healthy, but generally she dies. The placenta discharges on the sixth or seventh day, or even later. On such an occasion it is necessary to give drugs, about which I will write, and for her to hold in her breath. Best of all is the wormwood⁶⁴ herb, and dittany and the flower of the white violet; and the eye of the laserwort⁶⁵ is most excellent when it is drunk in water, just like Greek bean. If the placenta is unable to be expelled, the woman must abstain from food and then, after kneading leaves of the chaste-tree in wine and honey, and pouring warmed oil over the mixture, give as much as a cotyle⁶⁶ to drink, and the afterbirth is expelled. If the placenta is left behind in the woman's uterus – and this happens if the navel bursts forth with force⁶⁷ or if, through ignorance, the midwife cut the umbilical cord of the child before the afterbirth had been expelled from the womb – the womb draws back the afterbirth, because it is slippery and moist, and retains it inside itself. For

⁶⁴ *Artemisia* – a perennial herb with bitter, tonic and stimulating qualities (COD)

⁶⁵ *Ferula tingitana* – the juice of which was used in food and medicine (LSJ)

⁶⁶ One cotyle is equivalent to 0.2736 l in Attic measurements. (Potter.1988:331)

the afterbirth belongs to the umbilicus of the child and the umbilical cord is the last thing that exits from the womb. If it should be expelled first, because its nourishment has not passed through to the child, it is because the umbilicus has become attached to itself.

47. When in a pregnant woman the embryo dies when it is in its first or second month and cannot exit, if the woman is slim, one should purge the body and fatten her up. For mortified embryos will not exit, unless the womb is strong and stout.
48. If the afterbirth is left behind in a woman, if the uterus does not have a wide mouth, the discharge flows less than usual. The womb becomes hard and large, shivering occurs and an acute fever. There is pain all over the body and in the region below the navel. There is a weight in the womb and a feeling as if the embryo is twisting. If the woman is treated she quickly expels the putrid afterbirth and becomes healthy.
49. If, after childbirth, the womb ulcerates, treat with full-bloomed roses. Let the woman wash herself with astringents. But if the uterine mouth is ulcerated and inflamed, mix myrrh and suet,⁶⁸ white beeswax and frankincense with hair from hares, which is under the hare's belly, and apply a smooth pessary wrapped in wool.

⁶⁷ I take this to mean 'from a strenuous birth'.

⁶⁸ Suet is the hard fat around the kidneys and loins of animals and fowls – in this case it is hard goose fat.

50. If, after childbirth, the womb is inflamed, a slight fever attacks the body and there is a mist over the eyes and the fever never leaves the womb. In addition, the woman is thirsty and her hip-joints are painful. There is severe swelling of the lower belly and the bowel is upset. The stools have a bad smell as well. The fever that attacks is severe and the woman has no appetite. There is swelling around her forehead and the mouth of the stomach (i.e. the gullet) is unable to draw in liquids and food and the stomach cannot digest them. If these women are not treated immediately then most of them die, and the womb is the cause. Therefore the leaves of the corn, as they are the softest ones of wheat, are boiled with coarse barley meal and drunk lukewarm. Give her a mixture of honey, water and watered-down wine and plaster the cooled mixture over the abdomen. Give very little food to the patient. In order to stop the flow from the womb and treat the head, apply a plaster to the hypochondrium.⁶⁹
51. A drink for the womb – if there is pain after childbirth, whether it pains the anus or somewhere else, knead together a juniper berry, linseed and a nettle, and give it to her to drink. If there is pain from childbirth, give the patient a mixture of turpentine, honey and warm wine to swallow and, if the womb is inflamed, this will stop it. If the area of the uterus is hurting, knead the tender leaves of the almond tree and the olive tree, cumin and the seed, or the leaves, of the sweet bay tree, anise and hedge mustard,⁷⁰ origanum and sodium carbonate, mixing these and kneading until smooth, in order to make little rolls for the

⁶⁹ The area below the ribs.

uterus.⁷¹ If the womb is inflamed and there is swelling, knead together until smooth rose leaves, cinnamon and cassia⁷² for this complaint. Pour over oil of bitter almonds, and, after making pastilles – as many as one can hold in the hand⁷³ - after making a new earthenware pot extremely hot, let her sit over this, and, after wrapping her in clothing, fumigate into the womb. This will stop the pain.

52. If the uterus should be painful after childbirth, there is a slight fever, but on the inside the lower belly is severely inflamed and sometimes it swells up towards the hip joint. There is pain in the lower belly and the flanks and the stools are bile-coloured and malodorous. If the condition of the bowel is not checked, the patient suddenly dies. Therefore, when this is the case, it is necessary to cool down the bowel, guarding against the patient becoming chilled. If the flow is not stopped, let her drink a decoction from the coarse barley meal, or bread, or meal. The woman must swallow it after mixing pomegranate juice with water to a wine-like consistency. She must sprinkle this over a gruel of lentils and boil this mixture, mixing lentil, cumin, salt, oil and vinegar. Give this cold porridge to her together with sour lentil soup. In addition she must drink strong Pramnian wine. She must abstain from eating all other foods until the fever has left her. If convenient, let her wash herself. If the woman is weak, she must drink finely ground barley groats. But if she is extremely weak, give it in cold water, and let her have light

⁷⁰ *Sisymbrium polyceratium*

⁷¹ I assume these 'little rolls' would be inserted into the womb and left to dissolve and/or be flushed out with the menstrual blood.

⁷² *Cinnamomum iners*

⁷³ May also be translated 'weighing as much as one drachma'.

food, which will not cause purging, when the fever goes. The disease is both severe and fatal.

53. If a woman has just given birth and the uterus is inflamed, the belly is inflamed and becomes large, and suffocation occurs towards the hypochondria. Whenever this happens, make a plaster with oyster-green⁷⁴ from the sea (that which they throw on the fish) and to pound it in a mortar. Mix bruised meal of raw corn, ash made from vine twigs and roasted linseed. Grind these ingredients and mix well with vinegar and oil, then make the potion thick. Boil this mixture until it becomes like suet, and make a very hot poultice with it. If the woman wants to, let her give herself a sitz-bath.
54. If a woman has just given birth and the uterus is inflamed and becomes swollen, and the lochial discharge remains inside, the uterus secretly becomes stretched. It happens when the uterus has been contracted through cold. In these cases, if the uterus becomes cold, make it warm. But if it is violently inflamed and the coldness has gone, make a pessary which works against the inflammation. Wash the patient and fumigate her and administer medication – about which I shall write – to draw the vapour into the mouth and the nostrils.
55. If the uterus causes suffocation, boil lentils in vinegar, salt and much origanum, and make an inhalation. Let her eat the mercury plant and let her swallow fine meal mixed in the juice.

⁷⁴ *Ulva Lactuca* - from its Latin name 'oyster green' would appear to be sedge looking like lettuce, found in the sea – a type of seaweed.

56. When the woman gives birth too quickly, before the pain arrives, firstly give her medication that stops the pain in the uterus and let her have foods which relax the stomach. If the womb becomes feverish, purge with a douche as quickly as possible.
57. If the womb is clogged with phlegm, winds develop in the womb and the menses appear scanty, white and full of phlegm. The blood is thin, pure and quite full of membranes. It is in the womb that it is mixed, and appears three times a month. The woman is not willing to have sex with her husband because of the wetness, nor is she eager to do this. She also becomes thin. She has pain in the lower belly, the loins and the groin. If the flux should irritate and ulcerates the rim of the uterus, one could say that the flow is chronic. If the flow should be abundant, give a decoction of lentils with hellebore so that she vomits. Subsequently, make an infusion via the nostrils and also give her a laxative to drink. She must abstain from pungent foods. If she is depressed and cold, and has numbness, give her milk and fragrant wine. Let her drink St John's Wort⁷⁵ on an empty stomach, mix linseed and sage in watered down fragrant wine and rinse out the uterus with this, together with the drugs. If there is no ulceration, after leaving an interval of two or three days in between, rinse out the womb with the mixture together with the seed.⁷⁶ After this, use astringents. If there is ulceration, the womb is to be cleansed with the decoction made from the

⁷⁵ Today St John's Wort is an alternative medicine for mild depression – hypericum.

⁷⁶ The translation of τω` / κοvkkw/ is literally *grain, seed* as of the pomegranate; or the 'berry' (*gall*) of *hermes oak* (LSJ). Littré has *la baie du daphne gnidium* which, translated, is the 'seed of the laurel'. I am not sure whether the seed referred to is that of the pomegranate, the juice of which is mentioned earlier, or the hypericum, or even the linseed (flax seed)

myrtle and sweet bay tree, and she must anoint herself with it and with lead oxide. The disease is painful, and few women recover.

58. If the cotyledons⁷⁷ are quite full of phlegm, the menses are less, and if the woman should be pregnant, she miscarries when the foetus becomes larger – for it is not healthy, but atrophies. You will be able to tell from the following symptoms: the woman becomes moist and the flow is like mucous and sticky like that which is carried from the womb and it does not sting. When she menstruates, when the flow ceases, the woman purges herself of the blood, and mucous discharges come from the womb for two to three days, she shivers and is not extremely hot, but it does not subside. In this case, rinse out with juice from the wild fig tree, with [Lit. ‘and from’] which water is drained,⁷⁸ and do this two or three times. When it is cleansed, for the remainder use astringents. Apply the emollient pessaries, by which phlegm is cleared, and give the uterus a vapour bath with the remaining mixture mixed with the leaves from the sweet bay tree, and rinse with that and vinegar. After the menses cease, fumigate with aromatic herbs, subsequently the woman must fast and bathe and go to her husband. She must also take food and a little wine, and become warm, and wrap sheepskin around her legs, and anoint the skin with oil.

⁷⁷ Uterine vascular connections

⁷⁸ This is an awkward sentence and may mean the juice of the wild fig is able to drain water from the body, i.e. it is a diuretic.

59. If dropsy appears in the uterus, the menses are less and become painful and stop early, and the lower belly swells. The breasts are firm, not soft, and the milk is painful.⁷⁹ The woman seems to be pregnant and from this knowledge you know that it is dropsy. There are also signs at the mouth of the uterus, for when the woman touches it, the mouth appears small and moist. With the onset of time shivering and fever attack her. In such a case, if the period of time increases, there is pain in the lower belly, the loins, the flanks and the groin. This disease comes from a miscarriage, and from other causes, and when the menses are suppressed. The woman must wash with lots of warm water and apply fomentations if there is swelling. When the swelling disappears, she must drink a purgative, and fumigate the uterus with cow-dung. Then apply the dung with blister-beetle⁸⁰ and leave for two or three days. If the woman is strong, rinse out the uterus with oil of bitter almonds. If the belly becomes slack, the fevers have ceased and the menses flow properly. She must sleep with her husband and continue to use the pessaries. After an interval of a day, she must drink crethmon peel, five black peony seeds and fruit of corn in wine on an empty stomach. She must eat as much mercury as she can and garlic, raw and boiled, and she must use the emollients before going to sleep, and polypody and the other emollients rather than seafood. If she is pregnant, she is healthy.

⁷⁹ A nursing mother, particularly a new one, may develop very painful breasts from 'milk fever'. The breasts are engorged and painful to the touch.

60. If dropsy occurs in the womb, the periods become scantier, more unpleasant and last a long time. The woman conceives within two months or a little longer. The belly swells as well as the pubes, the legs and the lower part of the back. When a long time has passed⁸¹ and the woman is pregnant, she miscarries and expels the foetus and water flows out with it, and in most cases the woman dies. The blood is disordered, and the womb becomes dropsical. In this case the woman must drink milk, and the poppy juice until the embryo can be moved; even before this point, generally, the foetus is miscarried and is aborted, and blood and water flow from the womb. This occurs more frequently after fatigue than anything else. In this case you would know it is dropsy if, when feeling with the fingers, the mouth of the womb appears small and full of moisture. If this woman does not miscarry the foetus right at the start, but only when it is already two months old, she also suffocates, and the lower belly swells up. When she is touched she suffers as though she has an ulcer. She also has a severe fever and shivering. A severe pain, which is both sharp and violent, attacks the vagina, the lower belly, the loins, the flanks and the lower back. When this is the case, wash her with warm water, if there is pain, and administer fomentations, trying that which she accepts best, and a laxative. Leave a timely interval, which you think is sufficient for her, and rinse out. Give a vapour bath and apply a pessary of cyclamen in a rag drenched with honey to the

⁸⁰ The blister beetle (*Cantharis vesicatoria* L) is also known as ‘Spanish Fly’, and is the source of cantharidin. Stannard. 1962:505. Also Riddle.1994:76

⁸¹ i.e. When it takes longer than two months ..

mouth of the womb. Apply a pessary in the same way, but leave

it for a shorter time and at longer intervals, for it stings and irritates more, by taking scrapings of the cypress⁸² and moistening them in water, and, after using a tin probe that is passed into the cervix, insert the finger in the same way. Give her a potion to drink which she most easily accepts. She must sleep with her husband at the most opportune times. For if she conceives the seed and becomes pregnant, she purges from beneath and the matter which used to be there is brought down with it, and it is mainly in this way that she will regain her good health.

61. If a woman develops dropsy, because the spleen becomes watery and large, the spleen becomes watery because of the following condition. When she has a fever and it does not leave the woman, an extreme thirst attacks her, and she drinks and does not vomit, because the liquid has passed through the bladder as urine and the spleen draws the rest into itself from the bowel, because it is thin and lies sponge-like close to the bowel area. If, as a result of these happenings, she does not sweat, nor does the bladder cleanse her, nor does the bowel discharge, the spleen is extended by the liquid, even more so if the drink is water. If someone lightly touches her, the spleen is soft like soft down and it is then that it is resistant. Because it is swollen and overfull, it gives out the liquid through the veins in the body, and mainly into the fold of the peritoneum and in the little spaces around the bowel and in the legs. For the one passes on to the other in the body when it is full in each part and is unable to hold back. Dropsy always occurs from this cause –

⁸² *Cupressus sempervirens*

when the spleen, which is naturally thin and porous, has become accustomed to drawing moisture to itself. It happens in some cases that at the beginning of the disease there is even no sign of a fever. When burning heat begins in the bowel, such as when phlegm descends into it, and if the woman cannot check her thirst, the bladder and the bowel do not filter urine and excrement in the normal way, and the woman does not use a suitable regimen. If she is dropsical, the menstrual flow comes abundantly and suddenly, but sometimes scantily, and sometimes it is a little stronger and does not coagulate. Breathlessness also attacks her before the menses flow. There is pain in the spleen and it is stronger if she eats something sweet. Her belly becomes swollen and big. When she has eaten more than is customary, the belly becomes painful and the lower part of her back is painful now and then, and fever attacks her for a short time. When she has her period she appears to be better compared to the previous days, then the situation returns to normal. If she is cared for in the necessary way, she becomes healthy. If not, the menstrual flow appears and, for a long time, she always has a flux which flows little by little like a discharge and she is in need of more treatment. If the flow does not occur but the womb, because it is swollen from the earlier suffering, will not release the menses, her belly will be large and there will be a weight in it as though she is pregnant and it seems as if a child moves itself in her womb. This is because there is more water in the womb and it is the water that moves, for

occasionally the water moves to and fro in the womb as in a wineskin. When she is touched there is pain around the navel, the collar-bones and the chest and the face and the eyes become very thin, and the nipples become swollen. In some cases, the bowel and the legs are full of water, while in other cases it is one or the other. If both are filled there is no hope of the woman surviving. But if it is one or the other, there is a little hope if she is treated and is not very emaciated. This disease is chronic.

62. All these ailments happen more often to those women who have not borne a child, but they also frequently happen to women who have. These diseases are dangerous, as has been said, and generally they appear as acute, serious and difficult to understand because of the fact that the women share in the diseases. Sometimes they do not know why they are sick until they become acquainted with diseases from menstruation and when they are older. Then both necessity and time teach them the cause of the diseases. Sometimes, when women are unaware of what they are suffering from, the disease has become incurable before the doctor has learned correctly from the patient what she is suffering from. For they are also ashamed to tell, even if they know. They find it shameful because of their inexperience and ignorance. At the same time, doctors also make mistakes by not learning precisely the cause of the disease, but treating it as though it is a masculine disease. I have already seen many women die from this type of suffering. It is essential to immediately and precisely enquire into the cause.

For the healing of diseases of women differs greatly from the healing of diseases of men.

63. If the womb becomes ulcerated, blood and pus are purged and there is an overwhelming smell, and a sharp pain in the loins, in the groin and in the lower belly. The pain goes upwards into the flanks, the ribs and the shoulder blades and sometimes it reaches the collarbones. The pain burns and the woman has a violent headache and is deranged. In time everything is swollen and weakness attacks her. She faints and has a slight fever and shivering, but mainly the legs swell. The disease attacks after a miscarriage when the woman, having aborted the child which had putrefied, is not cleaned out and the uterine mouth becomes feverish. The disease also attacks after the flux, and if it is itself pungent and bile-coloured, it stings. If then the woman is lucky in overcoming the symptoms, when the pains are present, wash with lots of warm water, and apply fomentations, so that the pain is held in check. If the pains are in the upper body, and if the woman is strong, treat her whole body with a vapour bath and give her medication to drink. When the season is right, boiling some whey and give it to her to drink for five days, if she is able to. If whey is not available, boil some ass' milk instead and give it to her to drink for three or four days. After the drinking of milk, you must nurse her back to health with water and suitable foods, such as lamb and chicken, beet and

gourd. She must refrain from anything salty and pungent, and any seafood, and pork, beef and goat's flesh. She must eat bread. But if there are fainting fits and she is not strong and is shivering, she must take gruel. There are some doctors who give milk to drink to those women who suffer headaches because they have a headache. Others give them water to drink because they are fainting. I think the opposite is correct – if they should suffer headaches and lose their minds, water is suitable, but if the headache is stinging and is piercing, milk is favourable for them. When the woman appears to you to be strong, rinse out the uterus, firstly with the preparation from the wine dregs. After leaving this for an interval of three or four days, rinse out with the preparation mixed together with the warm decoction of cabbage and again, leaving an interval of three days, rinse out with the preparation mixed together with butter. If during these treatments the uterus becomes healthy, rinse with the preparation mixed with pomegranate peel. Smear lead oxide⁸³ on the ulcers, and oak gall, myrrh, frankincense and the fruit from the Egyptian acanthus, and wild dropwort,⁸⁴ basic copper carbonate⁸⁵, a fish scale and sawdust from a nettle-tree,⁸⁶ saffron and Egyptian alum which has been burnt; the amount of one of these must be equal to another, but for the alum, the oak gall and the saffron which make up one half of the amount. After

⁸³ Littré has translated $\alpha\lambda\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\epsilon\omicron\omicron\alpha$ [nqo~ as 'lead oxide'. $\text{Li}\alpha\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\epsilon\omicron\omicron$ (Litharge) is 'lead monoxide' (www.zompist.com/versci.htm, and LSJ p.1048). The Ancient Greeks used **white lead**, which is made by corroding lead with vinegar, as a pigment and medicine in ointments. It seemingly has a waxy quality to it (www.zompist.com/versci.htm).

⁸⁴ May also be translated as 'inflorescence of the wild grapevine' – 'inflorescence' in this case meaning 'flowers'.

⁸⁵ May also be translated as 'a dish of linseed and honey' LSJ. $\text{C}\rho\upsilon\sigma\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\iota\iota\eta$ (II).

⁸⁶ It doesn't make sense to have 'sawdust from a lotus, or water lily' unless it is 'pollen from a lotus', so $\lambda\omega\tau\omicron\upsilon$ must refer to trees found in Libya (LSJ) (*Celtis australis*)

kneading everything smooth and mixing together, dilute it in sweet white wine. Thereafter boil it until it has a thick consistency, very much like honey. Give some of this unguent twice during the day after the woman has washed in warm water, in which rock rose and sage have been boiled. When these treatments seem to you to be making her better, she must drink boiled goat's milk first for one day, then give her cow's milk the same way as previously. After the drinking of milk, give her food that fattens as much as possible and makes her strong for pregnancy. For she will become healthy. In general, the women survive this disease, but become sterile. Older women, however, do not always survive. After the treatments give them a drink of dry flax seeds, sesame and fruit of nettle, and the bitter root of peony rubbed into fragrant black wine which has been mixed.

64. If the womb is ulcerated and blood, pus and ichor flow out, because when uterine ulcers become putrefied, a disease results. The lower belly swells up and emaciation occurs. It is painful when she is touched, as with an ulcer, and there is fever and she has shivering. There is acute and violent pain in the genitals, in the pubic region, in the lower belly, in the flank and in the loins. The disease mostly occurs after childbirth, if something becomes rotten within the womb so that it destroys it (i.e. the womb). The disease also occurs when the woman miscarries, and even spontaneously. If you chance upon these symptoms, wash the woman with abundant warm water in the areas where the pain occurs. Apply the fomentations and a sponge wrung

out in warm water. Rinse out. Leave out anything pungent or astringent, but mix in those of the softest emollients that you think are convenient. Mix together in honey pounded fruit of flax and of the elder tree and, having made a medication, use this mixture. Wash with warm water and, taking a sponge or soft wool which you harden in warm water, thoroughly cleanse both the genitals and the ulcers. Next, dip the sponge or the wool into pure wine, and use in the same way. Then anoint with the same medication as often as it seems to you to be advantageous. Then, after mixing pine resin and hard fat from a pig with the medication, using the finger, plaster the area many times for a day and during the night. Next, roast some flax seed, pound it and sift it, pound white poppy in barley-groats and sift, and toasted goat's cheese, having scraped off the whey⁸⁷ and the brine, and mix together butter and finest meal of barley. Then take one measure of the medication and of the cheese and barley and after mixing in bitter wine (vinegar?) give this to drink in the morning on an empty stomach. In the evening give a thick potion, after mixing it, and give the potions to drink that are especially acceptable for women's diseases. Carry on these treatments all the time when the blood is flowing copiously and the patient experiences sharp pains at short intervals. When the ulcer is smaller and when the pains are reduced and come at longer intervals, give medication to drink by which she is likely to be purged from below rather than from above, leaving an interval of as much time as seems to be appropriate. Give her a

⁸⁷ There seems to be either an incorrect article (το;) or a misprint in the noun ending (~). οἱ ῥιζυπόω is 'dirt', which is the translation Littré uses, and το; ῥιζυπόν is 'whey'. As cheese has a coating of whey and brine, I think that το; ῥιζυπόν is the correct word.

vapour bath with gentle vapours and have the patient seated high, if it seems appropriate to the occasion. If she has these treatments she will become healthy. The disease can be more severe and fatal. Few women survive this.

65. If the uterus is excessively ulcerated, blood and pus are discharged, and there is an oppressive odour. When the pain progresses, as with the pangs of childbirth, the main pain comes around the flux, and over time the legs and feet swell, and the doctors treat it as dropsy. But this is not so. If you come across a patient like this, first wash her in warm water, and warm and rinse out the uterus with pungent herbs, emollients and astringents in both water and wine; and willow weed,⁸⁸ field basil⁸⁹ and honey, boiling them together. Then, after dipping wool into this mixture, smear all over the genitals. Also anoint with pine resin, honey and oil from a pig.⁹⁰ Give linseed, toasted sesame and butter, goat's cheese and barley groats to drink – all to be drunk in wine on an empty stomach. In the evening the patient is to drink it with lots of honey poured over the mixture. Do this when the blood is flowing out, the pains are severe and arrives at short intervals. When the flux is less severe over a longer period of time, give her a laxative to drink, and leave an interval. When she has done these things she becomes healthy, but she will not be able to reproduce.
66. Whether such ulcers occur in the uterus from a miscarriage or from some other cause, all of them should be treated with an eye on the whole of the body, by whichever treatment is deemed

⁸⁸ *Polygonum Persicaria*

⁸⁹ *Zizyphora capitata*

necessary, whether you occupy yourself with the whole body or only with the uterus. This is how you recognise that the disease comes from the uterus. The discharge from ulcers in the uterus is purulent and clotted, while the discharge that does not is thin and serous. So, when the discharge is thin, you should treat with medication, to be given from both above and below, but firstly from above. If, after the medication, the discharge becomes less and is easier, leave an interval and again medicate in the same way. After the medication, treat with the kind of regimen which will make the woman as dry as possible, or she will be if you put her whole body in a vapour bath⁹¹ for three or four days, and if you apply emetics immediately after the vapour bath. After the emetics and the vaporising, put her on a regimen with no bathing and drinking little and feeding on bread. She should drink nothing except weak, black wine, and no herbs. When you prepare the emetic, load it with many pungent herbs and a large amount of food and with whichever food the patient likes best, and abundant, watered-down wine. Wash her with a large amount of water after the vapour baths. This is the treatment for such discharges. It is better to use medication both above and below, to use emetics and to draw from above. It is even better to use a regimen that causes the body to dry up and to abstain from bathing. As far as the uterus is concerned, you should treat in this way. Firstly fumigate by boiling off the

⁹⁰ Littré has *l'axonge* – *hog's lard*. It could be that melting pig's fat to make oil was a common practice among doctors.

⁹¹ Vaporising or fumigating the whole body would be done in a room like a modern sauna. Jouanna, 1999:169.

leaves of the elder tree in water, then, after the vapour bath, rinse out the sediment with soap. If there is mortification in the ulcers and the discharge is ill smelling, use pure soap. If this is not the case, use wine mixed with a large amount of water. After rinsing out the sediment, use water. Boil myrtle, leaves from the sweet bay tree and sage in the water. After this, rinse with lukewarm, watered down, white wine. When there is instant irritation from the douche, then the ulcers are immediately cleansed. It is then necessary to rinse out the sediment with watery, black wine. After the wine, take fresh, melted pig's lard, mixed with oil, if you can from a goose, but if not, preferably from some other bird. If not, then, using the old part of the oil, rinse out with lukewarm oil. Afterwards make another douche infused with wine. Whether the mouth of the womb is ulcerated or not, apply tampons made from the emollients. If burning heat is produced when they are in place, order the woman to remove them and to wash with lukewarm water, which is applied like a douche. If, following this regimen, the discharges do not cease, but become less and there is excessive stinging, and the discharge has both bile and brine, and there are ulcers not only inside but also outside, it is necessary to change the regimen, and to saturate her entire body, so that the discharge will be as wet as possible and less irritating. She must have many hot baths, barley-cake, all herbs boiled in grease, with the cartilaginous fish boiled with

onions and coriander in sweet brine. Boil in grease all boiled meat, except beef and goat, well boiled in dill and fennel, honey-coloured wine, water in abundance, and a drink of milk with sweet wine. Make the other preparations for the douches according to the described account. This is now the treatment for such discharges. As far as the purulent and clotted matter that is discharged is concerned, it is not necessary to apply these treatments to the whole body. Rinsing out and using these treatments accomplish the entire treatment. Rinse out with the same douches in the same way as previously described. Other douches have also been written about. The remedy for ulcers – a pessary made from pale deer suet. If there are ulcers it is best to rinse immediately with new wine which has been boiled down and is best with white lead,⁹² and with narcissus oil. Use the softest foods but not pungent ones. If there is befouling and the ulcers are spreading, and the nearest spot is scraped away, purge in order to produce new flesh and also to bring the flesh into the ulcer,⁹³ for the ulcers relax easily and do not become malignant. Wash often.

67. If a woman is affected by a large wound from a miscarriage, or the womb is ulcerated from pungent pessaries - which women experience because they always have lots of treatments and physicians - and the embryo is destroyed, but the woman does not have a flow, it is because the womb is extremely inflamed, is closed and is unable to allow the discharge through. If the discharge is not passed at the same time as the embryo, the woman becomes healthy, if she is treated in time, but is sterile.

⁹² May be used as a pigment especially to whiten the skin of the face, or in salves.

If the lochia bursts forth from her spontaneously and the ulcers become healthy, the woman will become sterile in this way too. If the discharge comes from her, but the ulcers are not treated, there is a danger they will become putrid. If the discharge comes from her while she is weakened, she dies. If, during the birth, the womb becomes extremely ulcerated, because the foetus is not coming out naturally, then the same thing will happen as in the case of a miscarriage. The disease has the same changes and results, whether it comes from a miscarriage or from the womb becoming ulcerated from childbirth. If the lochial discharge flows in every respect, the woman suffers less, provided the ulcers are not large, and she will rapidly become healthy after she is treated. It is necessary to apply the treatment swiftly, if there are ulcers in the womb, for, because they are growing in a soft area, they quickly become putrid. The ulcers are treated like those in the rest of the body: make them free from inflammation, to cleanse them and to fill them up (i.e. close them), and close the wounds. Give the woman water but not wine, less nutritious food, but only a little.

68. When a miscarriage occurs, and delivery cannot take place, either because the whole or some part of the foetus is large, or if it is smaller but lying sideways and is weakly, in that case, if it is happening according to the rules of nature, give her the medication about which I will tell, having washed her beforehand with abundant warm water. If the foetus, being in a natural position, wants to come out, but cannot do so easily, give her medication which causes sneezing. Take the nose and

⁹³ I.e 'to close them over'.

make her sneeze, and hold her mouth tightly so that the sneezing is most effective. Also use succussion. This is how you do it. Take a high, strong bed and, put the woman in it lying flat on her back. Fasten down her breasts, armpits and hands with a bandage or a broad, soft strap to the bed and encircle it (i.e. tie her to the bed). Bend her legs and hold down at the ankles. When you are ready, prepare a bundle of soft firewood, or anything similar, enough that it will not allow the bed to be thrown to the ground but that it touches the ground with the feet raised towards the head. Order the woman to hold on to the bed with her hands and have the bed raised from off the ground at the head, so that it is inclining downwards near the foot, watching that the woman does not slip down in the bed and falls out. When these preparations are effected, and the bed is raised from the ground, place the firewood under it at the back, to set it as upright as possible, so that the feet will not touch the ground when the bed is tossed about, and that they are inside of the firewood. A man⁹⁴ grasps each foot here and there so that the bed will fall straight, level and evenly and there is no convulsion. It is best to jolt the bed at the same time as the labour pain, and if the foetus should be released, the jolting must stop immediately, but if not, jolt the bed at intervals, and swing the woman as she is carried on the bed. These procedures are followed in this way, if the foetus is released correctly and normally. It is necessary to first smear with a moist salve, this is best on all such affected parts around the uterus, and to pour

⁹⁴ It seems that men were allowed into the 'delivery room'. I wonder if the man in this case is a student of Hippocrates brought in to help shake the bed or a member of the household.

over mallow water, fenugreek⁹⁵, or rather juice from a wheat gruel. The woman must have a vapour bath of the groin, anus and vagina. It is also best for her to sit in it when the labour pains are extremely troublesome, and to concentrate on nothing else. The midwife gently lays open the uterine mouth, doing this gently, and draws out the umbilical cord at the same time as the foetus.

69. There are such cases where the foetus is folded up⁹⁶ and is lying in the mouth of the uterus. In these cases, whether it is alive or has died, the foetus is pushed back in order to turn it again, so that it comes naturally head first. When you want to push the foetus back or turn it, it is necessary, after the woman has lain down on her back, to spread something soft under the hips and under the foot of the bed, so that her feet will be much higher towards the foot of the bed. It is necessary to place something under her and the hips must be higher than her head. Do not put a pillow under her head. These are the preparations. When the foetus is pushed back and is turned around the other way, naturally set down the bed and the hips, after gradually taking away the wood and the stones from under the feet of the bed, and the soft cloth that was under the hips, and place a pillow under her head. Such cases are to be treated in this way. In the case of babies who, alive, put forward a hand or a leg outside, or even both, as soon as this situation arises, you must push the foetus back inside in the aforementioned manner, and turn it by its head and guide it into the birth canal. When it is a breech

⁹⁵ The literal translation of *Boukevra* is 'cow horn', but it is an alternative for *th`li* which means 'fenugreek'. Its botanical name is *Trigonella foenumgraecum*. Mixed with mallow water and used in bathing it relaxed the uterus and genital area.

presentation, the foetus has spread out either in the flank or in the hip joint during the birth process. It is necessary to make these babies straight, and to turn them and make the mother sit down in warm water, until those parts (i.e. the flank or the hip-joint) are relaxed by the warmth.

70. Whenever a foetus has died, and either the leg or the arm is outside, it is best, if it is possible, to turn the head so that the foetus is drawn out. But if it is not possible, because it has become swollen, cut it in this way. After dividing the head with a knife, crush it into pieces, so that it shatters, with forceps⁹⁷ drawing out the bones also. With the surgeon's crochet, having put it alongside the collarbone so that it will hold, draw out, not too much but little by little, relaxing and then forcing. When you drag out the foetus – and it should be by the shoulders and upper arms – cut both arms at the shoulder joint. When you extract the foetus, if it is able to come out, draw out the rest easily. But if it does not yield, split the chest all the way to the throat, taking care that you do not cut into the region of the womb, and expose the foetus, for the belly, intestines and faeces come out. But if some of these falls out, the operation immediately becomes more laborious. Crush the ribs to pieces and pull the shoulder blades together, and the rest of the foetus will easily give way after this, if the womb is not already swollen. For if there is such a problem, it is better to gently pierce the belly of the foetus, for it brings out only wind from the belly, and this will easily come out. If the arm or the leg of the dead foetus has fallen out, if it is possible, push both back

⁹⁶ I.e. a breech presentation, presenting the buttocks first.

inside, and try to turn the foetus. This is the best way. But if it is not possible to do this, cut away that which is outside so that it is possible to remove what is much higher up, and when the remainder has been delivered, push and turn the foetus by its head. Whenever you wish to turn or cut away the child, it is necessary to pare the nails of one's own hands, and the knife with which you cut must be curved rather than straight. Guard the knife around the head with the forefinger, putting the hand in to feel, both guiding and being very careful lest you touch the uterus.

71. This is the reason for a growth in a woman's womb. When menstruation is abundant, the womb conceives few and sickly sperm, and the conception is not normal. The belly swells up as in the case of a pregnant woman, but there is no movement in the womb, nor does milk come into the breasts, and the woman has plump breasts. This is her condition then for two years, and often for three. If there is only one mass of flesh, the woman dies, for she is not able to survive, but if there are many, a lot of blood and flesh burst forth from her in the region of the vagina. If the discharge is moderate, she survives. But if not, she dies as a result of succumbing to the menstrual discharge. This is the disease. You can establish it from the fullness of her belly and from the fact that there is no movement in the womb. For the male foetus starts to move at three months, the female at four months. Therefore, when there is no movement after the passing of time, it is evident this is a growth. This is considerable proof

⁹⁷ Lit. 'a squeezing surgical instrument'

too. Milk does not come into the breasts. Do not treat a case like

this under any circumstance, but, if you decide to do it anyway, then be warned beforehand. Firstly fumigate the whole body, then rinse around the anus, so that it discharges a vast amount of blood. Perhaps you can force the clotted mass which is like a foetus to move, when the woman has become thoroughly warm on account of the medication. Rinse also the area around the uterus so that you draw away the blood. Otherwise, use the strongest pessaries made from the poisonous beetle,⁹⁸ and give to drink the dittany of Crete⁹⁹ in wine. Or else even the beaver testicle. Also, at her back towards the flank, apply a cupping glass to her, and draw away as much blood as possible. The doctor also applies around the womb what he judges best.

72. This section tells about the diseases which arise from the lochia. The dangers resulting from them are not small, for there are acute and swift changes, and the women giving birth for the first time suffer more than those who have previously borne children. In the healthy woman, the lochia flows sufficiently, when it is an Attic cotyle and a half,¹⁰⁰ or a little more, the first time, then this becomes suitably less, until it ceases. Such blood is like that which flows from a slaughtered animal. If the woman is healthy, as I have already said, and she is likely to remain healthy, the lochia quickly coagulates. Purge her after the birth so that it results in increased health. In a healthy woman, the lochial discharge will flow on average for forty-two days after the birth of a girl – there is no danger even when

⁹⁸ 'Buprestis' – when eaten by cattle in the grass causes them to swell up and die (LSJ)

⁹⁹ *Origanum Dictamnus*

¹⁰⁰ Approximately 350 ml

twenty days have passed. After the birth of a boy it will last for thirty days at the most, and there is no danger even if it is only for twenty days. The discharge from the aborted foeti comes in proportion to these days – fewer days in the case of a foetus which dies in the early weeks of pregnancy and more in the case of the older foeti. The same symptoms occur in both the lochia of the live birth and in the aborted birth, if the little child is not destroyed. The miscarriages are more dangerous, for the abortion of the child is more difficult. For it is not possible to abort the foetus without force, using medication or a drink or food or anything else. But force is painful. Therein lies the danger of ulceration or inflammation of the womb. This is dangerous.

73. I have explained the origin of milk during birth in *On the Nature of the Child*. When a woman conceives, no more menses flow, except for a small quantity in some. The sweetness of the fluid from the food and drink turns towards the breast and is sucked out, and it follows that the rest of the body is emptier and is less full of blood. So this is what happens. Some women are naturally without milk, and the milk leaves them before the time. These women are naturally barren and have thick bodies, and sufficient moisture cannot flow through to the breast from the womb because the way is thickened.

74. To draw down the menses – two draughts of squirting cucumber and suet from the kidneys of a sheep are mixed, equal to the squirting cucumber. Do not break in pieces but make two pessaries, or, after pounding black cumin from the wheat, mix in water and make two pessaries. Apply these before the days on which the woman is likely to menstruate. When the menses do not come, the woman has shivering and fevers. Emollients from which water and sand are cleansed also bring down the menses, if a long period has not passed, and relax the uterine mouth. Narcissus, myrrh, cumin, frankincense, wormwood, galingale,¹⁰¹ an equal amount of each, except for the narcissus of which you use four parts. After mixing with raw linseed and kneading this mixture of boiled origanum with water, make a suppository and apply. Or even a mixture of cyclamen and an equal amount of milk vetch and ground copper particles,¹⁰² the size of a bean, moisten with honey, make a suppository and apply. Or stir into honey, pennyroyal, myrrh, frankincense and gall of pig and of ox and make a suppository. If the menses do not come, the woman must apply wild goose oil, oil of bitter almonds and pine resin which she has mixed together, then wrapped in wool. A purgative, emollient pessary: Take dried fig, boil it well, after squeezing pound it until it is very smooth, and then you must apply it in wool and rose oil. The pungent pessary – after grinding half of each of cabbage and rue, use in the same way. A purgative – take goose, ox or deer marrow, the size of a bean, pour over rose oil and breast milk, pound as

¹⁰¹ Aromatic rhizome of E. Asian plant of genus *Alpinia* or *Kaempferia*. (COD)

¹⁰² a [nqo~ calkou`, small grains of cuprous oxide made by quenching heated copper (Potter. 1988:356)

though pounding medication, then anoint the uterine mouth with this mixture. Another emollient pessary – use goose fat, the size of a bean, beeswax, the size of a bean, resin from a mastic¹⁰³ or turpentine, the size of a bean, dissolve these in rose oil over a gentle heat, make as a salve. Then anoint the uterine mouth with this lukewarm mixture, and drench the pubes. Another purgative – spring wheat-meal,¹⁰⁴ three obols of myrrh, an equal amount of saffron, an obol of castoreum, knead these ingredients with oil derived from the iris and apply; or mix together nettle fruit, mallow juice and goose fat and apply. Another purgative pessary, if the menstruation has not appeared - mix together storax,¹⁰⁵ and origanum which has been ground smooth, pour over goose oil and apply. Another purgative pessary, in order to purge the uterus and to clear out the blood – pound smooth a root of wormwood, mix with honey and goose oil and apply. Another purgative pessary – separate the head, feet and wings of a buprestis. Grind the rest and mix with the inside of the fig. The flesh¹⁰⁶ of the fig will be a double amount. This distends the uterus and this is the best for when women become speechless. Or the smooth leaves of mercury make a pessary. This draws down a slight and bilious discharge. The wormwood also makes a pessary like the mercury, and cleanses better. Smooth black hellebore in water, it also draws down that which is like water from flesh. The alum and the pine resin produce the same effect. Galingale, wormwood,

¹⁰³ *Pistacia lentiscus*

¹⁰⁴ If *sitavnion* is read as *shtavneios*, a, on it means ‘spring’, ‘of this year’ rather than ‘branching wheat’.

¹⁰⁵ A fragrant resin

¹⁰⁶ I think ‘flesh’ is a better translation than ‘fat’ when referring to a fig.

birthwort,¹⁰⁷ cumin, salt, honey, grind all these in the same way and apply. Hellebore in sweet wine, darnel meal¹⁰⁸ and wheat, mixed in honey and applied in wool. Pessaries, if the medications swallowed by the woman do not purge - mercury, myrrh, white violet, very pungent onion, black cumin and the sweet savour. If the woman can endure it, mix together and apply. Pungent pessaries which bring down blood: five blister-beetles (possibly *Cantharis vesicatoria* or *Meloë Cichorei*¹⁰⁹), except for the feet, wings and head, and myrrh, mercury and honey, mixed together then hardened in rose oil or Egyptian oil and applied during the day. When it irritates, remove it and harden it again in breast milk and Egyptian perfume, apply this at night, and wash out thoroughly with fragrant water and apply hard fat. A buprestis is suitable, if it is small, without wings, feet and head, but if it is large, halve it and mix the same ingredients as were also mixed with the blister-beetles, and apply in the same way. If a softer preparation is needed, mix wine and Ethiopian cumin with the buprestis, as well as raisins and the finest meal of hartwort and anise,¹¹⁰ and boil up the wine. After pouring off the wine, knead smooth and mould pastilles weighing as much as a drachma; apply these, having mixed myrrh and frankincense, and make in the same way, the very same way as for the blister-beetles. Or the black cumin, which is from the wheat, ground smooth with honey, make it like a suppository. Plaster it around a wing. An effective pessary – apply the milky juice of a mandrake and of a wild

¹⁰⁷ A herb promoting childbirth

¹⁰⁸ *Lolium*

¹⁰⁹ Potter. 1988:345

round gourd with breast milk. Or kindle dried dregs from old white wine, and quench with wine. Take also a wild round gourd, mercury, sodium carbonate and hedge mustard.¹¹¹ Mandrake root, blister-beetle, tufted thyme,¹¹² fruit of the sweet bay tree, perfume from the iris and the bay, also draw down the menses more quickly. Mix the juice of spurge,¹¹³ stir up and extract the sticky substance, and give as much bitter vetch¹¹⁴ and this makes a better pessary. If the flux should be too much, let the woman wash herself in wine. Or, by sifting out burnt copper, prepare warm ingredients in wool, and apply.

75. An aid to conception – a saucer of oil from the Syrian cedar, beef suet weighing four drachmas,¹¹⁵ after kneading smooth and mixing together, make tampons, insert on an empty stomach, and while keeping it in place, the woman must continue fasting for the day. She must apply this twice, early and late, after the menstrual flow, and she must wash after dinner, and sleep with her husband. Or crush black cumin, bind in a rag and throw in wild goose fat and give to the woman to apply. Another aid to conception – treat the woman for her to become pregnant, take old urine and a bit of iron dross, as much as the palm of the hand, then let the woman down on a couch, completely covering her body and her head. Placing a foot pan underneath, throw in about three red-hot bits of iron dross. The urine must be as much as twelve cotyles. Put her in a vapour bath using as much

¹¹⁰ *Pimpinella Anisum*

¹¹¹ *Sisymbrium poleratum*

¹¹² *Thymus Sibthorpii*

¹¹³ The Greek text has *tiqumavlou* which is probably corrupt, mss IJKQ showing it as *tiqumavllou* (Littré p.161, *apparata critica* note 8). LSJ has *tiqumavllou* ~ οϋ 'spurge', *Euphorbia Peplus*. Spurge has an acrid milky juice COD

¹¹⁴ *Vicia Ervilia*

as thirty bits of dross to make the steam. When you have steamed her, wash her head with the urine in which she was steamed, quench the stones again and reheat the vapour. After these steamings she washes around her head as much as possible, boiling hulwort¹¹⁶ in the water and as many of the chaste-tree seeds as possible. Do this for a period of seven days. There must be three fumigations before she is washed off. Let her anoint herself with sweet bay tree oil from the bath. After the meal, when she eats onions, which she dips in honey, and drinks a warm drink of honey and milk, as much as four cotyles, then, when she has eaten, keeping down a little, she must vomit. When she has lain down, let her have some rue in her ears and in her nostrils, and let her have leavened bread, as much as six parts of a choenix,¹¹⁷ crumbled into a bird soup, having as much as a measure of celery. Give her the same amount for supper. Do the same for seven days. Then she rinses the uterus for seven days. She must have a rinse of four drachmas of pine resin, a flat saucer of honey, an equal amount of oil, spring wheat juice, native sodium carbonate and seven eggs. Eight cotyles of rinsing water, of which three are of barley water.¹¹⁸ Let her wash out sideways,¹¹⁹ and bathe in a little water. She must apply seven pessaries also during the day and she must retain it until it dissolves. The pessaries must be of frankincense, sodium carbonate, the resinous juice of all-heal¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Or 'four handfuls of beef suet'

¹¹⁶ *Teucrium Polium*

¹¹⁷ A dry measure especially for corn (LSJ). Littré has a choenix = 1,08 litres.

¹¹⁸ Lit. 'the juice of peeled barley'

¹¹⁹ I take this to mean that either she is lying on her side, or she raises one leg to rinse and then the other.

¹²⁰ *Ferula galbaniflua*

and boiled honey. She must eat the same food. A fumigant – hulwort, ass' hairs, wolf's excrement. She throws as much as possible onto burning embers. Sit her over the coals and place incense around her, taking care she does not burn. If the woman who has previously had a child is unable to conceive, knead sodium carbonate, pine resin, myrrh, Ethiopian cumin and perfume in the same way and apply. Or let her apply dried pennyroyal in a plaster. She must drink pennyroyal whenever she is likely to sleep. Another aid to conception – it is necessary to have a regimen for the woman who wants to conceive and give her the very same to eat and drink as you would to one who has just given birth, and for the woman's husband everything except garlic, onions, thick soup,¹²¹ laserwort juice, and such foods which cause flatulence. Let him abstain from these. An infused aid to conception, if she has not conceived – infuse into the vagina the following mixture – a nursing mother's breast milk, after grinding into it the seeds of a fresh pomegranate and squeezing out the juice, and the burnt and pounded male genitals of the sea-turtle. An infusion to aid conception for a woman who fails to become pregnant – milk, pine resin and sweet pomegranate juice. Mix these ingredients with honey, infuse all of it. An aid to conception – fruit of the white purse-tassels,¹²² or the flower, kneading it together with honey, then roll it in wool, apply to the uterus for three days. On the fourth day, after pounding the broadleaved wild mallow, mix it with breast milk, and apply it after rolling it in wool. Then let her lie with her husband. Let her swallow beforehand pennyroyal on

¹²¹ Made with pease or beans

boiled wheat meal and let her drink fine pennyroyal in wine. If she is not affected by this, take fragrant fleabane, after chopping it up and squeezing out the juice and mixing it with wine, let her drink it on an empty stomach. Another aid to conception – let her drink asparagus fruit in wine in the same way. Another aid to conception – knead together the afterbirth from a woman and the maggots' heads, dilute Egyptian alum¹²³ in wild goose fat, apply with wool to the mouth of the uterus. Another aid for the same purpose – copper verdigris, copper particles, half an obol of each, male frankincense,¹²⁴ fine alum, flower of the grapevine, oak-gall, myrrh, pomegranate peel, pine resin, hulwort, an obol of each, ground into honey. Apply twice a day over three days. If the pessary is perhaps too pungent, mix with wild goose fat and roasted sodium carbonate, and give with wine so that the force of the pungency is reduced by it. Another aid to conception – a maggot which has a tail, take three or four parts of these and fine origanum, rub in rose perfume, and apply to the uterine mouth. Another aid to conception – knead purslane¹²⁵ with goose fat, myrrh, leek seeds and ox gall, after rolling the mixture in wool, apply to the uterine mouth. An aid to conception if the menses come in abundance and the woman has not conceived – two obols of copper particles and a similar amount of fine alum, after pounding smooth in honey then, having soaked it up with wool and binding the wool to a linen cloth with flax, she must apply it deep inside. The flax should

¹²² *Muscari comosum*

¹²³ Or ferrous sulphate as *sturthtiyv* is the name of astringent substances containing alum or ferrous sulphate. I have continued to use the word 'alum'.

¹²⁴ I understand this to mean that the aromatic gum resin would come from the male tree.

¹²⁵ *Portulaca oleracea*

project from the vagina.¹²⁶ Then when she has purged herself well, she must remove the tampon and, after boiling up sweet smelling wine, throw in myrtle leaves. She must use this as a wash, and go to her husband. A suppository to aid conception – honey, myrrh, the tamarisk fruit, soft pine resin, goose fat, pound everything together in the same way. Let the woman apply it after wrapping it in wool. A suppository to aid conception to enable the womb to open very wide, when it is closed and the woman is unable to conceive, and to clear away water – take the small alkanet,¹²⁷ mastich,¹²⁸ cumin, galingale, colocynth,¹²⁹ red sodium carbonate, Egyptian salt and the large alkanet, make all these items smooth, filter through a linen cloth. Take honey, boiling it over a gentle heat, when it boils mix with beeswax and pine resin. Then mix everything together, pour over oil, extract, warm, roll up in a woollen roll, and apply to the uterus until it is purged. Another aid to conception if the woman wishes to conceive, use this purgative on an empty stomach, and, if necessary, she must go to her husband – ten black berries of the spurge-laurel,¹³⁰ three drachms of frankincense and a little cumin pounded in honey, rolled up in greasy wool – let the woman apply it and remove it once on the

¹²⁶ The flax would be used to remove the tampon.

¹²⁷ *Anchusa tinctoria* (LSJ) or *Albanna tinctoria* (COD) – a plant whose root yields a red dye.

¹²⁸ *Pistacia Lentiscus*. According to LSJ *sci`no~* could be a form of *skivlla* meaning ‘squill’ (*Virginea maritima*), ‘the bulbs of which are dried and used as a diuretic or purgative’ (COD). As the suppository is ‘to clear away water’ it could be that *skivlla* should be read instead of *sci`no~*.

¹²⁹ *Citrullus Colocynthis*. A bitter-apple, gourd plant with bitter-pulped fruit used as a purgative drug (COD).

¹³⁰ *Dafn`ti~ idos hJ = a[cu* (no article given) which is quill-cassia, *camaidavfnh hJ* which is periwinkle (*Vinca herbacea*) and/or *dafnoeidev~, tov* – spurge-laurel (*Daphne Laureola*). Littré has taken the latter meaning. I tend to agree as spurge has an acrid milky juice which would lend itself to mixing with honey.

same day, and she must do this for four days in a row, and then she must abstain from food for the same number of days.

76. Aid for preventing pregnancy, if a woman does not wish to conceive: after soaking a bean-sized truffle in water, give it to her to drink, and for a year, practically, she will not conceive.¹³¹
77. Medication to promote a quick birth should the woman suffer in childbirth. After scraping a root of a sweet bay tree, or the shoots, as much as half a saucer, and warming it in water, give it to her to drink. A medicine to promote a quick birth: Let the woman drink as much as two obols of dittany kneaded in water. Or a handful of wormwood, Syrian cedar fruits and anise rubbed into sweet wine with a ladle, pouring in a ladleful of stale water, give to drink. It is good to give this if it is given before the pangs of childbirth. Or an obol of dittany, an obol of myrrh, two obols of anise and one of sodium carbonate. Pound these smooth, pour in a ladle of sweet wine and two ladles of warm water, give to drink, then wash her in warm water. Medication to promote a quick birth – turpentine, honey, oil double the amount, fragrant wine as pleasant tasting as possible, mix these together, warm, give to drink several times. This will settle down the womb if it is inflamed. Another aid to speedy delivery: the wild cucumber which is already white, plaster up the fruit in beeswax, then roll it up in wool which is dyed purple, and fasten it around the loins. Use if the pregnant woman is restrained for a long time and is unable to give birth, but has been in the throes of childbirth for many days. If she is young, in the peak of condition and full-blooded, it is necessary

¹³¹ The first oral contraceptive?

to cut the veins in the ankles and draw off the blood, depending on the strength of the woman. After these procedures, wash her

in warm water so that she is permeated by the warmth. Give her fruit of the chaste-tree and dittany of Crete, an equal amount of each, to drink in white wine or in water. After making a suppository, apply the resinous juice of all-heal and spurge-laurel and rose oil, rolling it in wool. Another aid to a speedy delivery – after pounding a root of the black oak fern¹³² into wine, give it to drink, or pound maidenhair¹³³ into oil and drink after diluting in neat wine.

78. For a woman who has just given birth, this preparation purges the lochia more efficiently: rub bile from a sea-turtle, which is still alive, into breast milk, and sweet oil from the iris, soak in wine and apply. Or use ground mercury applied in wool, or apply after rubbing wormwood in the same way on to wool. Or take mercury and wild cucumber, grind them a little, sprinkle with wine and honey, and apply. A purgative for the lochia after childbirth: bruise spring-sown wheat, as much as half a choenix,¹³⁴ boil in four cotyles of water. When it has boiled give it to her two or three times to swallow. Another purgative: after boiling the corn leaves in water, pour off and drink. Let the woman chew also boiled cabbage, leeks, fennel, anise, polypody and crayfish,¹³⁵ or sumach leaves and hedge-mustard in wine. After sprinkling over barley-groats, give to drink. Or apply ground truffle, as much as two obols, mixed in wine. A purgative mainly for menses and lochial discharge, it also

¹³² *Asplenium onopteris*. (LSJ). Littré has *asplenium adiantum nigrum*

¹³³ *Adiantum Capillus Veneris*

¹³⁴ The Attic choenix is equivalent to 1,094 l (Potter. 1988:332) therefore half a choenix would equal approx. 500 ml. Cf. Note 117, p.161

¹³⁵ *κavrabo~*, οJ has two meanings – ‘the horned or cerambycid beetle’ and ‘crayfish’ Littré has translated it as ‘crabe’ (crab). (VIII:175) As Hippocrates has previously used beetles in medication, but ground into other ingredients, it is possible that ‘crayfish’ is the correct word.

removes water and the rest: as much as a pinch of soap-wort root¹³⁶ which has been pounded smooth, after moistening in honey, apply. This sort of soap-wort is produced in the Andros on the seashore. Another similar purgative: boil hedge-mustard in water, and pour in olive oil. When it boils up, make it cool, and fumigate. The juice is good also. Use soft foods. A purgative for the lochial discharge: after gently kneading hedge-mustard, so that the shell is easily blown away, make it clean, knead smoothly, drop water on it and mix salt and olive-oil. Then you sprinkle over meal, boil, and let her swallow it. If the lochial discharge does not come down, take as much as three obols of the inmost part of a cucumber, wormwood herb, and as much as an obol of frankincense, knead, mix in honey, wrap it in wool, apply to the uterine mouth continually at night and during the day. Do this for up to five days. Or grind the pale green grape vine, and after mixing with honey, wrap in wool and apply in the same way. Or after kneading the fruit of the cypress tree¹³⁷ and frankincense in the same way, dilute with rose oil and honey, wrap in wool and let her apply. Or after mixing wormwood,¹³⁸ as much as a drachma, the inside of a cucumber and frankincense with honey, let her apply it in wool. A purgative if the womb is not clean after childbirth: give the woman clover leaves¹³⁹ to drink in white wine, and the menses

¹³⁶ *Saponaria officinalis*

¹³⁷ *Euphorbia aleppica*

¹³⁸ *Artemisia aborescens*

¹³⁹ *Trifolium frageferum*

discharge the pessary and expel the foetus at the same time. A purgative for the womb, when the child has died and the blood remains inside: after grinding a colocynth¹⁴⁰ into honey, let her lick it, or apply it. For all the lochial discharges, if they are not good: boil hedge-mustard and barley-groats, pour in oil, when it is boiled, let her swallow it and let her have foods which are as soft as possible. Or after pounding scammony in breast milk, sponging it up with wool, apply. Or, after drenching peony root with honey and rose-oil, or Egyptian perfume, let her apply it in wool. Or let her apply washed meal in the same way. Let her drink fruit of samphire and of hartwort, and fruit of rue, two obols of each rubbed together, and mixed in pure wine. Give it to drink if she is not feverish. A pessary to bring out the afterbirth which has been left behind: the leaf of the corn, first take a vapour bath and apply with the blister-beetle, and whatever else is mild. If the pessary stings and irritates, remove it immediately, and let her apply wool which has been dipped in rose-oil. An application which is able to draw out afterbirth, and draw down menses and a crippled foetus. Five cantharine beetles, having pulled off the wings, legs and the head, then, after pounding prickly samphire¹⁴¹ with the roots and leaves, as much as a shell-full, and grinding the pale-green ox-eye,¹⁴² the hardness on the outside, as much as a shell-full, the same amount of celery seeds and fifteen cuttlefish eggs, mix in sweet wine, and apply. When the woman has pain, let her sit in warm water, and let her drink watered-down honey and milk and

¹⁴⁰ A bitter-apple, gourd plant with bitter-pulped fruit used as a purgative drug. COD.

¹⁴¹ Riddle has the small caltrop, *Tribulus Terrestris*. Riddle.1994:76

sweet wine. Also drink in sweet wine as much as an Aeginetan weight of that which has been ground (i.e. ox-eye, celery seeds and cuttlefish eggs). Whenever she has pain, cool white chickpeas and boiled raisins in water and give to drink. When she has strangury¹⁴³ let her sit in tepid water. Expulsion of the foetus from the uterus: Make the juice of the squirting cucumber into something fashioned like a suppository¹⁴⁴ and apply after the woman has previously fasted for two days. You will not find better than this. A test: apply a head of garlic which has been boiled. Another test: apply a little oil of almonds rolled in wool, and establish if it smells through her mouth.¹⁴⁵ A pessary: place the gall of a sea scorpion in wool and apply when it has dried up in the shade; or dried pennyroyal, made smooth, soaked in honey, apply in wool; or apply copper particles, bound in a linen cloth, in honey; or cucumber seeds both burned in an earthen vessel and drenched in wine, apply in fur from a hare or in wool. Another application: apply Egyptian alum wrapped in wool. Or pulverised beetles drenched in wine, apply in wool. Or apply the wormwood herb soaked in wine. Or apply in wool black cumin pounded into wine. Or, take the little bulb¹⁴⁶ that grows in the wheat fields, pound it and drench in wine, apply in wool. Or burn the dregs of mature white wine and extinguish with white wine, grind and apply in a linen cloth.

¹⁴² Littré has the Latin *chrysanthemum coronarium* whereas LSJ has *Anacyclus radiatus*. Riddle has 'boantheon', and he argues that the two plants are not identified with certainty.

¹⁴³ Strangury is a disease in which urine is passed painfully and in drops (COD)

¹⁴⁴ Lit. 'a little bread'

¹⁴⁵ These are tests to see if the channels are clear, enabling the woman to conceive. The pessaries are applied to the vaginal mouth to see if the smell comes through the mouth in the face. The procedure is described in Mul. 2.146 kh[n me;n i[h/ ojd mh; aujth`/ dia; tou` stovmato~ tou` ejlaivou, favnai aujth;n tevxesqai k.t.l. – 'If the smell of the oil comes through her mouth, to show she can conceive ...'

Or resinous juice of all-heal, oil of bitter almonds and truffle in rose perfume, apply in a linen cloth. Another suppository: two draughts of squirting cucumber and a honeycomb in wine, apply in a linen cloth. Or, butter, alum, drench in honey, apply in the same way. Or juice of scammony, fat, mix into a barley-cake and drench with wine, apply in a linen cloth. Drinks to enable the placenta to draw out anything retained in the womb: the inside of a colocynth ¹⁴⁷ pounded into breast milk, let her apply in a linen cloth. For the same problem: laserwort, the size of a bean, in wine, give to drink. Another means of expelling the placenta: after taking the woman by the armpits, shake vigorously. Give her to drink leaves of the chaste tree in wine; or dittany from Crete, as much as an obol, grind into wine; or a handful of ill-smelling fleabane, ¹⁴⁸ diluted with leek juice, and oil of bitter almonds, as much as a large measure, give these to drink in wine after grinding smooth. Or very greasy pinewood boiled with sweet wine, after pouring over as much as three ladles, and as much as three obols of the resinous juice of all-heal and myrrh, boil until it becomes thick, give to drink warm. Or leek juice, myrrh and sweet wine altogether. Or pound purslane seed in a mortar, give to drink in mature white wine. Or let her drink nine seeds from the black poplar of Crete ground into wine. Or an Aeginetan ¹⁴⁹ drachma of the leaf and flower of ranunculus pounded into sweet wine to drink. If the placenta remains inside, grind an obol of serpent's skin rubbed

¹⁴⁶ Could also be 'purse-tassels' *Muscari comosum*.

¹⁴⁷ *Citrullus Colcynthis*

¹⁴⁸ Riddle has 'spikenard'. Riddle.1994:78

¹⁴⁹ An Aeginetan drachma weighs 6.03 g compared to an Attic drachma which weighs 4.366 g. Potter.1998:330

in wine and drink. Or let her boil celery root and myrtle berries, drink for four days. Or Ethiopian cumin, and castoreum, as much as an obol, and a little of blister-beetle. Give these to drink in wine. Or give her to drink fennel root, which has been boiled in wine, oil and honey. If the placenta does not come down, after grinding fleabane, apply in wool, but it is better to drink it. Or as much as the hand can hold of fleabane, and leek juice and oil of bitter almonds, as much as a scallop shell, mix together and let her drink these ingredients in wine. The placenta comes out, and the menses are drawn down and draw out a half-formed foetus: five blister-beetles, the wings, legs and head pulled off, then prickly samphire chopped up with the root and the leaves, as much as a shell full, and the same amount of ground green camomile, celery seeds and fifteen cuttlefish eggs in mixed, sweet wine – mix all these ingredients together and when she has pain, give it to her to drink. Let her have a sitz bath in warm water, and let her drink a mixture of honey and water and sweet white wine. This enables the placenta to be expelled: root of the sweet earth-almond,¹⁵⁰ it is like the purse-tassels, but small like an olive, grind this into wine and give to drink. If it is small use two, but if it is big, one suffices. Mix with the seeds, Ethiopian cumin and Marsillian hartwort,¹⁵¹ or a half-choenix of dry Libyan leaf with three cotyles of wine, boil and reduce it to half, and let the woman drink from this. Another: fruit of the chaste-tree, the same quantity of hartwort, myrrh, pound together and give to drink with water. An expellant: a saucer of fresh white chaste tree

¹⁵⁰ *Cyperus esculentus*

seeds, give to drink in fragrant white wine after pounding smooth. Another: an obol of castoreum or sagapenum,¹⁵² one drachma of bitumen, two of sodium carbonate, after pounding everything in sweet wine and oil – as much as half a cotyle, give two obols to drink on an empty stomach, and wash well in warm water. Another that is similar: three sea urchins ground completely smooth in fragrant wine, give to drink. Another: a small handful of mint,¹⁵³ of rue and of coriander, and sawdust from the juniper or cypress, give to drink in fragrant wine. And of the sea urchins, let her swallow as many as possible, if there are any. Then wash in warm water. Another similar expellant: anise, Syrian cedar fruit, celery seed, Ethiopian cumin, hartwort – half a saucer of each – give to drink down after grinding smooth in white wine. Another similar expellant: a handful of dittany of Crete and two drachmas of daucos fruit,¹⁵⁴ and as much black cumin. After grinding smooth in white wine, give to drink and wash in abundant warm water; give according to the severity of the disease. Another: pound all-heal, the size of an olive, in juniper oil, and apply. This enables her to abort and to expel the aborted child. Another expellant infusion for the uterus. When the foetus which has died because of cold, produced by a glacial wind, and is putrefying, grind smooth saffron weighing as much as a drachma, pour in goose fat, and allow it to infuse for as long as possible. A drink that has a good effect for the same problem: aromatic fleabane, honey and pine

¹⁵¹ *Seseli tortuosum*

¹⁵² A plant – probably *Ferula persica* - LSJ

¹⁵³ *Mentha viridis*

¹⁵⁴ *Athamanta Cretensis*. Today's common name is 'Queen Anne's Lace', Riddle.1994

resin, ground smooth in fragrant wine, or in radish,¹⁵⁵ give to drink and wash in warm water. Another drink, when the child and the insides are bad: copper verdigris rubbed with honey and radish, give to drink. Another expellant pessary, if the foetus has died: copper filings put into a soft linen cloth, apply to the uterine mouth, and this will be beneficial.¹⁵⁶ An expellant pessary, if the foetus has died inside: use a fresh shell and goose fat, apply after grinding. Another application: sodium carbonate boiled with pine resin and made into a pessary, which the woman applies after hardening it in bird fat. Another application: the plant called ‘gracious’¹⁵⁷ – apply the root of this to the navel, but not for a long time. Another: apply colocynth and rats’ droppings pounded smooth. Another application under a bandage: after rubbing together and mixing pine resin and goose fat, bandage her around the navel and the belly. Another application: after grinding the fruit of the white ivy and juniper berry sawdust and making little pessaries, let her apply. Another: after pounding the brain of the sea turtle, Egyptian saffron and Egyptian salt, and mixing together, make pessaries and let her apply. Fragrant medication for expelling the foetus or placenta, also enabling the woman to expel blood from the belly: put willow leaves on a fire, fumigate, and make the woman sit until the smoke goes into the womb. Concerning treatment of an attempted abortion: when the woman attempts to abort and the baby is not expelled, either because it is mortified and swollen, or because she is experiencing some

¹⁵⁵ The juice mixed with salt water makes a purgative and an emetic. LSJ

¹⁵⁶ Lit. ‘you will help’.

other related problem, leeks and celery, after squeezing out the juice through a rag wrapped around both, a cotyle of rose oil, and as much as a quarter of an obol of goose fat, and three obols of pine resin diluted in oil, and made so that after raising up the feet, it pours¹⁵⁸ into the uterus, and let her keep it inside for as long as possible while she is lying down. Then she sits down for four days, and expels the mortified child. But if this does not happen, after taking Egyptian salt and green colocynth, mixing with honey, and pounding, give the mixture to her to eat. When she has eaten, let her move herself round about. An expellant pessary: Egyptian salt, mouse droppings, colocynth and as much as a quarter of an obol of boiled honey, pour in and, after taking one drachma of pine resin, throw it into the honey, colocynth and the mouse droppings, thoroughly pounding everything together and after having made pessaries, apply to the womb, for as long as seems right. Another expellant which expels the child which has become paralysed: give to drink pellitory¹⁵⁹ ground into wine. Another expellant drink which expels the livid child: having taken a pinch of finely ground black hellebore roots and myrrh, the size of a bean, drink it in sweet wine. An expellant: coriander with the root, sodium carbonate and oil of bitter almonds, then the woman must walk up and down when she has applied the expellant. An infusion to expel the foetus, if it has died inside: after grinding saffron, pour over goose oil and, after filtering, pour into the womb, so

¹⁵⁷ The translation in LSJ reads as 'the plant called 'gracious'. Littré has 'l'herbe appelée gracieuse' (p.187).

¹⁵⁸ I think 'pouring into the womb' would be like giving an enema, except the liquid goes through the vagina instead of through the anus.

that it stays as long as possible. To destroy a motionless foetus and expel it: one drachma of fine alum, the same amount of myrrh, three obols of black hellebore ground smooth in black wine, make little pessaries. Apply until the foetus is gradually released. Douches for cleansing a womb if it is ulcerated from childbirth or from inflammation: winter figs, after pouring on water and boiling, leave, restore, then pour on warm oil and mix, rinse with two cotyles at the most. No douche should be more than this in volume. Also the peel and loose flesh of the pomegranate boiled in bitter black wine, then after pouring off the wine, rinse with this. Another douche: after burning wine dregs, dissolve and rinse in water, then pomegranate peels, myrtle, fragrant camel-hay,¹⁶⁰ and lentils boiled in wine, after pouring off the wine, rinse out. Another douche: butter, frankincense, pine resin, after dissolving in honey in the same way, pour over the wine, rinse out with warm liquid. Or corn seed boiled in water, after pouring off the water, grind in the usual way celery, myrrh, anise, frankincense. Having poured over very fragrant wine, equal in quantity to the water, filtered through a linen cloth and warmed, rinse out. Another: cabbage, mercury, linseed and the green flax – after boiling in water and straining off, rinse out with the water. Or a saucerful of myrtle leaves, myrrh, anise, honey, pine resin, Egyptian perfume, everything ground and mixed, after pouring over two cotyles of the most fragrant white wine, filtering and warming, rinse out with this. Or seed of the sweet bay tree and pennyroyal – after

¹⁵⁹ *Parietaria officinalis*. Littré has ‘helxine’ - bindweed - (*Convolvulus arvensis*). Pellitory is a plant with a pungent-flavoured root, used as a local irritant. COD.

¹⁶⁰ *Cymborogon Schoenanthus*

boiling in water, pour over rose oil, warm, rinse out with this. Or goose fat mixed with pine resin – after pouring this over wine and warming, rinse. Another: butter and cedar oil warmed in a little honey, mixed together, rinse out. Or boil honey, butter, camel-hay, sweet flag¹⁶¹ and oyster-green seaweed in wine, then filter and rinse as before. Or celery seed, hartwort, myrrh, anise, black cumin in wine – strain off the wine, douche. Or a juniper berry boiled in wine, douche with the wine. Or ivy boiled in water, douche with the water. Or squirting cucumber, or two draughts of saxifrage,¹⁶² boil in water equal to two cotyles, and rinse with it warm. Or the pith of a bottle gourd, as much as two fingers, boiled in two cotyles of water - pour the water over honey and oil, douche with this. Or as much as two draughts of deadly carrot,¹⁶³ pounded smooth, pour over honey and oil, dilute with water equal to two cotyles, rinse out. Or black hellebore, equal to two draughts, diluted in sweet wine and water, rinse out. Or use as many as sixty spurge-flax berries pounded smooth and poured over honey, oil and water, douche. A strengthening douche, if ulcers are clean – pound winter wild figs and pour over water, soak for a whole day, pour over oil and rinse out. Or with pomegranate peel, sumach, the one used for tanning, leaves of myrtle and of blackberry,¹⁶⁴ boil in black wine. When the ulcers have a foul smell, burn the dregs and rinse with wine and water. Douches for chronic ulcers – with the juice of boiled cabbage, rinse out, and similarly with mercury, and mix with a little red sodium carbonate. A

¹⁶¹ *Acorus Calamus*

¹⁶² *Stachys alopecuroides*. Littré has ‘cestron (*sideritis syriaca*, d’après Fraas)’

¹⁶³ *Thapsia garganica*

saucerful of myrrh, frankincense, hartwort, anise, celery seed, oil of bitter almonds, pine resin, honey, goose fat, white vinegar, white Egyptian perfume, the same amount of each,

¹⁶⁴ bavton, tov = blackberry; bavto~, oJ = bramble

pulverise smooth in the same way, then dilute in two cotyles of white wine, rinse out while it is warm. Or boil mercury in water and strain off. Or a saucerful of myrrh, mercury, hartwort, oil of bitter almonds, an equal part of each, rinse out with it warm. Or sage and hypericum, after boiling in water rinse out with the water. Or corn seed and sweet bay tree seed, boil an equal amount of each in wine, then the woman douches with the wine. Or seed of pennyroyal boiled in water. Or goose fat melted in pine resin, similarly a little cedar oil poured in and soaked with honey, rinse out with the warm mixture. Or lead oxide in wine, honey and melted beeswax, and galingale, camel-hay and sweet flag, everything mixed to an unguent, also iris and oyster-green boiled in wine, douche. Or boil in wine celery seed, anise, hartwort, myrrh and black cumin, or boil Cretan juniper berry in wine and rinse out. Or Cretan ivy in water, do it in the same way. Or bryony¹⁶⁵ and myrrh diluted in water, rinse. Or as much as two draughts of squirting cucumber in water, douche. Or two colocynths in wine or in boiled milk – after soaking in four cotyles of either, strain off and rinse out. Or cucumber pulp, as much as the palm of the hand, boiled in four cotyles of water, and use after pouring over honey and olive oil. Or two draughts of deadly carrot root diluted in sweet wine with two cotyles of water, rinse with the warm liquid. Or hellebore, as much as two draughts diluted in about two cotyles of sweet wine, or as much as a saucerful of shepherd's purse¹⁶⁶ mixed with honey, dilute with as much as two cotyles of water, use warm. Or cucumber,

¹⁶⁵ *Bryonia cretica*. Littré has *Bryonia alba*.

¹⁶⁶ *Capsella bursapastoris*

as much as the palm of the hand, and one draught of spurge flax boiled in five cotyles of water, pour over honey and olive oil, rinse out. Or sixty spurge flax berries, honey, oil diluted with water, douche. If the woman is attacked by diarrhoea after childbirth, she must drink black raisins and the inside and peel of the sweet pomegranate, and kid's rennet. Dilute these in black wine and goat's cheese and sprinkle over wheat meal, and give to drink; toast the wheat for a little. If the woman vomits blood after childbirth: with this complaint the liver-duct is damaged – she must drink ass' milk, then cow's, if it is convenient, for forty days, and ground sesame, until she becomes healthy. She must drink the milk on an empty stomach. If she is suffering around the anus after childbirth, boil juniper berry,¹⁶⁷ and flax root and drink for four days, and eat lettuce seeds pulverised with goose fat. If the womb is inflamed from childbirth, pour on juice of hound's berry,¹⁶⁸ or of beet or of buckthorn.¹⁶⁹ If after childbirth the leg becomes lame because of the womb and the woman is unable to stand up, drink henbane seed, as much as a scallop shell,¹⁷⁰ in black wine for three days; the drinking makes her mad. A solution is to drink as much as a wine cup of ass' milk, then of the medication by which the phlegm is purged. Let her fumigate herself with red sulphide of arsenic, salve and hare's fur for three days. Concerning inflammation after childbirth: if the uterus is inflamed after childbirth, pour into the genitalia, hound's berry

¹⁶⁷ *Juniperus macrocarpa*. Littré has *juniperos phoenicea*.

¹⁶⁸ *Solanum nigrum*. There are various meanings of *struvgnon* – winter cherry (*Physalis Alkakengi*), thorn apple (*Datura Stramonium*) and sleepy nightshade (*Withania somnifera*). Littré uses 'hound's berry'.

¹⁶⁹ Once again there are various meanings of *ῥῥαυμνο~* but all refer to the buckthorn family.

juice, or juice of celery, or of buckthorn, or of beet, or pour in squeezed out juice of colocynth, or the long centre of it, and after squeezing out the tenderest part, insert. Or pound juice of wormwood in water, soaking up with wool, but if she is shivering, take it away. Or leaves of navelwort¹⁷¹ and leeks boiled in coarse barley meal; pour over oil, give to drink.

79. Purging bile from the uterus: after pounding smooth the inside of a bottle gourd, and mixing with honey, make a suppository and apply. It is necessary to give medication and to purge both from above and from below, and to wash in the warm water, and to apply a pessary of anise or black cumin. Or make the insides of a colocynth smooth, mix with honey and apply. Or apply as much as four draughts of squirting cucumber; after mixing with fat from a goose or from a goat, make a longer suppository, and apply. Or sodium carbonate, cumin, garlic and fig; after making everything smooth and drenching with honey, apply. Let her wash in warm water, and let her drink after bathing. Or shepherd's purse pounded smooth and mixed with honey, apply. Or after scraping the fat from an old fig, mix with two draughts of squirting cucumber and as much sodium carbonate, after drenching with honey, apply. Or give her to drink as many as three ladles of sulphur-wort¹⁷². Or give her to drink anise and black cumin diluted in wine. For a suppository: four draughts of squirting cucumber mixed with sheep's fat; after she has removed the suppository she must wash out thoroughly with fragrant water, which is mildly astringent. Or

¹⁷⁰ Littré gives the measurement as 0,009 litres – about two teaspoons.

¹⁷¹ *Cotyledon Umbilicus*

¹⁷² *Peucedanum officinale*

give her three draughts of squirting cucumber, with sheep fat, make a covering (?)¹⁷³ around the suppository. If she removes it, she must wash out thoroughly with more than sufficient water. Or give her a draught of shepherd's purse with honey.

80. A douche, if the woman is bilious: Two draughts of squirting cucumber diluted with water, pour over narcissus oil and rinse out with warm water. Or after soaking two colocynths in boiled milk mixed with wine, equal to four cotyles, strain off once, mix with narcissus oil and rinse out. Another douche, suitable for biliousness and inflammation: the inside of a bottle gourd, equal to the palm of the hand, boiled in four cotyles of drinking water,¹⁷⁴ and honey and oil of lilies mixed, douche. To cleanse phlegm and bile: sixty spurge flax seeds, honey and oil of lilies mixed, rinse out with water. Or a stinging plant¹⁷⁵ boiled in five cotyles of drinking water. After pouring off two cotyles, mix with honey and oil of lilies with narcissus, and rinse out. Purging douches: grilled winter wild figs which have been soaked in water, pour off the water and mix with olive oil and rinse out. Cleanse afterwards with a douche made with pomegranate peel, castor oil and sawdust from a nettle tree; it is necessary to boil in black wine. Or, take burnt dregs with water, and cleanse afterwards with myrtle leaves, sumach used by tanners and boil everything in a fragrant black wine. You can also cleanse afterwards with a douche of camel-hay leaves,

¹⁷³ I agree with Littré 'en ce sens, n'est pas dans les dictionnaires' (p. 199) that there is no clear dictionary meaning of the word *perivpteron* in the sense required here. Perhaps the text is corrupt. If the verb *periptuvssw* is used instead of *perivpteron*, it means 'to enfold'. The sentence may then read 'Or give her three draughts of squirting cucumber and make a suppository enfolded in sheep fat'

¹⁷⁴ Hippocrates differentiates here between using seawater and drinking water.

¹⁷⁵ *Daphne oleoides*

hypericum and sage boiled with fragrant black wine, or in cabbage water in which you have boiled mercury and a little red sodium carbonate. Rinse out. A draught of squirting cucumber, with narcissus oil, or lily oil, and rinse out with it warm. If the woman is bilious, two colocynths soaked in four cotyles of boiled ass' milk and, after filtering, douche; mix together narcissus or lily oil. Or by using the bottle gourd: as much as a palm of the insides boiled in four cotyles of drinking water, and pour in honey and oil of lilies. This douche is useful for inflammation and biliousness. A douche to draw phlegm: pound belladonna seeds with water.

81. Very abundant and all kinds of purging come from this pessary: a head of garlic, sodium carbonate, the inside flesh of a fig; after pounding them equally smooth, so as to make the pessary the size of the large castor oil berry, apply. Or cumin leaves ground into wine, apply in wool. Or a draught of white earth. Or pound a white root¹⁷⁶ smooth and pour over honey; boil up and, after making a suppository, apply. Or soften laserwort juice with figs and make a suppository. It is also good to pulverise bottle gourd seeds in the same way. Or bull's gall, red sodium carbonate, oil of bitter almonds and cyclamen, these are to be equal in size to a castor oil berry; with the exception of the cyclamen, of which you take a bigger part; mix with honey and the patient must apply. An application: cleanse the head of a narcissus with water, grind, and apply after mixing up well into a froth. Or myrrh, salt, cumin, bull's gall with honey mixed in the same way. Or seeds freed from their shells, equal to three of

¹⁷⁶ Littré has *celle du dracontion*, *dracunculus polyphyllus*. (p.203) LSJ has no definition.

medicinal peppers¹⁷⁷, the one which is for the eyes, which is called ‘pepper’, and of the spherical type; grind these three peppers smooth and dilute in warm, mature wine, put the suppository around a bird’s feather and administer in this way. Or juice of spurge¹⁷⁸ soaked in honey; or a root of a squill¹⁷⁹ equal to six fingers, rolled around two fingers of wool, apply. Or the same squill without a root, pounded, and rolled around wool in the same way, then apply.

82. A douche if the woman is full of phlegm: dilute two draughts of hellebore in sweet wine, equal to two cotyles, mix and rinse out. If the woman is requiring a purgative, it is necessary to boil leeks, or corn seed, or anise, frankincense, myrrh, wine; pound all these ingredients and rinse out with their juice. Or cabbage boiled in water; boil mercury in the cabbage juice and, after pouring off a little, rinse out. Or infuse a draught of a stinging plant, diluted in honey.
83. It is necessary to look carefully at the menses, to ascertain whether they are bilious or full of phlegm. Put fine, dry sand in the sun and, when the menses come, pour the blood over it and allow to become dry. If the menses should be bilious, the blood becomes greenish-yellow when it dries in the sand, but if it is full of phlegm, then mucous discharges are seen. If then it should be full of phlegm, dilute a draught of a stinging plant with a cotyle of a mixture of honey and water, and douche.

¹⁷⁷ According to LSJ *jIndiko;n favrmakon* is ‘a kind of *pepper*’. It cites ‘*eye salve*’ in Gal.12.780.al.

¹⁷⁸ *Euphorbia pepylus*

¹⁷⁹ *Urginea maritime*. ‘A seashore plant whose bulbs are dried and used as a diuretic, purgative, etc.’

84. A gentle purgative which draws down water, skin¹⁸⁰ and blood-filled serous discharges, and draws down menses if they have not been suppressed for a long time and softens the uterine mouth. Narcissus oil and edible cumin,¹⁸¹ myrrh and frankincense, wormwood, salts of copper, rose oil, equal amounts of each of these; except for the narcissus of which you take four parts; after mixing with a tow¹⁸² of raw flax pound everything and make a pessary; apply around fine lint with a feather, bind fast, and dip into white Egyptian oil; apply and keep in place the whole day. When she has washed herself and removed the suppository, she must wash out thoroughly with fragrant water. Another purgative which brings down water, skin, mucous and blood-filled serous discharges: myrrh, salt, cumin and bull's gall, mix these together; after mixing with honey and putting into a rag, apply. Keep in for a whole day then, when she has washed herself and removed the suppository, she must wash thoroughly in fragrant water. Another: salt, cumin and bull's gall, mixed up with honey, and apply. When she has washed herself and removed the suppository she must wash in the fragrant water. Or laserwort mixed with a fig and applied, then wash out thoroughly with rose perfume. Or boil shelled grains and make a pessary, and when it is removed, she must apply rose oil. Or garlic and red sodium carbonate and a fig, each of these mixed equally with honey: give to her to apply and, when it is removed, apply deer

¹⁸⁰ Although the Greek is in the plural, it makes more sense to have 'skin' in the singular.

¹⁸¹ There are obviously different types of cumin, besides black cumin; some edible, others not. It maybe that cumin from different areas has different properties, or maybe it is a different author who is more precise in his description.

¹⁸² The coarse part of flax which remains in the flax-comb. COD

fat, melted in wine. Or five pepper grains mixed with a little squirting cucumber, drip breast milk on to wool, after dipping into perfume; apply in the same way when the pessary is removed. Or the fleshiest part of a fig with a draught of squirting cucumber and an equal amount of red sodium carbonate and of honey, in the same way. Or bull's gall and red sodium carbonate, oil of bitter almonds and of cyclamen, as much as a castor-oil berry,¹⁸³ in honey. Or bull's gall, after dipping it in Egyptian oil, let her apply, and when it is removed, wash with rose oil. Or the inside of the large bottle gourd, the seed removed, with breast milk from a nursing mother,¹⁸⁴ and pure myrrh, a little honey and Egyptian perfume; pound and apply. Or dry the inside of the bottle gourd, chop it up without the seed and throw in honey, boil up and make a long pessary and dip in white oil. Or the colocynth in the same way. Or three draughts of squirting cucumber, ground into spelt flour, mixed and made into a dough, and make a pessary. Another similar pessary: shelled grains, kneaded as much as a draught, boiled and poured over honey and apply, or rose oil and let her apply. Whenever a pessary is applied, you must stick the feather into it, then wrap it in a fine rag with wool, and dip it into Egyptian perfume, then apply. It brings down the most part¹⁸⁵ and removes skin. Strong applications for purging which are more able to bring down water, mucous and skin than those described earlier. Four pepper seeds of the largest type, or ten of the

¹⁸³ Or 'oak-gall'.

¹⁸⁴ I disagree with Littré's translation 'mettre du lait de femme allaitant un garçon' (p.207) as LSJ's meaning of *kourotrovfo~* is (Lit) 'rearing children' (metaph.) 'nursing mother'. *Kourotovko~* means 'bearing **boy**-children'

¹⁸⁵ The technical term is 'emmenagogic'

smaller ones, after mixing with a draught of squirting cucumber pound smooth, dripping in breast milk and a little honey; after mixing this well and wrapping a cloth in clean, soft wool around a feather, covering it and dipping it into white Egyptian perfume, apply. It must be attached for a day and, when it is removed, she must apply deer fat. Applications for purging, if drinks did not purge: after pounding mercury and myrrh, apply. Similar applications for purging, which are able to expel the placenta, and draw down the menses and gradually withdraw the paralysed foetus: five blister-beetles, having pulled off the wings, the legs and the head, then, after chopping up prickly samphire with the roots, leaves and the outside green part, pounded to an equal size, and celery seed, fifteen cuttlefish eggs in mixed sweet wine, she must take a warm hip-bath and drink a mixture of honey and water, sweet wine and, of the ground ingredients as much as an Aeginean weight, to drink in sweet wine. When the woman has pain; after boiling white chickpeas and raisins in water and cooling, give to drink. When she has strangury,¹⁸⁶ she must sit in warm water and drink sweet wine. For all diseases, and capable of dilating and cleansing: a little myrrh, sage and anise, pulverise and use.

85. A purgative which is able to cleanse a childless woman, if the cervix is straight. Make a vapour bath using dried cow-dung, four choenix¹⁸⁷ chopped up and sifted, and ten cotyles vinegar, and just as much of cow urine, and twenty cotyles of sea water; make a gentle vapour bath to steam for a long time, then, when

¹⁸⁶ A disease in which urine is passed painfully and in drops. COD

¹⁸⁷ A dry measure

she has washed herself, she must vomit from drinking a mixture of lentils, honey and vinegar. Then give her barley meal to

swallow and afterwards she must drink mature, fragrant wine which has been exposed to sun and air. She must not taste food for this day, but on the second day, give a seed pill, and on the third day, give a diuretic – raisins and white chickpeas, two choenix of chickpeas and a choenix of raisins and pour over three half-chous¹⁸⁸ of water, then pour off, put it in the open air and drink on the next day, and use the pessary.

86. A purgative for the menses: mould the cow-dung like a drinking vessel, mix, mixing sawdust from the cypress tree, dry in the sun and throw into this the fragrant incenses.
87. Another purgative, if the menses do not come: the leaves of the white thorn tree,¹⁸⁹ after grinding, purifying and warming slightly, pour in to the vagina.
88. A purgative ointment that cleans out the womb: after grinding leek seeds and nose-smart and diluting in wine and boiled milk, smear over the lower belly. An emollient ointment which brings down water, mucous and skin, brings down lochial discharges and does not cause ulcers: a half measure of the best myrrh and the same amount of coarse salt; after grinding seasoned pitch and mixing smooth, and there must be the half of myrrh, of salt and of pitch, throw into a rag of large, crushed pitch¹⁹⁰ the size of a large castor-oil berry. There must be two rags, so as to have one for the day and one for the night, using until the rag dissolves. She must wash in warm water then, when she has removed the rag she must wash out the vagina thoroughly with fragrant water.

¹⁸⁸ a chous (cou`~) equals 12 cotyles, therefore this measurement is 18 cotyles.

¹⁸⁹ *Acacia albida*

¹⁹⁰ The C and q mss have pivssh~ after peflasmevnh~.

89. A purgative to cleanse the childless woman if the cervix is straight. If you should treat a childless woman: sifted, sun-dried cow dung, as much as four Attic choenix, ten cotyles of vinegar, a choenix of bitter vetch and twenty cotyles of seawater; fumigate copiously and for a long time. Then make a lentil soup and mix honey and vinegar, and she must vomit and must swallow meal and drink fragrant wine. She must not touch food on this day. On the next day give a seed pill and, on the third day, a diuretic and, if she wishes, white raisins and two choenix of chickpeas, after pouring over three half-choenix of water remove half, then stand the mixture in clear, cold air. On the next day she must drink a little from this and use as pessaries. If you want a woman to conceive, cleanse her and the womb, then give her dill to eat on an empty stomach and pure wine to drink. Apply red sodium carbonate, cumin and pine resin drenched with honey, apply in a linen cloth. When the water runs off, she must apply black pessaries like an emollient and must sleep with her husband. If the cervix should be closed, she must apply fig juice until it opens up and immediately wash herself with water. Pound hawk's droppings into sweet wine and let her drink it on an empty stomach, and then she must sleep with her husband. Or when the menses stop, pound droppings from an Egyptian goose in rose oil and let her anoint the vagina and sleep with her husband.

90. If ulcers are pungent-smelling and festering, use a douche in this way: Mix goose oil and pine resin and, after diluting with warm water, rinse out. Or melt honey and butter and douche. Or scrape an amount of bryony¹⁹¹ equal to a small drinking vessel,¹⁹² and equal amounts of myrrh and honey. Dilute these ingredients in fragrant black wine, and rinse out with the warm liquid. If there is ulceration, or the innermost lips of the vulva are full of blisters during the purging, take beef, or butter, or goose oil and anise, or saffron or copper oxide, grind all these and smear all over the meat, and apply. If there are ulcers and they are irritating, take beef, smear fat over it and apply to the body; rinse out. If they are dirty also fumigate with mulberry-tree root and afterwards let her drink pear in sweet wine. If there are ulcers in the genitals, smear ox fat and myrrh boiled in wine and let her rinse thoroughly with the wine; or leaves of olive, blackberry and pomegranate. Persea leaves¹⁹³ and Pramnian wine also have the same effect; pound the leaves smooth and apply to the genitals. Or ground dill seed and celery seed, anoint. If the genitals have thrush, treat in this way; beef, about two palm lengths and about as thick as a rod,¹⁹⁴ apply until evening, and remove at nighttime. On the next day apply until midday and let her drink sweet wine, the wine being mixed with honey. A douche if the womb has ulceration and if strangury attacks: leeks, corn seed, hartwort, anise, frankincense, myrrh

¹⁹¹ *Bryonia cretica*

¹⁹² Littré has 0,009 litres (about two teaspoons) – a very small drinking vessel!

¹⁹³ *Mimusops Schimperi*

¹⁹⁴ LSJ – ‘shaped like a spade handle’. *Steleov~ oJ* is referred to in this way in *Fractures VIII* – Withington.1999:115

and wine equal to the juice of these: mix these and boil up, cool and rinse out in moderation. Or infuse honey, butter, marrow and beeswax. Every time when ulcers are present and are forming in the vagina: leaves of olive, blackberry, ivy and sweet pomegranate ground smooth, diluted in mature wine, apply in wool to the genitals at night, and plaster over inside the genitals. The next day draw out, boil up myrtle berries in wine and wash out thoroughly. Or melt goose oil and pine resin and rinse out. Or mix up butter, cedar oil and a little honey, and rinse out. To dry up ulcers in the cervix: lead oxide ground into wine and rinse out. Or butter with honey, douche. Or dilute bryony, myrrh and honey in strong, black warm wine and rinse out on the next day. Mastic leaves boiled in water, cleanse afterwards by douching. Another, if the uterine mouth is ulcerated: butter, frankincense, myrrh, pine resin, deer marrow, rinse out with these ingredients. Or lentil soup boiled in water and poured off, douche with this. When water flows from the uterus and there are ulcers which are stinging, smear goose fat and egg all over. Or fat from a sheep or a pig, and a lentil in wine, boil after mixing with an equal amount of water, rinse out with this. Drench the ulcers in the vagina with wine, sprinkle over powder, blackberry, pine bark and wash these off with water.

91. An expellant if the foetus has died: she must apply to the uterine mouth all-heal, the size of an olive, rolled up in a linen cloth, dipped into cedar oil. Another: sweet flag and the inside of a bottle-gourd ground into goose fat, bind up the navel and the abdomen and, after dropping in a little from this mixture, let her apply it in wool to the cervix. From this treatment, the foetus gradually comes out. Another: chopped madder¹⁹⁵ and cedar sawdust; pour over water, put into the open air, then, early in the morning, give for the pain. Another: as much as one drachma of laserwort, and as much as a saucer of leek juice, after mixing with half a small ladle of cedar oil, give to her to drink. Another: ox gall equal to an obol, or half an obol, which is pounded in wine, give to drink, or ox gall kneaded with dough, again give her to swallow. Another: five river crabs and a root of monk's rhubarb¹⁹⁶ and of rue, and soot from the oven; after grinding everything together and mixing in a mixture of honey and water, putting in the open air, let her drink it three times on an empty stomach. Another: the inside of a bottle-gourd pounded smooth into cedar pitch, rolled up in wool, tied to the feather with flax, she must apply this inside. Let the shaft of the feather jut out a little from the wool. When the blood appears, she must remove it. Another: take a small shoot of black hellebore, the breadth of six fingers, wrapped around in wool, the extremity to be left bare, then she must apply as much as possible inside. When the outside is stained with blood, she must remove it. Another: black hellebore, blister-beetles and fleabane pounded in water and a soft suppository made, as long

¹⁹⁵ *Rubia tinctorum*

as six fingers, dried, and then made hard, wrapped around with wool, and applied. The outside must be smeared with cedar oil and it must be exposed. When the blood appears, it must be removed. An expellant, if a foetus should be dead inside, or paralysed: ranunculus and a little squirting cucumber mixed in lukewarm vinegar, give this to drink. Or a soft stem of a cabbage, when you have anointed the outside area with oil of bitter almonds, insert.

92. **Spurious writings placed at the end of the first book about gynaecology.**¹⁹⁷ Concerning a child's cough: feed by putting little bits of deadly carrot¹⁹⁸ in barley groats. Another: roasted egg, after removing the yolk, pound. Also roasted white sesame and salt, eat it by licking up in honey. To free the child's bowel: insert unwashed wool which has been dipped in honey. If the child is older, insert the insides of an onion which have been ground. If the child is not older, rinse out with goat's milk, mixed with honey. If goat's milk is unavailable, after thoroughly washing finely sifted wheat meal, and mixing honey and oil, rinse out with the warm mixture. Treatment of an asthmatic child: frankincense in sweet wine, abstain from bathing, purge. To make suppositories: a cotyle of honey, a saucer of anise, two drachmas of bitumen, ox-gall, three drachmas of myrrh, a draught of squirting cucumber; boil in a copper vessel, mix goose fat and use whenever necessary, then

¹⁹⁶ *Rumex Patientia*

¹⁹⁷ Littré has 'Ald. et Froben placent cet appendice après le livre *Peri; ajfovrvn,*' (sic) (Ald. and Froben place this appendix after the book 'Concerning Sterility'). 'Concerning Sterility' is the third book of 'Diseases of Women'.

¹⁹⁸ *Thapsia garganica*

anoint the suppositories with soft fat from a goose. Use with sheep wool, with mastic oil, mix cinnabar with this.

93. This medication puts an end to vomiting: Juice of ocymum¹⁹⁹ in white wine. Another remedy: water in which the juice from spring-sown meal has been boiled, or extracting juice from sweet pomegranates, and vinegar, then mix in honey.
94. The remedy against infections is made in this way: black hellebore, red sulphide of arsenic, copper scales,²⁰⁰ an equal amount of each, ground separately. When it is smooth, mix it together with gypsum, twice as much as one part, after diluting in cedar oil, then anoint with scented oil.
95. Medication can be cooked in the following way: burn a copper particle thoroughly, until it becomes purple; then grind it smooth, and then use it.
96. The black medicine: Grind separately copper scale and copper particle. When you have ground them smooth in this way, mix. Make two or three kinds of the medicine, the strongest one having the copper particle to²⁰¹ three parts of the scale, the second, four parts, and the third, five parts. This medication can be widely used.
97. Lotion for a sore throat: parched barley, wild raisins, wormwood, honey.

¹⁹⁹ *Ocymum basilium*. I have used Littré's transliteration as I have been unable to find $\omega\kappa\upsilon\upsilon\mu\omicron\sim$, $\omicron\upsilon$ in LSJ.

²⁰⁰ Small pieces that scale off under the hammer - LSJ

²⁰¹ It is difficult to distinguish whether the copper particle should be 1:3 of the scale, or 3:1. Littré has it as the particle is one third of the scale 'la fleur est le tiers de l'écaille, ..' Littré VIII.225.

98. In painful gouty cases, plaster up the extremities with salt dissolved in water, and do not remove for three days. When you do remove it, again mix raw sodium carbonate, of the red variety, pounded, and a little honey, use this just like salt for the same time. Throw smooth salt into an earthen pot, then sprinkle over a little alum, then put the copper pots on the fire and again sprinkle over the salts and alum, then leave to burn for a night and a day.
99. To insert in the anus: with crushed raisins, which have been pulverized and dried, smear around the anus.
100. This treatment disperses calluses: red sulphide of arsenic in suet.
101. Juice of the red lettuce in water releases pain everywhere, a half an Attic obol weight.
102. For the eyes: burnt copper, verdigris, myrrh, dissolve in goat's bile. After pounding all these ingredients smooth, dilute with white wine. Then dry in a copper pot in the sun. Then, inserting in a reed, use it dry.

103. A salve: after burning copper ore, the type found in Cyprus, grind into mortar. Mix a yellow powder which has been washed with it. The mixture must be three parts of powder, one part of copper ore. The copper ore is burnt in a barley-cake, taking care that it does not flow out. For when it is roasted it becomes full of moisture. When it is properly roasted it becomes vermilion. A salve: white lead mixed the same way with roasted copper ore, the copper becomes just like the mixture in the yellow powder. Another stronger salve than this one: copper oxide, which has been washed free of soot, and white lead and roasted copper ore. The mixture is to be two parts of copper oxide and white lead and one part of copper ore.
104. Squeeze out liquid from an anemone after chopping up the leaves and put in the sun in a red copper urn, after covering it up in order that nothing falls out.²⁰² When it becomes thick, mould into pastilles and then dry. When the pastilles are dry, burn as much as possible, then, when they are cold, grind smooth, and mix copper ore, washing out equal amounts of the soot to the ore; then, dripping on a little oil of bitter almonds, grind then dilute with honey; then after drying, throw into a little copper basket, use this. A dry, gentle remedy: copper oxide, unwashed rock alum²⁰³ which has been ground smooth, and copper particles; mix these equally and grind smooth. Another dry

²⁰² *ejmpesei`tai* may be translated as ‘fall in’ or ‘fall on’. It is unclear whether the lid is to stop anything falling into the mixture, or to stop evaporation by the sun’s rays falling on it, or even to stop the contents falling out if the pot is toppled.

²⁰³ *calki`ti~* may be translated as ‘containing copper’ or as a mineral – ‘rock alum’. I think ‘rock alum’ is the better choice.

remedy: copper oxide, smoothly ground rock alum and unwashed yellow powder, in which is boiled a piece of gold, grind each part smooth. Another dry remedy: washed ashes, rock alum and copper foam ground equally smooth. Another: unripe grape juice and copper oxide; when the unripe grape is in full bloom it is necessary to squeeze out the juice through a linen cloth into a red copper pot, and mix three parts of very sour white vinegar and boil up in the sun; stir up five times a day. When the juice becomes thick, throw in ashes of copper and of rock alum and mix smooth; but throw in the ashes only, when the juice has been put in the sun for six or seven days, in an Attic cotyle of eight drachmas of the juice and of the ashes. If you wish it to be more pungent, reduce the ashes, but if softer add more. Afterwards dry these mixtures until it is possible to form pastilles. Then dry out by hanging up over smoke and, in this way, dry until it becomes like an earthen pot, so that when it is pounded it does not form lumps,²⁰⁴ then use in this way. It must be stored where there is no moisture. Another dry remedy: ashes, rock alum mixed with white vinegar, then after making pastilles, dry. When they are dry, pound smooth.

105. To anoint the eye: boil together honey, of the best quality, and mature sweet wine. For albugo²⁰⁵ you must use black poplar sap mixed with breast milk. If eyes are running with tears and are painful,²⁰⁶ squeeze out the juice of a sweet pomegranate, boil in a copper pot over a gentle heat until it becomes thick and

²⁰⁴ Another translation is ‘... it does not harden,’

²⁰⁵ A white speck on the eye - LSJ

²⁰⁶ This could be conjunctivitis, or ‘pink eye’.

black like pitch. If it is summer, place in the sun, then anoint with it moist. If the eye is running with tears and the patient is bleary-eyed, then a bunch of extremely ripe, white grapes which has withered on the vine, purify after plucking, then dry in the sun. When it is dry, scrape off, and mix verdigris to the amount of half an obol in Attic weight. Then anoint the eyes with this. A sprinkling powder: equal amounts of burnt lead and ashes, a tenth part of myrrh, a little of opium poppy juice, matured wine; use dry after pounding. One could also use squill and a third part of ashes and of white lead, a third part of burnt papyrus, a tenth part of myrrh.

106. If you wish to remove hair from the body: plaster with grapevine sap and oil. If you wish to remove hair from the eye also, anoint with oil after plucking out. After burning bastard sponge,²⁰⁷ then pounding smooth, dilute with wine, anoint, and the hair comes away with a fine skin, and the skin will be red and healthy looking.
107. For cases where food is passed without being digested:²⁰⁸ lentils, spring wheat, as much as two choenix; after wetting, when these are soft to the teeth, vigorously make smooth in a mortar or in a cup. Then pour over six cotyles of water and shake vigorously. Boil that which separates after pouring into an earthen pot and pouring over a little honey. When it has boiled vigorously, after roasting, give this to eat. If the patient is thirsty, she must drink wine which is as mature as possible. She must follow this regime until she becomes healthy.

²⁰⁷ A zoophyte, so called because it is like a halcyon's nest - LSJ

²⁰⁸ Lientery

108. If the patient has a common cold:²⁰⁹ having rubbed myrrh smooth with mixed honey and prepared a linen cloth, rub on the nostrils.
109. A douche for bringing down phlegm: a draught of deadly carrot, or as many as forty raisin seeds, or a draught of small nettles,²¹⁰ or of a stinging plant²¹¹ and mix half a cotyle of honey, the same of oil, dilute with seawater, husks of corn or peeled barley, reduced by boiling, until they become oily; or make one of fat, or boiled in only the juice of beet, or boiled in milk, or in corn juice, or in mercury juice. Mix with as much as ten drachmas of sodium carbonate, or a cup of salt, except if you are diluting in seawater. If you wish to bring down bile: use a draught of vegetable juice, one and a half drachmas of a round gourd. Dilute in the same way as the first method. If you wish to bring the bile down more violently: use the inside of a cucumber, after soaking four drachmas of the cucumber in half a cotyle of water, rinse out with this; if the bile stings when it comes out, rinse out afterwards with peeled barley juice. Another: soak the inside of the cucumber in boiled ass' milk or in three cotyles of beet juice, mix with salt, honey and oil, rinse out afterwards with peeled barley juice. Another: after pounding a drachma of round gourd and previously soaking in ass' milk, mix the same ingredients. Another: a drachma of the inside of the cucumber, a draught of squirting cucumber, a

²⁰⁹ The medical term is 'coryza'.

²¹⁰ If *knivdion* is taken as a diminutive of *knivdh hJ* – 'nettle' then the translation is 'small nettles', but if it should be read as '*Knivdion, tov*, it means 'a measure of wine'. Littré has combined *kovkkou~* with *knidivou* reading it as *Knidivou* and translated it as 'grains de Cnide'. LSJ has *kovkko~ K., oJ* – berry of the shrub *knevwrōn* (*Daphne Guidium*), used as a purgative. The use of the lower casing for proper nouns makes it difficult to give an absolute meaning.

pinch of golomena,²¹² honey, oil, dilute in seawater. If you wish to bring down faeces, never give medication to drink, but use the other methods. A douche for dysentery: sweet pomegranate peel boiled in wine for as long as possible, and boil until half is left, and mix honey, olive oil, a fourth part of a cotyle of each one. Tenesmus:²¹³ four drachmas of frankincense, half a cotyle of rose-oil, barley juice, boiled seawater. Two draughts of ground hellebore, diluted in half a cotyle of water, rinse out with an equal part of olive oil. After pouring juice into a drinking vessel, cut up some quinces²¹⁴ and allow them to rot. When the water has the smell of quince, give to drink. After throwing barley gruel into twelve cotypes of water, boil until it becomes oily, and after cooling cut in the quinces; soak a honeycomb in water, and pound at the same time, until it is sweetish, filter, throw in celery leaves. Another: after throwing white raisins into water, grind up catmint or coriander until the water develops a sweetish smell.

End of Book One

²¹¹ This gives verification to my translation of *knidivou*. If nettles are not available any stinging plant will suffice.

²¹² Littré had the same problem with *solovmh~* as I have. In LSJ the text against *solovmh* reads that the word is corrupt and quotes cod. *q* as having *golovmh~*. However LSJ does not show *golovmh* but has *golomevnh* ‘name of a *plant*’. Littré left the word as a blank, because he found it unintelligible. He had access to the Cornarius manuscript in which Cornarius had read ‘*a{l}mh~ pro solovmh~*’ (‘of brine’ instead of *solovmh~*). Littré says it is not a good conjecture because of the use of *qalassh/* - ‘Ce mot inintelligible paraît altéré; je l’ai laissé en blanc. La conjecture de Cornarius ne semble pas bonne, à cause de *qalassh/* qui suit.’ I am, perhaps, less circumspect than Littré. The measure of *solovmh~* is ‘a pinch’ and it follows that the substance must be solid. I think that if, as LSJ has, *solovmh~* is a corruption of *golovmh~*, then *golovmh~* is a corruption of *golomevnh~*.

²¹³ ‘Continual inclination to evacuate bowels or bladder accompanied by painful straining’ COD.

