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OF

MEDICATED PESSARIES
IN THE
TREATMENT OF UTERINE DISEASE.

BY

THOMAS HAWKES TANNER, M.D.,

ASSISTANT-PHYSICIAN FOR THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN
TO KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL, ETC.

Read July 2nd, 1862.

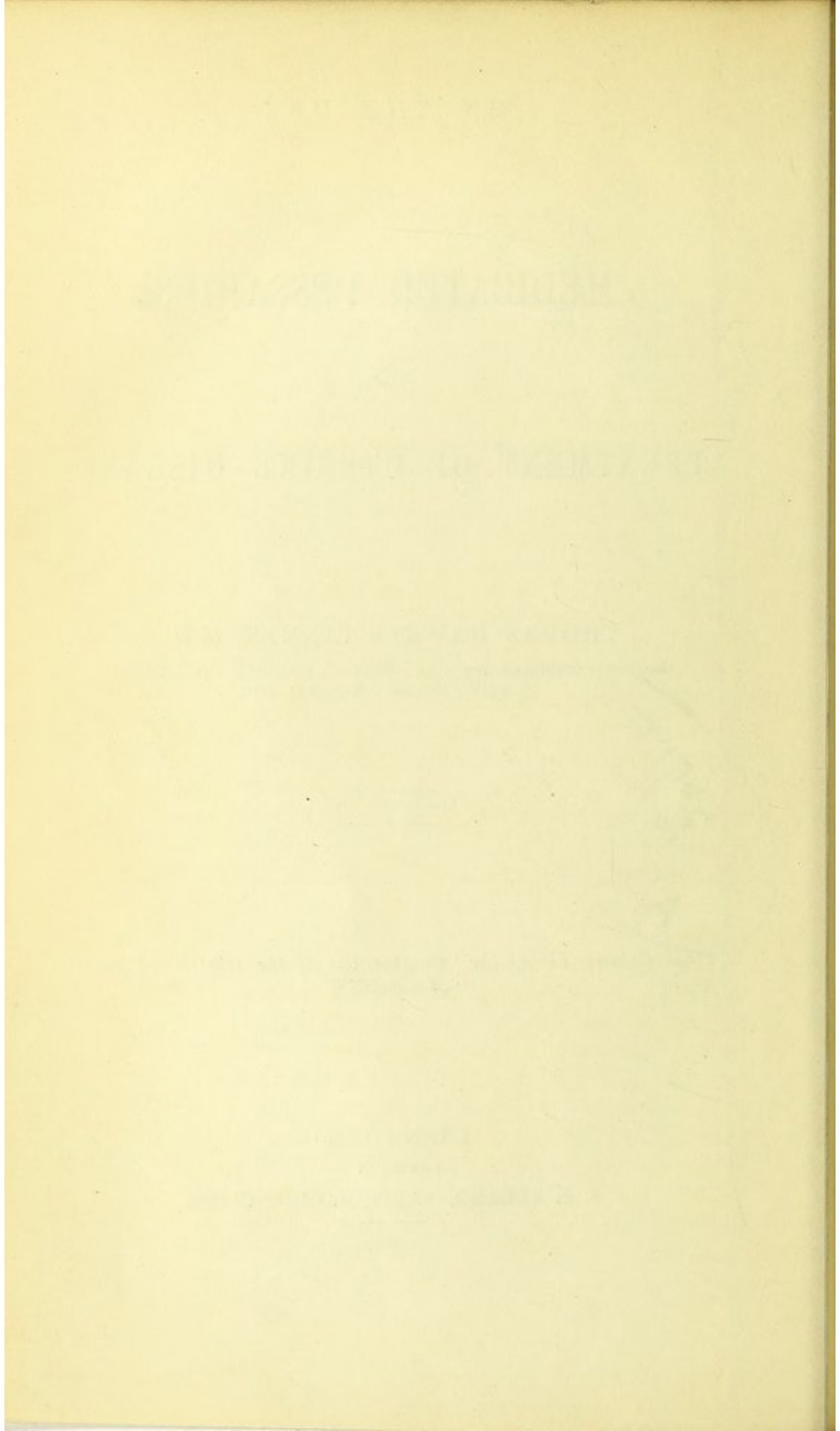
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ON THE USE OF MEDICATED PESSARIES IN THE TREATMENT OF UTERINE DISEASE.

By THOMAS HAWKES TANNER, M.D.,

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THE great value of a variety of local applications in the treatment of uterine disease seems to be insufficiently appreciated by the profession at large. This is somewhat strange, considering the time which has elapsed since Dr. Simpson specially directed attention to their exceeding utility. Yet it is certain that a large number of practitioners know of no agents which may be directly applied to the uterus and vagina save the various kinds of caustics and injections. The latter are certainly of great benefit in many cases ; but it must be allowed that, even when properly used, they are often of only temporary service, since they cannot be kept in contact with the diseased part for more than a few minutes.

The chief reason, I believe, for the non-employment of medicated pessaries has been the difficulty of so making them that they can be efficiently applied by the patient herself. When formed of certain drugs mixed into a mass with lard and wax, they are either so soft that the sufferer cannot introduce them into the vagina ; or, on the contrary, they are so hard that they fail to dissolve, and are expelled in just the same condition as that in which they were introduced. Although I have now employed these agents very freely for some years, I have found very few druggists who

would take the trouble so to make them that they were of any service. The difficulties just alluded to have, however, been overcome since Mr. White Cooper directed attention ('Lancet,' 28th June, 1862) to the utility of the butter obtained from the *Theobroma cacao nut*, from which chocolate is made, as the basis for ophthalmic ointments. This material possesses many valuable qualities, the chief being these:—It has an agreeable smell, and does not soil the fingers when handled; it does not become rancid; while, more particularly, though very firm, it has the property of becoming fluid at a low temperature. It is sometimes a little too stiff, but this fault is readily obviated by combining with it a little olive oil or glycerine. Pessaries made with cacao butter, though they have the consistence of wax while cold, are dissolved in the course of a few minutes when introduced into the vagina.

If ophthalmic surgeons are much indebted to Mr. White Cooper for directing attention to the uses of this butter, obstetric physicians are under no less an obligation. For although it had been used in America for making ointments for some time before this gentleman wrote of its merits, yet no physicians in this country were acquainted with its value, as far as I can learn from many inquiries.

There are few uterine diseases in which the use of medicated pessaries may not advantageously form a part of the treatment. But they are more especially valuable in acute and chronic inflammation of the cervix uteri; in internal metritis, with exfoliation of the lining membrane of the uterus; in slight prolapsus or procidentia; in cancer; in all varieties of ovaritis; as well as in many affections of the female bladder. By means of them the diseased parts may be kept constantly bathed in such drugs as mercury, iodine, lead, zinc, belladonna, opium, conium, &c. They are not only most efficacious in relieving pain, but they also shield the diseased and irritable surface from contact with the vaginal walls. Owing to this latter property, they are of great utility in healing excoriations about the labia uteri; though, of course, part of the benefit derived from their use

in these cases must be attributed to the absorption of the materials composing them. By their employment, moreover, the necessity for frequent examination of the morbid structures is greatly diminished.

The following formulæ are given as examples of the way in which I generally prescribe these remedies. It is only necessary to premise that rather large doses of the different drugs are necessary, inasmuch as absorption through the walls of the vagina is slow and uncertain :

1. *Iodide of Lead and Belladonna Pessaries.*—R. Plumbi Iodidi, ʒij ; Extracti Belladonnæ, ʒj ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Olei Olivæ, ʒj. Misce. Divide into four pessaries, and order one to be introduced into the vagina every night or every other night.

2. *Mercurial Pessaries.*—R. Unguenti Hydrargyri, ʒiv—ʒij ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Olei Olivæ, ʒj. Misce. Where there is tenderness of the cervix uteri, one scruple of extract of belladonna or two scruples of extract of conium should be added to the mass. Divide into four pessaries.

3. *Lead and Opium Pessaries.*—R. Plumbi Acetatis, ʒj ; Extracti Opii, gr. xij ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Olei Olivæ, ʒj. Misce. Divide into four pessaries. Order one to be used every other night.

4. *Zinc and Belladonna Pessaries.*—R. Zinci Oxydi, ʒj ; Extracti Belladonnæ, gr. xij—ʒj ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Olei Olivæ, ʒj. Misce. Divide into four pessaries. One to be used every night.

5. *Iodide of Potassium and Conium Pessaries.*—R. Potassii Iodidi, ʒj ; Extracti Conii, ʒiv ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Glycerinii puri, ʒj. Misce. Divide into four pessaries, and direct one to be used every night.

6. *Tannin and Catechu Pessaries.*—R. Tanninæ, ʒij ; Pulveris Catechu, ʒj ; Butyri Cacao, ʒiv ; Olei Olivæ, ʒj. Misce. Divide into four pessaries, and order one to be used every other night.

In some diseases of the uterine cavity, attended with copious muco-purulent discharges or with hæmorrhage, the greatest benefit may be obtained from the local use of

astringents. Once or twice a week a pessary made of tannin and the cacao butter, about two and a half inches long, and of the size of an ordinary stick of nitrate of silver, may be introduced up the canal of the uterus, and left there. It soon dissolves, and thus coats the whole seat of the discharge with the medicament, the coating remaining attached for many hours. Such a pessary, weighing about thirty-six grains, will usually contain from twelve to twenty grains of tannin. Of course other substances—as alum, sulphate of zinc, dried sulphate of iron, &c.—may be employed in the same manner, if their use be indicated. This plan of treatment has none of the objections which apply to throwing fluids into the cavity of the uterus, a proceeding that is certainly not unattended with danger. There is no necessity, moreover, for dilating the cervix with spongetents prior to the introduction of the pessary; inasmuch as, when sanguineous or purulent discharges have long been present, the os and cervical canal will always be found sufficiently patulous to permit of the introduction of these astringent rods.