

**Important researches upon the existence, nature, and communication of venereal infection in pregnant women, new-born infants and nurses / by the late P.A.O. Mahon ; these are contrasted with the new opinions of the late John Hunter upon this subject, together with observations thereon, by Jesse Foot.**

### **Contributors**

Mahon, P.-A.-O. 1752-1801.  
Hunter, John, 1728-1793.  
Foot, Jesse, 1744-1826.  
Royal College of Surgeons of England

### **Publication/Creation**

London : Printed by D. Jaques, and sold by T. Becket, 1808.

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/q3uqpm69>

### **Provider**

Royal College of Surgeons

### **License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

*With the Author's Emplum*  
5.  
IMPORTANT RESEARCHES  
UPON THE  
EXISTENCE, NATURE, AND COMMUNICATION  
OF  
VENEREAL INFECTION

IN  
*Pregnant Women, New-born Infants and  
Nurses,*

By the Late P. A. O. MAHON,  
Chief Physician to the Venereal Hospital du Vaugirard,  
&c. &c. &c. at Paris.

THESE ARE CONTRASTED WITH  
THE NEW OPINIONS  
OF  
*The Late JOHN HUNTER*  
UPON THIS SUBJECT,

TOGETHER WITH  
OBSERVATIONS THEREON,

---

BY  
JESSE FOOT, Surgeon.

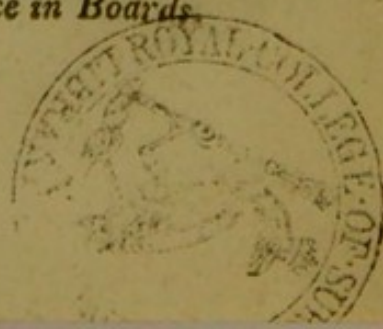
---

*C* London:

PRINTED BY D. JAQUES, LOWER SLOANE STREET,  
AND SOLD BY T. BECKET, PALL MALL.

*Price Three Shillings and Sixpence in Boards.*

1808.



IMPORTANT RESEARCHES

ON THE

EXISTENCE, NATURE, AND COMMUNICATION

OF

VENERICAL INFECTION

IN

Young Men, New-born Infants and  
Others.

By the Late F. A. O. MARION,

Chief Physician to the Vener. Hospital de Venereux,  
Paris, &c. &c.

These are contrasted with

THE NEW OPINIONS

OF

THE LATE JOHN HUNTER

ON THIS SUBJECT,

TOGETHER WITH

ORIGINAL OBSERVATIONS THEREON,

BY

JESSE FOOT, Surgeon.

BY

London:

Printed by D. Cadogan, at the Crown and Lion Press,  
and sold by T. Cadogan, at the same Press.

Price Three Shillings and Sixpence in Boards.

1808.



### ADVERTISEMENT.

**PAUL AUGUSTIN OLIVIER MAHON** was born at Chartres, the 6th of April 1752. He practised physic at Paris, was a Doctor of the Faculty of Medicine, Chief Physician of the Hospital du Vaugirard for Venereals, and Member of the Society of the School of Physic. He was perfectly conversant in Greek, Latin, and English; he translated Black's Medical Observations from the English, and Stoll's Works from the Latin. He was author of a number of interesting articles in the Encyclopedia. His manuscript was



prepared twelve years ago. His work upon le Medecine Clinique et les Maladies Syphilitiques dans les Femmes Enceintes, dans les Enfans Nouveaux-nés, et dans les Nourrices, has arrested my attention. I was struck with the justice of his remarks upon the subject of the venereal disease, and therefore thought I could not do better than give them to the public. The other parts are not so much within my province. It is understood that Dr. Mahon died of a complaint in his breast about the year 1800, in the forty-eighth year of his age; and that Dr. Lamauve, Professor of Anatomy and Physic, Physician of the Military Hospital, Prévôt of Ecole-Pratique of Paris, and member of many literary societies, superintended his deceased friend's publication.

## PART I.

---

### *Upon the Existence and Nature of the Venereal Disease in New-born Infants.*

IF the symptoms of venereal affections of new-born infants have been so long unknown, or badly described, and if the nature of that disease has not been sufficiently explained, we ought not to be surprised, when, on tracing back, we find that the venereal disease was not began to be known until the end of the fifteenth century, and that the best records of that disease in infancy, had been but little observed and badly described before the time of Harris and Rosen, who have yet left much to be done by their successors.



In the early age which followed the regeneration of letters, authors were scarcely occupied, but in copying, verifying, and criticising upon what they found in the works of the Greek physicians. In the sixteenth century, the discoveries in anatomy and chemistry dazzled their genius; and instead of proceeding with circumspection and prudence in favor of their new discoveries, all their systems which presented to them some allurements for the genius and imagination, induced them to give opinions with impetuosity. The reign of experience ought to follow that of theories; but if the spirit of observation which ruled in that age, originated from the fatigue which was caused by their madness for doctrines and love of systems, they were singularly favored by the progress of the science of physic; this, without doubt, will accomplish by its happy influence in refining the practice of conceited men, which confines it yet, and retards its progress.

In making methodical enquiries upon the existence of the venereal disease in new-born infants, 1st, I shall explain what has been the opinion of medical men on the subject until this time: 2dly, I shall explain the table of symptoms of the venereal disease, such as have



appeared to me in my practice at the hospital for the venereal disease : 3dly, I shall finish by examining all the objections upon the grounds of which they attempt to doubt the reality of these symptoms, and by attempting to resolve the different problems to which the transmission of this disease may give place.

## CHAPTER I.

*Upon what has been the Opinion of Physicians on the Venereal Disease in New-born Infants?*

IN order to discuss these researches with the greatest perspicuity, I shall arrange the different authors who have written on the venereal disease in children, into two classes, and shall take for the basis of that division, not the disposition of the times when these authors lived, but the importance and extent of their works. In the first class will be comprehended the principal authors who have written since the beginning of the fifteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century. The second class will comprehend those who have written since the year 1750, until this time.

## ARTICLE I.

*The principal Authors who have written since the Commencement of the Fifteenth Century, until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century.*

In surveying the most compleat collection of ancient authors who have written on the venereal disease, Aphrodisiacus de Luisinus



published for the first time in 1506.\* We do not find that there was a question of the infection of new-born infants before the time of Matthiol, a celebrated physician at Sienne. That author, in his dialogues upon the venereal disease, which appeared in the year 1536, recommended a composition of a philosophical water which he affirms is very good for the cure of nurses and new-born infants attacked with that disease.†

Nicolas Massa, cotemporary with Matthiol, and the first who improved the treatment by mercury in the cure of the venereal disease, a method, of which we give the invention to Berenger de Carpi, who looked upon the pustules on the angles of the mouth in new-born infants, as a sign of venereal infection, and recommended a water which he thought would cure these pustules and common ulcers, without friction.‡

Rondelet, physician at Montpellier, and after him, other authors of the sixteenth century,

\* This is surely the commencement of the sixteenth century. J. F.

† De Morbi Gallici Curatione Dialogus, 1536, Ludg. p. 63.

‡ Nicol: Massa de Morbo Neapol. l. 1. chap. 7. et l. 2. chap. 3. Ludg. 1536.



have described also distilled waters composed of medicinal treacles, aromatic substances, bitters and sudorifics, infused in water or wine, and distilled after several day's maceration.\*

Ambroise Paré explains the manner of finding out what was the opinion of physicians and surgeons of his time, and proves that they limited their treatment to the use of medicinal waters or sudorifics. “ Often, says he, we see  
 “ children just taken from the bellies of their  
 “ mothers, who have this disease, and immediately afterwards we find numerous pustules  
 “ upon their bodies. They being thus infected,  
 “ give the disease to all nurses who suckle  
 “ them. Hence, others get the disease from  
 “ the nurses. We seldom see children born with  
 “ the disease cured; but those who get infected  
 “ from them, or otherwise, who are not very  
 “ young, are sometimes cured. The manner  
 “ in which you are to proceed in the cure, is,  
 “ to give to the nurses a medicinal water,  
 “ which we shall describe hereafter. Twenty  
 “ days or a little more is sufficient for the cure  
 “ of this disorder and for the rendering the

\* Rondelet de Morbo Gall. Paris, 1575. l'Epit. de Pigray, 1634; la Chir. de Guillemeau, 1647, etc.



“ milk nutritious and medicinal. And as for  
 “ young children, they anoint only the pus-  
 “ tules with an ointment made of quicksilver,  
 “ and soon after wrap them in a bed or linen  
 “ which has previously been perfumed. But  
 “ these operations should be done with care  
 “ and at intervals, that is to say, by little and  
 “ little, and be continued, for fear of affecting  
 “ the mouth.”

Botal, a physician of Piémont, attached to Catherine de Medicis, who had encouraged the manner of cure by mercury, instead of medicinal waters or disguised preparations of mercury, proposed mercurial frictions for the cure of children.\*

The author who has written the most upon this subject in the beginning of the sixteenth century, is Louis Guyon Dolois, the sieur de la Nanche, a physician, who, in a publication under the name of “ the Mirror of Beauty and Health,” published a theoretical and practical course of medicine, which was much noticed. We have thought it right to extract the following passage ; “ When a child

\* Botal de Luis Venereæ curandæ ratione. Paris, 1563. in 12mo.



“ is infected with this disease, and having  
 “ brought it from the belly of its mother, it  
 “ seldom lives more than a few moments after  
 “ its birth. It is generally known by the pim-  
 “ ples and pustules that are found upon divers  
 “ parts of its body. There are others who  
 “ are infected by their nurses, and these are  
 “ never cured as long as they suck them, and  
 “ as long as they suck of infected milk, and as  
 “ often as they change their nurses, so often  
 “ will they infect them.”

He rejects as useless and hurtful all medi-  
 cinal waters recommended by the physicians  
 already spoken of: he recommends the giving  
 the milk of goats to children infected, or a piece  
 of rag soaked in the milk of a healthy woman:  
 the milk should be fresh, and to gain time be-  
 fore you administer the mercurial unctions,  
 he says, you must, while the children are  
 sucking, rub, with a mixture of hog's lard and  
 mercury, all the pimples and pustules, and  
 abstain from its use when you find the mouth  
 is infected or has become hot. In this manner  
 you may succeed in the cure of some. But if  
 you can wait until the age of four or five  
 years, the cure will be more certain. But, says  
 he, at the beginning of the same chapter, how



many children have been seen to live some months, and then die before that age arrives !\* The greater part of the physicians who have written at the same time as the author of this book, are very far from treating on this subject to so great an extent.

Riviere in his observations, says, in a few words, that a child born of an infected mother, has been treated in the following manner, on the fifteenth day after its birth, by the white precipitate, a dose of two grains being given every two days.

Harris positively assures us that infants covered with blotches and pustules which they had gained by being suckled by nurses that were infected, were completely cured by a very simple process. His only plan, according to this author, was the mixing powdered sarsaparilla with panada and broths and to add to them a little santal citrin to correct its insipidity, and observing to purge now and then : an assertion

\* Le Cours de Médecine pratique et theorique, par M. Louis Guyon Dolois, sieur de la Nanche, Docteur en Médecine : par M. Lazare Meyssonier, Médecin de Montpellier, 6th Edition, Lyon, 1673. T. S. L. 6. pag. 28.



very strong and precise, but since that time it has not been encouraged by any success.\*

Musitan, a Neapolitan physician, who, in defiance of the order of the priesthood to which he belonged, and who was particularly devoted to the treatment of the venereal disease, has very cleverly explained the manner of communication of the disease of infants infecting their nurses, and nurses giving the disease to children. But although this author has written upon the symptoms of the disease in adults in a detail and in an order that we do not find in any of the preceding writers, he has said nothing upon the particular symptoms which are to prove the existence of the disease in children, or the manner of treatment.†

Garnier, physician at the hospital of Lyon, and author of a collection of formulas for the use of that hospital, composed, in the year 1696, a dissertation upon the venereal disease. He remarks that he has made use of mercurial friction in women that were infected, as far advanced in pregnancy as the ninth month, and that the children born from these women

\* De Lue Venerea versus Finem.

† Musitan; *Traité des Maladies Veneriennes*, trad. par Davaux. l. 2. p. 221.



were cured or very little infected, and the cure of the children completed by the sucking their mother while under a salivation.\*

Among the different works that appeared in the commencement of the eighteenth century† upon the venereal disease, or on the diseases of children, we do not find that the medical practice had made much progress on the subject that we are now engaged upon. They feared, and that with great propriety,‡ the dangerous effects of the application of mercurial unctions upon the bodies of infants, because the mercurial unctions made in imitation of those for the adult stage were pushed too far. At this time, the administration of anti-venereals had become of so much consequence, that they feared the effects on women who had gone half the stage of pregnancy.†

Mauriceau observes as a very extraordinary circumstance, that he had used mercurial unctions upon women in the fourth month of

\* *Traité pratique de la Verole*, par M. Pierre Garnier. Lyon, 1696. p. 65.

† He means the seventeenth century, J. F.

‡ This is not true. J. F.

† *Les Accouchemens de Mauriceau*, T. 2. Obs. 61 et 100.



pregnancy,† and that when children were born infected with the venereal disease, and that they received the infection from their mother, they generally perished a very short time after their birth.\*

Boerhaave, in his Aphorisms, remarks, as a general rule, that the venereal disease is transmitted through the means of the organs of generation as well as by sucking. There is nothing wonderful, says this celebrated author, that if the children whose father and mother are infected, that they should be born with the same disease. Indeed, since the venereal disease mixes with all the circulating humours, and is probably carried to all parts of the body before it arrives at certain parts, the fœtus living in the womb of the mother is perpetually receiving vitiated humors, and there is perhaps already a morbid poison in the uterus before it is impregnated. On the other side it has been remarked, that a child which has been healthy while in the uterus of the mother, may be born infected with venereal disease, in consequence of its remaining a short time in its passage through the vagina, whence it gets impregnated with ichorous and purulent matter that

† He might have used it safely to the ninth month. J.F.

\* Les Accouchemens de Mauriceau, Aphor. 167.



it meets with there. It is in this manner that midwives and accoucheurs are sometimes infected, they having suffered the infection to remain upon their hands some time. In this case the infection of the child is not long before it shews itself, but in the other we cannot doubt but that the child may grow to an adult stage before it exhibits any marks of the disease.\*

Vercelloni published in 1720, that two children that were found infected with the venereal disease had infected a very great number of nurses. In another part he assures us, that he has employed the same means used by Riviere, (in his observations before mentioned,) that is, the giving of mercurial salts.†

At this time, or very near, the famous Brunn, or Brunner, physician from Switzerland, published just before his death, a book upon the treatment of the venereal disease without salivation. He speaks with great confidence of a method for the treatment of the venereal disease in children,

\* Van Swieten in Aphor. Boerhaave.

† De Pudendorum Morbis et Lue Venereâ, Tetrabiblion.



which consisted in the use of sweet mercury, and drinking with it sudorific woods and quick-silver.\*

In the year 1736, the work of Astruc appeared, which makes a very remarkable epoch in the history of the venereal disease. According to this author the disease is hereditary, and may be transmitted to the foetus equally through the father or the mother; by the father in consequence of the particles of the semen communicating to the embryo the venereal virus of which it is infected, and by the mother in consequence of her supplying, during the nine months gestation, the nourishment of the foetus—and she gives at the same time, the disease with which she is infected. It is thus that it is proved by experience, that a mother who is infected brings into the world very weak and feeble children, of a bad constitution and half rotten, covered with ulcers and truly diseased; by the same means a father who is infected, begets children sometimes truly diseased and covered with ulcers, although the mother may be perfectly healthy, at least has no symptoms of the virus that infects the

\* *Methodus Tuta ac Facilis, Citrà Salivationem Curandi Luem Venereum*, 1739. Schaffusiae.



\*embryo.† In another place, he says, that if a child while sucking has the disease, and that they do not apply any remedy in consequence of its age, yet as the nurse will no doubt be infected from the child, mercurial frictions may be applied to the nurse and by this means the infant will be cured at the same time as the nurse by her giving it her milk. She will give, with her milk, particles of mercury which will be necessary for its cure; but if the child is weaned, they treat it without delay with mercurial preparations, or what is better, mercurial frictions. Its tender age should be no objection, for it is easy when used with prudence to prevent any bad effects.‡

In revising what are the symptoms of the existence of the venereal disease, he looks upon, as unequivocal and undoubted signs, 1st, The habitual miscarriages, the state of the embryo, and the ulceration and putrefaction which appears upon the children that are born full-grown: 2ndly, If alive, their sickly state is characterized by symptoms of ricketts and scrofula. This last sign is conclusive, when we find in all these children, or the most part,

\* The observation of Astruc is true and important. J. F.

† Astruc, édit Française, par Louis, tom. 2. p. 5, 6.

‡ Astruc, tom. 4. page 192.



that their father or mother, or some of their ancestors, have been subject to these defects But this opinion is less decided when these symptoms are not found.\*

\* Astruc, tom. 4. page 109.

## ARTICLE II.

*The different Authors who have written since the Year 1750 until the present Time.*

Rosen, a Swedish physician, who published, about the middle of this century, salutary instructions upon the diseases of children, could not forget a subject which was so important as the venereal disease in new-born infants, and it may be said that he was the first that wrote with precision and correctness on the principal symptoms which characterise it. It was some time before the wise precepts of this physician, upon these diseases of children, were known, in consequence of their being published in the Swedish language, and we should have yet been deprived of their knowledge, had it not been for the care of de Lefebre de Villebrune, who gave us a translation a little time before the death of that author. We will hear the opinion of Rosen, because what he says upon this subject is equally good.

If the father and mother are both infected, it is very natural that the child should be so also. As when the virus during pregnancy becomes more acrimonious or less virulent, in



these cases the effect we find may be different. If it is extremely acrid or virulent, the child generally dies in the womb of its mother. It is this which occasions also miscarriages. The child is sometimes born at its full period of utrogestation, but covered with ulcers which evidently prove the disease of which it is infected. Sometimes the progress of this disease is impeded by medicine that may have been given them, but has not radically cured them. In this case, the children have not the decided symptoms of the venereal disease. The virus with them appears unnatural, but it produces ills much more untoward, and they do not suspect the cause. These children grow but little, are weakly and sickly, and if they live to the adult age they only have a posterity which is very soon extinguished. It often happens that a child born of parents infected with the venereal disease, that there are no symptoms which prove its existence in them, while in others its existence is proved, the causes of which are, that the first are conceived and born before the venereal virus was in action, and the other is produced by the contrary effect. “ Those children that are born of infected parents are thin, have little rest at night, are subject to some sort of eruptions from their birth, others at the end of six



“ months. They have tumors in the groin,  
 “ in the arm pits, the ears, excrescences from  
 “ the bone of the lower jaw or head, the bone  
 “ of the arm, or from the shins. There is a  
 “ continual discharge, as if from a cold in the  
 “ head, a continual hoarseness without any  
 “ apparent cause, a difficulty of swallowing,  
 “ and you find in the throat ragged ulcers of  
 “ the appearance of bacon. You find a number  
 “ of purulent pimples, scales upon the head  
 “ and upon the forehead: there appear many  
 “ red blotches, yellow about the neck and  
 “ breast, at the lower part of the belly, chaps,  
 “ chaps upon the hands and feet, excrescences,  
 “ warts, chancers upon the private parts. These  
 “ chancers are sometimes small and sometimes  
 “ large, sometimes smooth, other times hol-  
 “ low, generally of a deep red near its edges,  
 “ and more or less hard: they are white in the  
 “ centre and become livid or blackish when  
 “ they have existed some time: it is of a very  
 “ different species to cancerous ulcers, begin-  
 “ ning quite differently; it begins from a little  
 “ unnoticed pimple, which soon becomes very  
 “ painful: this is followed by little white pim-  
 “ ples, which break and suppurate. Sometimes  
 “ they appear like warts, that discharge white  
 “ pus, which becomes yellow upon the linen.”



In perceiving the precision, the justness, and the truth of Rosen's description, the physicians who were in the habit of seeing the venereal disease in young children, were astonished that he did not place among his symptoms, the symptom of venereal ophthalmia, which will be proved hereafter is the most remarkable and most frequent symptom among the phenomena, by its variety and its effects. Rosen adds, with much sagacity, that all these symptoms do not appear upon the same subject; the one may have more, the other less. It is much more easy to cure the disease in children, while sucking, than when weaned. But the disease is much more obstinate, when hereditary, than when infected by the nurse. The sooner the disease exhibits itself, the more easy it is of cure. When an infant is born with this disorder, it may be cured by the milk of the mother, provided she uses mercurial frictions, but for the want of the woman, you may make use of a goat which they must rub with a pomatum of mercury.

Levret and d'Aumont, professors at Valence, made use of this plan. If the child is weaned, you make use of milk in the same way. If it is of the age of ten or twelve years, you may make use of mercurial frictions: it can undergo



the use of mercurial frictions, but with prudence, or it may be as well to take once or twice in the day, a tea spoon full of the mercurial syrup of Plenck.

\*Levret has said but little upon the venereal disease in new-born children, but what he has said deserves to be noticed. In this manner, he explains how to act, in a book that he published in the year 1753. “ No one doubts at  
 “ this time, that a child may be perfectly cured  
 “ in the womb of an infected mother, if she is  
 “ properly treated during her pregnancy. It  
 “ is no less true, that if a child is born of an  
 “ infected mother, that the child will bring  
 “ the disease with it at its birth. It is  
 “ also proved very evidently, that if a  
 “ mother, infected with the venereal virus,  
 “ suckles her child, and is treated as soon  
 “ after her lying in as can be done with propriety, both will be cured at the same time.  
 “ The disease, if not manifested very soon  
 “ after the birth of the infant, generally exhibits itself by ragged aphthæ with hard elevated edges, and which are communicated  
 “ from its mouth to the nipples of the nurse  
 “ and there form chancres. You necessarily  
 “ administer immediately mercurial frictions  
 “ to the nurse. In not doing it to the nurse,

\* This popular Accoucheur must have seen a great many cases. J. F.



“ I have treated goats in the same way,  
 “ which in suckling the infant has perfected  
 “ its cure, as an ordinary nurse after under-  
 “ going the same treatment would have done.  
 “ It is remarked that in the different plans  
 “ that are made use of for the cure of adults  
 “ they accord exactly, and that the greater  
 “ part of these unfortunate children die drop-  
 “ sical, either during the treatment, or a short  
 “ time after.”\*

Fabre, a pupil of L. Petit, an excellent and  
 celebrated surgeon, and who rendered himself  
 as celebrated as his master in the treatment of  
 the venereal disease, published for the first time  
 in 1750, the opinion of Petit and his own, upon  
 the venereal disease of new-born infants.  
 “ Children, says he, are liable to be infected  
 “ with the venereal disease, either by gene-  
 “ ration or by contagion. It is the father or  
 “ the mother who are diseased, that infect  
 “ their children in the first case; in the se-  
 “ cond case, it is an infected nurse, who,  
 “ suckling an healthy child, communicates to  
 “ it the disorder. Children who are born with  
 “ the disease are infected in different degrees,  
 “ according to the circumstances in which  
 “ they are begotten.” This remark, adds  
 Fabre, which influenced him in his practice,

\* Levret Art des Accouchemens, 1753. page 266.



is due to L. Petit; according to this excellent observer, that when the father and mother who were infected with this disorder, beget a child, it ought to have the disorder in an eminent degree, by its not only being nourished by an infected mother, but it is formed by semen also infected by the virus; but when the mother is alone infected, the child ought to have the disease in a lesser degree than in the preceding case, in consequence of the semen of the father which contributed to its formation, not being infected with the disease. We ought also to suppose that if the mother is healthy and the father is infected, that the child will be less affected with the disease, as neither the semen or the ovarium of the mother have contributed to the formation of the disease, as also in consequence of the subsequent existence in the womb it does not receive any new stimulus to the virus. In a word, supposing the father or the mother are not infected till after the formation of the child, it is certain that the child will be less affected with the disease than in the other case, at least it will be much easier of cure, because the semen that formed the child was uninfected with the disease, the disease not being so deeply rooted, and in consequence of which ought not to be so difficult of cure. If the disease appears in the child at its birth, you



must hasten to stop its progress, and to cure it, if possible. If in the case of a child which is too young for the administering to it the mercurial frictions, the making use of them on the nurse has been done with success, by the specific passing with the milk into the blood of the child, mercury may act effectually in eradicating the disease. But this indirect treatment requires particular attention in relation to the milk of the nurse. She will lose her milk if she is suffered to bathe, or take too strong purgations, or too often repeated, or if salivation is induced. In consequence it will be necessary to use the mercurial frictions from time to time, and to prescribe her a regimen which is adapted to her situation. If it is the mother that suckles the child, she may use mercurial frictions, without any preliminary preparation, a few days after her lying in. If the mother is not in a condition for the suckling of the child, or will not do it, there remains but one method for the safety of the life of the child, which is to nourish it with the milk of an animal. There is a plan proposed, which is, to suffer the child to be suckled by a goat, and to make upon its thigh a simple wound,\* and to rub upon the wound every day a quantity of mercurial ointment; I prefer in this case to apply the ointment immediately to

\* There is no occasion for making any wound. J. F.



the child, either upon the tumors or upon the venereal ulcers it may have, or to rub twenty or thirty grains upon any other part of the body of the child.

In 1775, the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, published a consultation which they had upon the children found in the Hospital d'Aix, which was looked upon rather as a provisional answer dictated by the immediate necessity of directing the governors of that hospital, than as a deep research upon that subject. Of the three questions that were proposed by the administration of the Hospital d'Aix, two had for their subject, the venereal disease in new-born infants. In the first question they enquired if it was possible to indicate certain and unequivocal signs, by which they might discover if a new-born infant had the seeds of the venereal disease. They answered it in a negative manner; it is but by the symptoms that the venereal disease manifests itself, and often we find children born with every appearance of health, and it is not but at the end of ten or twelve days, or often a month, that the disease manifests itself, and especially if the mother has had the precaution to make use of mercury during her pregnancy. In the second question they were occupied upon the method that



they might make use of, for the immediate cure of new-born infants attacked with the venereal disease. The first symptom of the venereal disease in new-born infants is upon the glands of the eyelids; there exudes from them a whitish purulent humor, like that of gonorrhea. The eyelids surrounded with this humor are glewed up, they discharge but at intervals, and generally in the morning; the child grows thin daily; there are excoriations in the bend of the thighs and in the groins, sometimes the genitals are excoriated; these are the usual succession of symptoms. There are very frequently chaps at the angles of the mouth, accompanied with a discharge similar to that from the eyes, which thickens into a black crust upon the face and produces malignant apthæ in the interior of the mouth; then shoot out pimples upon the arms and upon the spine of the back, which occur upon the parts of generation, upon the buttocks, and upon the whole of the interior of the thighs. It is not uncommon to see the course and tumors of the lymphatics. Thinness and decay accompany all the symptoms, sometimes slow in appearing, but its developement so rapid that children have become completely putrid in a few days. You must not however confound these accidents with those that arise



from the want of cleanliness and the abodes of children that are low and damp. The impossibility of giving active remedies at so young an age, will not allow us to be sanguine in the radical cure of this disease in new-born infants thus attacked with the venereal disease, all that you can at first attempt is a palliative cure. We must distinguish among those children whose mothers have had no remedies, and those whose mothers have submitted to a treatment more or less effective. Antiscorbutics are often sufficient for the last. When we are obliged to use mercury we ought to prefer fumigations and other external applications. It may be done with twelve or fifteen grains of powdered cinabar applied at different times upon a piece of live coal and exposing the naked body of the infant to the fumes, in a wicker basket covered with blankets, or in a sort of lantern, in which are placed embers on a chafing dish. In either case, the head of the child should be protected from the fumes. The first day of the application of the fumes, you must not suffer the child to be exposed to them more than four or five minutes; and to encrease the length of the application daily; the time may be encreased to half an hour according to the effects on the symptoms; care must be taken that the body of the child is kept open with a solutive



syrup. It is not one of the least necessary cares in this treatment, the not placing the child in the cradle immediately after the fumigation, but rather expose it to the open air, or in a large apartment, if the air is too cold. Generally ten or fifteen fumigations will be sufficient for the cure, but you may risk double the number, by taking the necessary precautions. As to the internal remedies there are very few suited to young children. They may give now and then very small doses of sweet mercury, to begin by giving half a grain, and augmenting the dose gradually to three grains, every other day, to purge them with laxative syrup, or with rhubarb water. By mixing with each dose one or two grains of powdered rhubarb you may produce the same effect.

They have observed (says Roulin in this publication upon the preservation of children, published in 1777,) that children born with the venereal disease seldom live more than a month, and those where the disease exhibits itself two or three months after their birth, are not long-lived. At Lyon they made use of mercurial frictions; they seldom recovered; they did it to goats, to which they gave children that



were infected to be suckled. The children and goats died at the same time. The venereal disease declared itself in some children in the hospital at Rouen, at the age of two or three months: they pretended to cure them by giving them some sort of mercury, of which they gave two or three grains twice a day in some pap. I am at a loss to perceive what good effects were proved by this practice, since every one of the children who were submitted to the treatment died, with the exception of five who had never had the venereal disease. I made this remark, adds Roulin, that they cured children who had taken the disease from their nurses by the application of pieces of linen, plastered superficially with camphorated mercurial ointment and applied to the thighs.

There appeared a work in 1780 upon the venereal disease, under the name of Clinical Memoirs, which was praised by many physicians and criticised by others. This work, which was attributed to Lefebre de Saint Ildephonse, may be, in fact, considered under different reports and judged in a very different manner than in the point of view in which it is considered. They could not deny that it was written in a very seductive manner and they found some very correct



opinions upon the treatment of the venereal disease. The author explains himself thus, in speaking of pregnant women and new-born infants attacked with the venereal disease.

If the treatment of pregnant women infected with the venereal disease is imperfect, the child will not be cured, and they will find much trouble in completing the cure, after the child is born, though it takes nothing but the breast of the mother during the cure. The communication from the mother to the child will be less direct and less continual than when in the place of its conception. Moreover it appears proved that the air in which the child breathes, and with which it is surrounded, joined with all the other circumstances of its life, concur in making the disease worse and rendering it more obstinate. It is for the physician to choose the most proper method for the cure; but he ought to recollect that the disease is often cured in appearance, whether a child has the symptoms of the disease from its birth, or it appears immediately after. From whence it is inferred, that a superficial treatment will not prevent the consequences of the disease in the mother or the child.

As to the cure of infants, the milk of the mother who takes medicine, transmits it



to the child, and the elaboration which it undergoes assimilates it more to the delicacy of its organs. It ought therefore to be continued some time after the symptoms disappear; for it ought to be remembered notwithstanding the opinion of Harris, that time renders the disease more obstinate, and that it often appears to deaden, to re-appear with greater energy. When the child has sucked the disease with the milk of an infected nurse, the hope of success from the method just spoken of is destroyed. You may nevertheless supply the want of the milk of the woman, by the milk of a goat or a cow, which has been rubbed with mercury. It is in this sad distress that you may impregnate the atmosphere of the room with mercurial fumes. An abundant salivation will be hurtful to a child, who will swallow more or less saliva; but it is good that the mouth should be heated. Sweet mercury, (if they cannot use the preceding methods,) seems to me to be the best of all the mercurial salts for its weakness, and at the same time the most easy to be taken.

As it is not possible to exhaust entirely the strength of a child, without great danger of the life of the child, or at least its health, we are sometimes obliged, when all the symptoms



have disappeared, to delay the perfection of the cure till some other time, which would be destroyed by carrying it too far. I have remitted at three times the treatment for the same disease in the space of six \*years.† In the practical enquiries upon the treatment of the venereal disease, (de Gardanne,) a work which is the apology for the use of sublimated mercury, the author found much difficulty, danger and inconvenience in giving sucking children, infected from their birth or from the nurses, mercurial frictions and boluses. The sublimate appeared to him the most proper means for its cure; but he thought that, excepting in a very pressing case, this remedy ought not to be used before the age of twelve months; but where the necessity urged its use in a very early age, a very small quantity should be used, which, from what he prescribes, may be about a sixth of a grain. In his sixth observation, he gives the case of a child of eight months, who had the face, the breast, and the buttocks covered with pustules; the genital parts above all were covered. Eight grains of sublimate, administered by very small frictions, cured the disease radically.

\* Cette Methode d'administrer le traitement en plusieurs tems, n'est pas la plus avantageuse.

Note de M. Lamauve.

† I am of the same opinion. J. F.



In the month of August, 1781, Doctor Colombier, physician of the faculty of Paris, who was united with Citizen Fageur Desperrières, formerly principal surgeon of Bicêtre, to lay the first foundation of the Hospital of Vangirard, read, at the public meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine, of which he was a resident associate, a Memoir which contained a table of rapid symptoms which he had observed in the first children which were brought to that hospital, and the basis which had originally been established for the treatment of children and nurses. This abstract may be found in the third volume of the Memoirs of the Royal Society of Medicine. In the month of November of the same year, Doctor Doublet published his first essay on the venereal disease in new-born infants; and four years after, he published a new edition, in his Journal of Medicine, (Département des Hôpitaux civils.)

In the interval, that is to say, in 1783, the same Fageur, of whom I have just spoken, supported, for his admission into the college of surgeons, a thesis, which ought to be looked upon as an excellent abstract of the symptoms of the venereal disease, its nature and its treatment in new-born infants.



In the posthumous works of Dr. Sanchez upon the venereal disease, which we owe to the care of Citizen Andry, and which was published in 1785, there are two chapters upon hereditary venereal disease. In the first, he explains the different symptoms which he observed in children; such as are the faults of conformation, such as refer to the passage of the urethra and the imperforation of the anus, incurable accidents, frequent belly aches, green stools, dentition slow, where the teeth become black and soon perish. From the age of two years to puberty, they have worms, which produce different effects; such as diarrhæa, vomiting, itching of the nose, small pulse, swooning and epilepsy. The signs that are the least equivocal of the venereal disease, says the author, are a pustule upon the upper lip, interiorly upon the fillet, bad eyes, obstructed glands, a softening and bending of the bones, especially those of the hands and feet, the ear ache, scabs, pustules upon the head and face, debility of the body, joined with lively spirits, these are certain signs of that affection; above all, if these accidents are obstinate in the cure.

The indications of cure are, in the first place, to keep the stomach and all the intestinal canal free; to correct the humors, and to preserve



them from putridity. They satisfy these indications by giving warm purgatives, to which are added, half a grain of sweet mercury, making use of the vapor-bath as often as the strength will permit, and applying of frictions of tincture of cantharides from head to foot, when the patient is put to bed.

In the adult stage, the venereal disease exhibits itself in robust persons in different forms; it appears exteriorly under the form of rheumatism, sciatica, tetters, ophthalmia; in lively, delicate, and sensible constitutions, it attacks the stomach, the kidneys, the intestines, the diaphragm, the lungs, from thence pain, palpitations, &c. At an advanced age, the diseases are treated by bleeding, baths, common purgatives, and they degenerate into hydrothorax. It is in all these cases, that the author employed, with a constant success, pills composed of sweet mercury, camphor, ext.: cathartic: and jalap (of the Phar. Lond.) assa-fœtida, pil. rufi, balsam of Peru, and elixirs of peculiar property without acids. He made use of, besides these medicines, tincture of cantharides as a friction upon the legs.\*

Doctor Swédiaur, (an English physician,\*) in his practical observations upon the venereal

\* Malad. Vénér. de Sanchez.

\* Dr. Swediaur is a German. J. F.



disease, of which a translation appeared in the year 1786, had a very different opinion to that of Sanchez. I doubt, says he, if the venereal disease in a woman ever infects the milk, consequently, the infection cannot be communicated to the child by the milk alone, unless she has an ulcer on the nipple, or in its neighbourhood. It is equally a great doubt with me, whether the venereal disease ever passes from an infected father or mother to the foetus, in the act of generation, provided their genital organs are healthy, or if a child is always infected in the womb of a diseased mother. The children who have been infected, that I have seen, and those of some of my friends, whose practice furnishes them with a frequent opportunity of seeing new-born infants, seem to furnish proofs for the negative. Neither myself, or my friends, have ever been able to discover venereal ulcers upon new-born infants; and it may be conjectured, that those that have appeared five, six, or eight days after their birth, upon their genitals, upon the anus, upon their lips, or in the mouth, are from the gonorrheal running which sometimes happens, and arises from the infection which has been communicated to them in their passage through the vagina, from the discharge that the mother had in those parts: for the skin



of a child is nearly as tender as those parts of the adult that is not covered with the epidermis; and that is perhaps the true cause why venereal absorption may take place, without there being any ulcer or excoriation of the skin. In this case, the nipples of the nurse may be infected from the venereal ulcers which are found in the mouth of the child, or reciprocally the nipples of the nurse being infected, occasion venereal ulcers in the mouth, the nose, or the lips of the infant.\*

The opinion of a man so justly celebrated as John Hunter is of great importance: we will examine it with the greatest attention, whether here or elsewhere. In his treatise on the venereal disease, which is well known in France since the year 1787, by the translation of Andiberti, John Hunter speaks, in the first place, of the venereal disease in new-born infants; in examining the different ways that this disease may be communicated. He fears, he says, that this disease manifests itself upon other parts of the body besides the genital organs; such as the anus, the mouth, the nose, the eyes, the nipples of the nurse that suckles them, of which the children have been infected in their birth,

\* Neither Sanchez nor Swédiaur possessed the knowledge of their predecessors, either in theory or practice. J. F.



the genital parts of the mother being at that time infected.\*

It is supposed, says he, in another part of his work, that a foetus in the womb of its mother who is infected, may receive the disease, and be infected as if there was a direct communication between the two. I doubt much that it can happen, from what I have already said, speaking of secretions; for you see that the same matter that will produce a constitutional inflammation, is not able, as I have said above, of communicating the disease. You may nevertheless conceive how possible it is for a child to be infected in the womb of its mother who is infected, not by the disease of the mother, but by a part of the same matter that infects the mother herself, and which she has absorbed; and whether this matter is determined or not to the solids of the mother by its action, it is possible that it can pass to the child as pure as it was absorbed, and in this case it may infect the child precisely in the same manner as the mother is infected.†

We find, in the same chapter, cases which prove this communication. A woman aged

\* *Malad. Vénér. de Jean Hunter, chap. 2. p. 25.*

† *Ibid. chap. 31.*



twenty-five years was brought to St. George's Hospital the 21st of August 1782, with ulcers on the legs and pustules upon the body. Her husband was a soldier, and had given her the venereal disease in December 1781. The symptoms that she had was a discharge from the vagina, with a little swelling of the glands of the groin, which were painful. She had taken thirty pills that were supposed to be mercurial. In February 1782, about three months after she was infected, the discharge stopped; but the swelling, which encreased gradually from the instant of its appearance, had at last suppurated. She applied an ointment which they gave her, and two months afterwards, that is to say in April 1782, she was cured. After the cure of the bubo, the discharge reappeared: she took a second time a larger number of the same pills, of which she had taken before to the amount of thirty; but immediately afterwards her body was entirely covered with pustules, of which some that were upon the breast, upon the legs, and upon the nipples, ulcerated. The twins which she had at eight months, in May 1782, (the time that the bubo was approaching to its cure) were covered with pustules at their birth, and died very soon after. Another child, aged about two years, which she suckled, was also covered



with pustules when she came to the hospital. The twenty-first of October, 1782, we placed the mother and the child in the room which was appropriated for those who were under salivation. The child took no mercury; they thought its gums were affected and a little ulcerated and the pustules were cured.

What I have extracted from the works of J. Hunter, proves, that he admits and knew the venereal disease in new-born infants, but that he limited the mode of transmission to the inoculation of the virus at the time of its passage through the vagina. He has, in another part of the work, thrown doubts upon the communication of the venereal disease in new-born infants. But I shall reserve the examination and the discussion of these doubts to the time with which I shall occupy myself upon the objections made upon the venereal infection of new-born infants and the mode of its transmission from the mother to the child, and the child to the nurse, and from the nurse to the child.

Nisbet, a physician, and member of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, dedicated his last chapter in his essay upon the theory and the practice of the venereal disease, (translated into French by citizen Petit



Radel) to the "Veneral Disease of Children." It is observed, says this author, that the venereal disease in children always manifests itself about the genital parts and about the thighs; it very rarely attacks the face, the breast, or the lower extremities. The phenomena which characterise its first appearance, in his opinion, are pustules of a copper colour; these pustules spread; the body is covered with scales which resemble much the appearance of scorbutic eruptions: sometimes, instead of pustules, you only find pimples of a livid colour; whatever appearance these pimples are of, they continue to spread, and soon appear upon the face, upon the eye-brows, upon the chin, and these pimples soon take the appearance of those in the small pox, which are slow in exsiccation. The mouth begins to be affected interiorly and exhibits some appearance as in the thrush. This sort of apthæ changes into ulcers, insensibly encreases towards the throat, upon the lips and upon the nostrils, and impedes the power of smelling and of breathing, and produces other symptoms that accompany the impediments of organic actions. The disease always encreases and the ears are very much affected by the matter that is formed in them. The affection of the eyes is a characteristic



sign which was remarked at Paris by the physicians of the hospital that was established for children that were infected. The time which this disease appears among children, is most frequently between the tenth and the fifteenth day after their birth. Before that period, they have the appearance of good health, their skin is clean and soft, at other times the disease appears at the birth, and often it is formed before.

The infection of children hath it's origin, 1st, by the semen of the father, a means of transmission which is sufficiently proved, since it is seen every day that children that are born with symptoms of a confirmed disease, and at the same time the mother has not the least appearance of the disease. Children infected by this means go not to the full time of utro-gestation: many are dead and are in a state of putridity; some are born so wrinkled and emaciated, that they exhibit the appearance of extreme old age: 2ndly, Children may be impregnated with the venereal disease by the virus which circulates in the general mass, and is determined to the child without affecting the mother in traversing the windings of the placenta. These means,



which are merely thought probable by Nisbet, ought to appear certain when we recollect that the small pox sometimes passes to the fœtus without affecting the mother: 3dly, The effect is produced by the child being in contact with the virus during its passage through the vagina before delivery. This mode of communication, which is the most frequent, never appears before twelve or fifteen days after delivery: 4thly, The suckling is another method of communication upon which it is often very difficult to decide, as will be seen in the sequel. According to Nisbet, there are two methods of administering mercury to children. You may give to their nurses, or directly to the children. There is less security in the first method.

Some persons have said, adds this author, that after the evacuation of the milk of nurses, who have been under a state of salivation, there remains so large a quantity of mercury, that it may be distinguished by the eye; some others, especially Doctor Young, have proved by experience, that it is very difficult to impregnate the milk of nurses with mercury. In the second method, they administer the mercury directly to the child, which practice is the most



received. They ought to make use of the mercurial salts. Those that are the most employed are the sweet mercury, of which a grain should be given every night, or the corrosive mercury of Van Swieten, of which thirty drops should be given. It has also been remarked, that the guaicum and other woods, which are of but little use in this climate for adults, are nevertheless of service in young children; this proves that the least active medicine may cure the venereal disease in young children. According to the translator of Nisbet, (Petit Radel) when they are upon the treatment of a young child, and when other causes prevent the mother's nursing it, you must anoint the legs of the child every three days with a fourth part of the usual proportion of mercurial ointment for an adult, and purge it with syrup of chicorée, if it is troubled with cholic. This physician rejects entirely all sublimated preparations, and recommends that when circumstances prevent the use of mercurial frictions, to use the sweet mercury in the quantity prescribed by Nisbet. I shall not say any thing as to my opinion upon the treatment proposed by Nisbet and by his translator, reserving for another place the examination, the comparison, and the judgment which I think ought



to be supported upon all the different means upon which there has been a question, in the succeeding table, which I am about to present.

### EXAMINATION.

*Upon the different Modes of the Communication of the Venereal Disease from the Mother to the Child, before its Birth, or from the Children to the Nurses, and from the Nurses to the Children, during their suckling.*

These are impenetrable questions to the human powers, and are those which tend to induce us to revert to the origin of things. Endowed with all the proper means for research, for analysing and classing effects, arranged in a manner to be accomplished by study and meditation, for acquiring the knowledge of the secondary causes, we still find insurmountable difficulties which prevent our getting at the primary cause. We have proofs in the explication that we can give functions to the human subject; we know physically the apparent effect which every organ has, and every organ ought to have, and we distinguish the sensible variations which happen in their state, but the first motion of these organs and



the reciprocal action of these humours in their intimate combination, will be without doubt always an impenetrable mystery.

Thus, in fixing our remarks upon the limits that nature has given for our research upon the functions of man, healthy or sick, we ought to feel that there ought to be a much less question in this chapter in searching theoretically into the mode of communication of the venereal disease, than in considering the effects which are exhibited, in what circumstances this communication takes place, in examining whatever happens then to the mother, to the children and to the nurses.

Three problems are given to be solved in this chapter.

1st, To know how children can be infected before birth.

2ndly, To discover how a child infected can infect the nurse.

3dly, To discover how infected nurses can infect the children. These three questions will be made each an object of a separate article.



## ARTICLE I.

*How Children are infected by their Mothers before Birth.*

In examining the opinions upon this question, we find they admit three ways by which the venereal disease is communicated to the child before its birth. 1st, When the child is infected in the time of conception by the infection of the mother : 2ndly, When the child is infected during the time of the conception of the mother by the nourishing humours which are transmitted to it, through the vessels of the placenta : 3dly, When it is inoculated in its passage by the purulent and ichorous humors which it meets with. We will examine each of these different manners of infection.

## ARTICLE I.

*Can Children be infected with the Venereal Disease, by the Effect itself, of Conception ?*

It is a research almost metaphysical in the examination, if children can be infected with the venereal disease by the seed, which is the first cause of their existence. For to be able to attack and defend this opinion, you must



know the process of conception, and that is what the efforts of the greatest physiologists have not been able to solve. In reasoning after the effects, they say, that if the venereal disease can infect the woman, this seed, altered in its nature, cannot have the power of impregnation; but if there exists an organic virus, hereditary in some families, which the most incredulous cannot deny; if the virus is propagated by the real effect of conception, depending equally upon a bad disposition of the solids and fluids as they must admit, they ought to conclude that the venereal disease is capable of altering the humour which is the principle of generation. Why should the venereal disease spoil the prolific quality of the seminal humors, when the virus of leprosy, scrofula, and rickets, which is propagated by the same means, is not deprived of its fecundating power? In this hypothesis it is possible that the venereal disease communicated by the father, and enveloped in the seed of the foetus, unites with the humors and is developed with them without the mother's participating with them, as in the example of the gout, ringworm, scrofula. I knew an infirm old man, who was married at an age much advanced, to a very young woman and very healthy, by



whom she had many children, very ricketty, who died before the age of twenty-one years.

When the mother and father are infected with the same humoral virus, the children receive much more strongly the effects of the original virus. I knew a family that were ricketty and scrofulous, of which all the children were more or less affected with the virus. A young lady of that family married a husband who was also of a family afflicted with the same disease: they had children, who died before the age of two years with every symptom of the rickets. There are but few physicians who are in practice that cannot relate cases of the same nature; but these cases, although so striking, and uniting with a great number of probabilities upon the opinion of the communication of the venereal disease by conception, are not of a kind to be demonstrated physically, but are, nevertheless, not of a less degree of certainty.



## ARTICLE II.

*General Objections made by those who have mistaken the Existence and the Nature of the Venereal Disease in New-born Infants.*

The explanations that we have given upon the opinion of physicians upon the venereal disease in new-born infants, the picture that we have traced in this disease, after ten years observation in the first hospital destined to patients afflicted with this disease, the irrevocable effects that we have brought forward to prove the different ways by which children taking or propagating the disease, are sufficient, I think, to disperse all the doubts that can be formed upon the existence of the disease in new-born infants; upon the certainty of the signs by which it manifests itself; and upon the different means by which it is contagious. But as I have proposed to dissipate the smallest cloud which can yet obscure these questions in the eyes of some people, I have gathered all the general and particular objections that have been made, and can be made upon the existence, the nature, and the communicability of the venereal disease in new-born infants and in nurses.



Finally, when they themselves reject all the proofs, and will not admit the possibility of the fœtus receiving the seed of the venereal disease in the act of conception, and that from a cause which they cannot explain, it will be sufficient to demonstrate the venereal disease in newborn infants, to prove, that the fœtus has other means of being infected before it quits the womb of its mother. These are, the means of communication of venereal infected humors during the process of gestation, and also the absorption of the virus in the passage of an infected vagina. For the first means, every one knows the possibility of its happening to the fœtus by the communication that is established between the mother and the child, participating of the disease of which the mother is infected as in the example of the small pox. These are what authors have called known diseases, *morbi congeniti*.

The second means by which a child may be infected with the venereal disease before its birth, is by the absorption of the infected virus in the vagina; this happens to midwives and surgeons who attend in the accouchement of women that are infected and leaves no doubt on this head.



## OBJECTION I.

*There does not exist any hereditary Disease, consequently it is an Error to admit the Venereal Disease in New-born Infants.*

All the objections that have been made against hereditary diseases, are caused by the impossibility of explaining their formation; if we admit that those are hereditary diseases, which are transmitted by the act itself of conception, it must be confessed their formation will be always covered with an impenetrable veil, for it is a mystery which belongs to that of generation.

But though we are unable to explain a thing, we ought not to deny its existence. The analogy which is found in the conformation, the colour, the features of the face, and the constitutions of children, with those of their fathers and mothers,—the fact which proves that a negroe and a mulatto transmit to their children a disposition of the solids and fluids analogous to their own, in whatever climate they are found,—the numberless observations that prove that the organized imperfections of a



father or a mother are communicated to their children in a long succession of generations, as it is seen in certain families,—are proofs without a doubt, that the fathers give to their children a physical disposition analogous to their own. They cannot determine how the solids and the fluids act in this primitive disposition, and to what extent it proceeds to conceal and to prepare this morbid seed, but they cannot doubt the necessity of the two elements in these first instances of the existence of the fœtus, as in the remainder of its life.

I could support these principles by multiplied proofs of authority, by opinions and facts, but that will be encroaching too much on a general thesis, and would go too far from the question of which I am treating. I shall content myself in reciting for example, the transmission of hereditary diseases, the unquestionable facts related by M. Vidal in his researches on leprosy, and the transmission of that disease from generation to generation. These facts and all those of the same species, are proofs without a reply, that a vitiated seed is not the less fruitful; they have proofs of this in the vegetable world.



## OBJECTION II.

*If the Children were infected in the Wombs of their Mothers, they ought to have every decided Symptom from the Moment of their Birth, and these Symptoms ought to be the same in the one as in the other.*

The three different ways that we are now to speak of, that a child may be infected that we know of, 1st, by conception,—2ndly, by the communication of humors with the mother,—3dly, by absorption in its passage,—must lead you to suppose that there ought to be a great difference, according to the symptoms, and according to the time of its appearance.

There is ground to suppose that children born not at the full period of gestation, under the form of an embryo, the skin of which being wrinkled, or the epidermis dried up, or other imperfect formations, are infected at the time of conception; these are those that have existed in putrid or corrupted waters. Children that are infected by the humors of the mother are often without symptoms at the time of their birth, and the virus is slow in developing itself. We have had often in the Hospital striking



examples. We will relate the two following facts. A woman, named —— had an old and confirmed venereal infection, and among other symptoms had ulcerated pustules on the genital parts and a discharge: she was brought to bed in the month of —— of a child without any symptoms; three months after, there appeared pimples, which ulcerated and formed large chanceroous ulcerations about the anus. A woman named ——, when the symptoms were known, was brought to bed of a child which had no symptoms, but at the expiration of three months, there appeared pustules, and ulcers about the anus, which in a short time became an unequivocal venereal chancre, and was a long time in curing. This woman suckled another child for me, to which she did not communicate the disease. On those children that were infected in the passage, we observed ulcerated excoriations, suppurating pimples, erysipelas, and ophthalmias, and these were manifested very soon. Generally they are seen on the fourth or fifth day, and you discover the time taken up in the inoculation.



## OBJECTION III.

*There are Women who are infected and give Birth to Children, upon which you find no Symptoms that would lead you to suppose they were infected with the Venereal Disease.*

It is very true that we see women with the most decided symptoms of being infected, give birth to children that are healthy, as you see women very much infected with the venereal disease have communication with men very healthy, without giving them the disease with which they themselves are afflicted. In both cases it is a particular circumstance that prevents the venereal virus from attacking the subject which has been submitted to its action. When a woman afflicted with the venereal disease has not had it a long time, or has only local symptoms, it is possible and probable, that the disease is not general and constitutional. In that case the nourishing vessels of the placenta and the lymphatic exhaling vessels do not communicate the virus either to the foetus or the waters in which it swims.

On the other hand, as when the genital organs are the seat of the local disease, it is very pos-



sible that the child in this case may not be in its passage sufficiently exposed in contact to absorb the venereal virus and to be inoculated. This is what in many cases, of which the one depends upon the mother and the other upon the child, can be produced. In fact the presence or the absence of pus or the virulent discharge, the situation of the ulcers, the discharge more or less rapid, or a greater or lesser quantity of the waters, the greater or lesser time that the child remains in its passage, and the way that it is enveloped, these are the principal causes which prevent or determine the inoculation of the venereal virus at the time of the birth of the child.

Finally, it is very important to observe, that absence of venereal symptoms upon a child born of an infected mother is not always a sufficient reason to conclude that the child has not imbibed the seed of the disease in the womb of its mother. We have already said that there are examples where the disease has not developed itself till after some months, and we have also stated other examples where the disease has not developed itself till the child has been weaned. Thus, without admitting the consequence of those authors who think they see the disease every where, we think that it exists oftener than thought for, and the most



wise part is to believe that children born of infected mothers, are children with whom it is very probable, the venereal disease will be developed, and that consequently it is more prudent to submit them to treatment.

Among those who deny the possibility of a late developement in the seed of the venereal disease existing since its birth, and those that fancy they see signs of this disease in all the diseases of youth and childhood, there is a mixed opinion which consists in recollecting that the venereal disease, like that of scrofula, may remain stagnant during many years and discover itself in a very different form than the primitive contagion. Experience may furnish us with some instruction upon this subject.

#### OBJECTION IV.

*There are Children born of healthy Women who have Symptoms analogous to those that are looked upon as infected ; as those Children that are born of infected Mothers.*

There are symptoms among the different diseases which affect the human body, whose affinities, resemblances, and analogies, cause the liability of mistaking one disease for ano-



ther; and that which characterises the experience and knowledge of a physician, is the discovering and distinguishing the difference and the dissemblance between objects, that an eye less clear or less exercised looks upon as analogous. What may be said upon the diseases of adults may be applied more particularly to children. It is known that the small pox has often been confounded with the chicken pox, the worm cough with the catarrhal cough, constitutional affections of the chest with inflammation of the lungs; consequently it is not astonishing, that they should often confound cutaneous diseases produced by the venereal disease, with those that happen in consequence of ring worms or scabs, and bad care of the child which produces a bad habit of body. It is in examining with great attention the origin, the nature, and developement of the symptoms which manifest among children a suspicion of the venereal disease, that you distinguish those that are really venereal and those that are not so, as we have shewn in the preceding chapter.



## OBJECTION V.

*They cannot from the Appearances, that are sometimes detached and often slight, be aware of the Existence of a Disease so obscure and of so much Consequence as the Venereal Disease.*

The venereal disease exhibits itself sometimes among children by a great number of symptoms at the same time, many of which are of a serious nature. There are children that have but one symptom for some time, but to this you see a succession of symptoms, as I have described; with others, you will find one or two symptoms, which are the most decided symptoms of venereal infection. Such are those with whom the symptoms are slow in shewing themselves by pustules that ulcerate about the genital parts, the anus, or the mouth. Finally, where children are born of infected mothers, the most equivocal symptoms may pass as a sufficient sign, since the non-existence of symptoms is not sufficient to satisfy you of the event.

In fact, it is a general principle admitted in physiology, that to prove the existence of a disease, you must have the union of a certain



number of symptoms which characterise it; but the best physiologist cannot apply it to virulent diseases, which often exhibit themselves in a manner the less doubtful by the appearance of one or two distinct symptoms, which are very equivocal in their origin, but become afterwards very serious and very dangerous, when the disease has not been attacked in an earlier period. We have proofs of it in tetters, in cancerous affections, in hydrophobia, and above all in the venereal disease, which often manifests itself by one or two symptoms, which, although in the first instance are very equivocal in its origin, does not deceive those who are a little conversant in the venereal disease. They might at the same time say, that the venereal disease ought to begin with but one symptom, which sooner or later will be followed by many others. There is nothing in that which differs essentially in new-born infants, with that which happens the most frequently in adults; which begins by shewing a primitive symptom, and then subsequently is followed by many others. Thus in a decided venereal symptom, it is sufficient to prove the existence of venereal infection in a new-born infant.



## OBJECTION VI.

*The Casualties that they look upon as the Venereal Disease in New-born Infants, cure themselves without Remedies, which proves that they are not the Venereal Disease.*

It is true, those that are given up to the chance of nature, children that are born of infected mothers, and have symptoms resembling those that I have described, the greater part of them die, or if they live, infect their nurses. This is what the experience of physicians of every country, and the records of all the hospitals for foundlings, can attest.

It cannot be denied that it sometimes happens that the venereal symptoms of new-born infants disappear without the use of any remedies. I have many examples, among which I shall choose the following.

Jacques Pasq\*\*\* a legitimate child, was taken into the hospital in July, 1790, at the age of ———, with its mother, who had all the symptoms of an old venereal infection, and had not been under treatment before; this child was strong and well looking, although it



had at an earlier period after its birth been affected with many symptoms, such as chancreous ulcerations about the anus, of which there remained scars, and ophthalmia which had left white specks. This observation does not prove that the mother had not communicated the disease of which she was infected to the child; but it proves the transmission of an hereditary disease, which disappeared after existing a certain time. This is what is seen among adults, that gonorrhea cures itself without mercury in proceeding through the stages of inflammation to suppuration and to cicatrization. It is thus we see venereal accidents cured without remedies, or they disappear during the use of baths, &c. which preceded the use of mercury. But it is essential to remark two things here: 1st, It is these symptoms which aggravate and become mortal in the greatest part of those that are left to chance: 2ndly, The disappearance of symptoms is not a certainty of its cure. We have had, for the confirmation of this, at Vangirard, instances in many children, when the re-appearance of symptoms, during the time of weaning, were very striking, which had disappeared during the period of suckling. Although nature has not the same resources for the cure of contagious diseases, as she has for the cure of other



diseases, there is more than one example under certain circumstances, and for individual privileges, to shew that she naturalizes the different virus which attacks the human subject.

### OBJECTION VII.

*No Conclusion can be drawn from those Symptoms observed in the Hospital of Vangirard, because the Wet-nurses of that Hospital being infected, they infected the Children that they suckled.*

The greater part of those children at the Hospital of Vangirard, that were brought there, were foundlings of the town, and were brought with the unequivocal symptoms upon them; while those that were born at the hospital, some had symptoms and the others had not, although they were suckled by infected nurses. It is much more reasonable to suppose that those who were infected, were so either in the womb of their mothers, or at the moment of their birth, and those that had no apparent disorder, received it from some one of those particular circumstances which I have mentioned in the third objection.



Finally, we do not deny that nurses at Vangirard do not infect their children, but this is very rare; it is easy to discern them as you will see hereafter, without deviating from the truth of what we have asserted.

### OBJECTION VIII.

*No Conclusion can be drawn of the Cure of Children of the Hospital du Vangirard, by the Milk of Nurses under Treatment, for nothing is less proved than the medicinal or specific Qualities of their Milk.*

We will examine this head of treatment by the extent they believe of the physical quality of the milk of nurses; we will see what must be thought from the experience by which they would prove that mercury makes no alteration in the milk of nurses. It is sufficient to say here, what the facts require; it must be admitted that infected nurses infect their nurslings by their milk; they must then allow that they may be cured by the same means. On the other hand, they do not content themselves at the Hospital du Vangirard by solely giving medicine to the nurses, for in most cases they administer remedies directly to the child, of a kind for the destruction of the disease of which they are afflicted.



*An Examination of the particular Objections of  
Mr. John Hunter that are drawn up in his  
Work, against the Power of Infection of the  
Venereal Disease from Children to their Nurses,  
and from the Nurses to their Children.*

Mr. John Hunter has adopted a decided proposition, that pus alone contained the venereal virus, and that all cases that were venereal that did furnish pus, except those of an incipient chancre or a gonorrhæa, could not communicate the disease. What ought to be concluded from such propositions, but entirely new and extraordinary consequences, and which appear astonishing to those to whom those principles have not the same degree of certainty and evidence. We will not examine here what erroneous consequences upon the nature and treatment of the venereal disease might be construed from the two propositions of which Mr. J. Hunter thought to prove the fact; we will content ourselves with analysing those arguments upon which he rested, to convince the want of communicability of the venereal virus from children to their nurses and from the nurses to their children. We will hear Mr. John Hunter's opinion.



“ It has been supposed and asserted from  
 “ observation, that ulcers in the mouths of  
 “ children from a constitutional disease, which  
 “ constitutional disease was supposed to be de-  
 “ rived from the parent, produced the same  
 “ disease upon the nipples of women who had  
 “ been sucked by them, giving it as it were  
 “ by the third hand; that is, the children  
 “ were contaminated either by their mother  
 “ or father having the disease in the form of a  
 “ venereal disease, (of which I have endea-  
 “ voured to show the impossibility;) the child  
 “ was the second, and the nurse was the third.  
 “ If, however, it were possible to contaminate  
 “ once in this way, it would be possible to con-  
 “ taminate for ever.”\*

This argument induces us to say, that we  
 ought not to admit the communication of the  
 venereal disease from the children to their  
 nurses, because all children born of infected  
 mothers do not infect their nurses.

But 1st, We have proved that all children  
 born of infected parents had not the venereal  
 disease, either from the disease in the mother  
 not being sufficiently general to have vitiated

\* Hunter on the Venereal Disease, page 295.



the general mass of humours, or that the child under particular circumstances had escaped the local affection that awaited it in its passage through the vagina.

2ndly, That a child born of an infected mother, and itself infected with symptoms of the venereal disease, infects its nurse. It must not be concluded that all children born under these circumstances, and with whom there appear some symptoms, ought to infect their nurses; for on the one side, the child may have local symptoms without a general affection, and on the other side, there ought to be a remarkable difference, depending upon the situation, and the more or less intensity of these local symptoms. Finally, it may be added, that some nurses by their particular dispositions, may escape that contagion which will not fail infecting many others.

Those arguments, which in truth can be said, that John Hunter rests upon, are facts or particular observations; the frankness with which he reports them, and the veracity of this famous man, guarantee the authenticity of these facts; but what appears to us a greater cause for the convincing us of the candour with which they are related, is, that these facts are with us



a refutation of his opinion of the question of which we are now speaking: therefore in order to answer the objections of Mr. Hunter, we will content ourselves with relating faithfully the observations upon which they are founded, and joining with it remarks to explain the sense in which they ought to be considered. In fact, if the accidents which Mr. Hunter looks upon as diseases that only bear the appearance of the venereal disease, are symptoms compleatly analogous to those that we have constantly observed in the Hospital du Vangirard, upon the wet nurses attacked with the venereal disease, and upon children born of infected mothers, if the symptoms of the nurses which are the subject of the observations of Mr. Hunter only appeared after the suckling of diseased children, and the symptoms observed upon children born of mothers not suspected of the disease, only appear after having sucked the milk of diseased nurses,—finally, if the greater part of these accidents have only yielded after the use of mercury, it must be concluded that Mr. Hunter is deceived, in believing those symptoms resembling the venereal disease, but in reality different from that disease, which were symptoms of the true venereal disease.



*The Observations that are given by Mr. John Hunter, as Diseases resembling the Venereal Disease, and upon which he is mistaken in taking them for it.*

*Critical Remarks upon these Observations, which prove that these Diseases were true Affections of the Venereal Disease.*

### OBSERVATION I.\*

JOHN HUNTER.

A child was supposed to infect its nurse with the venereal disease. The parents had been married above twelve years when this child was born. The father was a very fond husband, and the mother one of the mildest and most affectionate women that could possibly exist. The father had a venereal gonorrhœa two years before he married, that is, fourteen years before the birth of the child. About nine months after marriage they had a child, and afterwards a second, both of which were extremely healthy at birth, and still continue so. The mother fell into a weakly state of health and miscarried of her third child at the end of five months. The fourth child came at seven months, but was puny, weak, and had hardly any cuticle when born. It was immediately after birth attacked with a violent disorder in the bowels so as to purge blood. It died in a few days and was opened by me. The whole skin was almost one excoriated surface. The intestines were

DR. MAHON.

We shall see that women infected with the venereal disease are subject to miscarriages, and that the waters are of a bad species, and the children born are robbed of the epidermis.

The vessicles are what we have termed *phlictènes* in the table of symptoms. We say this symptom is frequent, and we shall place it among the unequivocal signs of the inoculation of the venereal disease.

\* Hunter on the Venereal Disease, page 296.



JOHN HUNTER.

DR. MAHON.

violently inflamed and thickened.

With her fifth child, from great care, she went eight months, and it was now hoped that she might go the full time, and also that this child might be more healthy than the former. When she was delivered, the child was very thin, but free from any visible complaint.

Some days after birth it became blistered in a vast number of places on its body, which blisters were filled with a kind of matter, and when they broke they discharged a thinnish pus. The inside of the mouth was in the same condition. Bark was given to the nurse. Bark in milk was given to the child by the mouth, and it was fomented with decoction of bark; but in about three weeks after birth it died.

Some weeks after the death of the child the nurse's nipple, and the ring round the nipple, inflamed, and sores or ulcers were formed with a circumscribed base. They were poulticed, but without benefit. She also complained of a sore throat, but the sensation she complained of was so low in the throat that nothing diseased could be seen. A swelling took place on the glands of the arm-pit, but they did not suppurate.

Every thing that can characterise the communication of a contagious disease is exemplified in this case, the interval between the inoculation of the virus and the local disease, the original seat of the disease being where it was submitted to the infection, the first transmission of the virus to the lymphatics of the part affected to the neighbouring glands.



## JOHN HUNTER.

She applied to a physician, and from the account she gave he pronounced her disease to be venereal, and that she had given suck to a foul child; and ordered ten boxes of mercurial ointment to be rubbed in on her legs and thighs, eight of which had been used when I saw her, and then her mouth was become extremely sore.

These circumstances came to the ears of the family, and an alarm took place. The husband went from surgeon to surgeon, and from physician to physician, to know if it was possible for him to have the disease for fourteen years, and never to have perceived a single symptom of it in all that time: or if it was possible he could get children with the disease now, when the two first were healthy.

He also wanted to know, if it was possible for his wife to have caught the disease from him under such circumstances; and also, if she could breed children with this disease, although she herself never had a single symptom of it. If we take all the above mentioned circumstances as facts, it was impossible there could be any thing venereal in the case;

## DR. MAHON.

It appears to me, that argument, medical tradition, and experience, unite in saying, that the indications of the physician were just.

There are many examples where diseased persons have had the seed of the disease upon them, and with whom it has only developed itself at a very distant period; it is certain that while the venereal disease is dormant, it is not contagious, but that it becomes so immediately upon its being developed. The rage of the small pox may be recited as an example that is analogous, and to demonstrate that many things must be admitted in medicine, that cannot be proved.

In the place of losing time in obscure researches upon remote effects, impossible to be explained or proved, would it not be more just to explain those things that are known and proved? It is certain that the three last children were diseased in the womb of their mother, and that the last was born with a disease resembling to the venereal,



## JOHN HUNTER.

but as they could not be absolutely proved to be facts, there remained a doubt in the mind, a something still to be proved.

## DR. MAHON.

that it had communicated it to the nurse, that it had infected under the same circumstances as children born of infected mothers. Here is a physical fact which they must not lose sight of, who seek the truth.

What weight of argument can the affirmation of parents be, under these circumstances? It is known that nothing can be more illusive in a case where so many causes can engage the parents interested, in hiding from others the truth, and at times the deceiving of themselves. In all cases of the venereal disease, it is demonstrated, that if the confession of the diseased would be of service in many cases, they will deny the truth, even when the symptoms appear against them. On the other side, it is possible that the infection may be dormant in the father several years, and then develop itself suddenly, and that the wife may have a local affection of the genital parts, the character of which may have been remarked. Nevertheless it appears more probable to those who have any experience of the way in which the husband and wife dissemble reciprocally the venereal disease, that the husband or wife has contracted an infection anterior to



## JOHN HUNTER.

Now let us see what the result of the case itself says. The nurse's mouth was become extremely sore from the mercury when I first saw her. I desired that Mr. Pott might see her along with me; and it was the opinion of us both, that the sores on the nipple and round it were not venereal; but it was alledged, that as she had taken mercury their not having a venereal appearance now was owing to that cause.

The bark was given, as also the sarsaparilla, but the sores did not heal, nor did they get worse; nor did the mouth get better by leaving off the mercury; they both as it were become stationary. I ordered the hemlock, but that appeared to have no effect. While this was going on eruptions broke out on the skin. The skin of the hands and fingers peeled off, the nails of both fingers and toes separated, and sores formed about their roots, which were all supposed (by many) to be venereal. But some of them appearing while the constitution was full of mercury, and others disappearing without any further use of that medicine, I was clear they were not.

## DR. MAHON.

their marriage, and we have judged so, having many opportunities of seeing the fact in the Hospital of Vangirard: the disease of the mother had began before the birth of the three last children.

But whether the source be a new or an ancient disease; the symptoms in the child and the nurse evidently convince us of the nature of the disease.

We call to mind the reasons already alledged, to prove that the opinion was hasty and without foundation.

It appears to me that the reasoning was very just, at the same time the amendment of the symptoms during the use of mercury has proved the disease to have been venereal; and at the same time the continuation of the different accidents, and their increase under different aspects during the exhibition of the specific confirms the opinion they ought to have formed of its nature. In a word, the best proof that the mercurial treatment had ameliorated the symptoms of this disease, is that the cessation of the treatment had not only rendered stationary the ulcers which had taken a better character, but that new symptoms appeared, such as ulcers upon all the surface, and that they fixed



## JOHN HUNTER.

## DR. MAHON.

themselves particularly upon the nails.

To prove that the perseverance of the original ulcers, and the symptoms that succeeded were not venereal, Mr. Hunter gives two reasons; the first is, that they appeared at a time when the constitution was under the mercurial influence; but, in the first place, this patient was very far from having had a sufficient quantity of mercury for its treatment, only having made use of nine frictions. 2ndly, When the new symptoms appeared in the commencement and during a mercurial treatment, we look upon with propriety, these new symptoms as a developement of a disease which the remedies have not affected, or as a modification produced by the virulent humour which was not yet corrected; and when the mercury from frictions did not produce any favorable change in the symptoms that existed, and the disease made a progress which exhibited itself by new symptoms, experience proves that although it cannot be said they are not venereal affections, but yet they are such venereal affections for which you must seek for a time some other means for the cure, than that of mercurial frictions.

We suspected that her mode of living was such as

The second reason upon which Mr. Hunter founds



## JOHN HUNTER.

contributed greatly to the continuance of her first complaint, and gave rise to the new ones; she looked dejected and sallow. She was desired to go into an hospital, which she did. As soon as she got into a warm bed, and had good wholesome food, she began to mend, and in about five or six weeks she had got fat and almost well, the sore only about the root of the nail of the great toe had not healed; but that appeared now to be owing to the root of the nail being detached, therefore acting as an extraneous body. She came out of the hospital before this toe had got well, and by returning to her old poor mode of living the soreness of the mouth returned; however she mended in the end without the use of more mercury.

## DR. MAHON.

his opinions, is, that the greater part of the symptoms disappeared without the use of mercury; but the disappearance of the symptoms are very far from a decided proof of the cure. Mr. J. Hunter confirms this fact; for it happened that some time after the discharging of this woman from the hospital, new symptoms appeared in the mouth, which he attributed to a bad regimen, from which it is natural to conclude, that the good regimen of the woman, joined to the mercury she had already taken, had palliated the symptoms which a new change of living had dissipated. In truth, Mr. Hunter adds, that there were new symptoms which disappeared without the use of mercury; but this woman was not seen again by Mr. Hunter, or in any way under his care; and there is reason to believe, that her amelioration was dissembled, or that it was dormant, and after an interval of a longer or a shorter period, she would not fail having a recurrence of the same symptoms.

I ask of all medical men, who have read this work, without having formed an opinion upon that observation, if the observation of Mr. Hunter that we have just given, does not prove directly the



JOHN HUNTER.

DR. MAHON.

contrary of what he would wish to prove, and if it is possible to mistake the venereal virus in new-born infants, and the communicability of the virus by suckling? We see a mother who has three sickly children born, and the only surviving child covered with symptoms, resembling those of venereal infected women; we see characteristic symptoms of inoculation of the venereal virus, by suckling; the progress that the virus makes in its developement, the progress of the disease palliated by a small number of frictions with mercury; the disease which is regenerated with great strength, and exhibits itself under a different form; the new calm that is established, whether by the effect of this explosion or by the change of regimen; and finally, we see the disease reappears suddenly, and unless you can contradict the favorable appearances, which are proved by the consequences, it appears to us, that we cannot give a better or more exact table of symptoms of the nature and action of the venereal disease.

How has it happened that a man so celebrated as Mr. J. Hunter, should be deceived? It is, that on one side, he believed that the father and mother were



JOHN HUNTER.

DR. MAHON.

healthy; on another side, deceived by his experience upon the inoculation of the venereal disease, he persuaded himself that a child infected with the venereal disease, with apthæ in the mouth, had not the power of communicating the disease to the nurse. Thus, opinion destroyed observation, and the disposition for system has made great efforts to overturn facts, of which nothing can shake the truth.

## OBSERVATION II.\*

## CRITICAL REMARKS.

A lady was delivered of a child on the 30th of September 1776, the infant being weakly and the quantity of milk in the mother's breasts abundant, it was judged proper to procure the child of a person in the neighbourhood to assist in keeping the breasts in a proper state. It is worthy of remarking, that the lady kept her own child to the right breast, the stranger to the left. In about six weeks the nipple of the left breast began to inflame, and the glands of the axilla to swell. A few days after several small ulcers were formed about the nipple, which spreading rapidly soon communicated and became one ulcer, and

The diseased breast of this nurse is that which furnished milk to the child, the axillary glands inflamed and enlarged, the nipples inflamed, and little ulcers formed upon the nipples became large, and finished by the destruction of the nipple. This precisely happened to nurses infected by their nurslings. The nurses had shortly pustules, which ulcerated, and became a chancre on the part. It does not develope those symptoms of the same kind with that patient where ulcers cicatrise in the space of three months. But the long and ragged ulcers which are upon the breast, the enlargement of the glands, the loss of the nip-

\* Hunter on the Venereal Disease, page 386.



## JOHN HUNTER.

at last the whole nipple was destroyed. The tumor in the axilla subsided, and the ulcer in the breast healed in about three months from it's first appearance. On inquiry, about this time the child of the stranger was short breathed, had the thrush, and died tabid, with many sores on different parts of the body.

The patient now complained of shooting pains in different parts of the body, which were succeeded by an eruption on the arms, legs and thighs, many of which became ulcers.

## DR. MAHON.

ple of the breast which suckled the child, exhibit symptoms of a local infection which are completely analogous to those which prove infected nurses. The death of this strange child which had ragged ulcers upon the mouth, which happened at the end of three months, and which had also ulcers upon different parts of the body, is on the other side the strongest argument, that the venereal symptoms appeared in no other way equivocal in this child than in those accidents which followed on the breast of the mother, when at the same time it happened that this local and early disease was cured without any antivenereal medicine, and without there happening any subsequent symptoms: for, as we have already said it is not uncommon that a general infection develops itself very slowly; and, on the other side, the best marked disease disappears sometimes without using any antivenereal medicines. But the disappearance of the ulcers from the breast, was very far from being an end of the disease.

These symptoms are evidently symptoms of general venereal infection.



## JOHN HUNTER.

She was now put under a mercurial course, with a decoction of sarsaparilla. Mercury was tried in a variety of forms, in solution, in pills internally, and externally in the form of ointment. It could not be continued above a few days at a time, as it always brought on fever or purging, with extreme pain in the bowels. In this state she remained till March 16, 1779, when she was delivered of another child in a diseased state.

This child was committed to the care of a wet nurse, and lived about nine weeks; the cuticle peeling off in various parts, and a scabby eruption covering the whole body; the child died.

Soon after the death of the child the nurse complained of headach and sore throat, together with ulceration of the breasts. Various remedies were given to her, but she determined to go into a public hospital, where she was salivated, and after some months she was discharged, although not cured of the disease. The bones of the nose and palate exfoliated, and in a few months she also died tabid.

## DR. MAHON.

It was after the appearance of all the characteristic symptoms that they gave it mercury, but the short time that they persevered in its use, did not allow them to calculate upon the cure of the disease, of which the symptoms were considerably palliated.

But this woman infected with a general disease, ought to have communicated its virus to her child, if what we have established is true.

The condition of this child at its birth, and the successive developements of the symptoms, are completely the same as those at the Hospital of Vangirard, who were born of infected mothers.

The infection of the nurse joined to the symptoms of the nursling, and the anterior state of the mother, form three species of proofs which do not leave a doubt upon the nature of the disease.

It is very astonishing, and very fortunate, nevertheless, for the truth, that in a chapter destined to dispute the existence and the contagiousness of the venereal disease in new-born infants, Mr. Hunter unites the strongest proofs and the most demonstrative of that contagious property.



## JOHN HUNTER.

Of the various remedies tried by the lady herself, none succeeded so well as sea-bathing. About the month of May she began a course of the Lisbon diet-drink, and continued it with regularity about a month, dressing the sores with laudanum, by which treatment the sores healed up; and in September she was delivered of another child, free from external marks of disease, but very sickly; and it died in the course of the month.

About a twelvemonth after the sore broke out again, and although mercurial dressings and internal medicines were given, remained for a twelvemonth, when they began again to heal up.

## DR. MAHON.

Can there be an example more strong and more affrighting than that of the unfortunate nurse, who, having been treated too late, and beyond a doubt badly treated, fell a victim to that disease?

We always see that the virus perseveres upon the constitutions of those who have been imperfectly treated. The curative means employed at that time appears to have fixed it upon the constitution, and to have only corrected its apparent virus; these means had been insufficient to regenerate the humours. This is, without doubt, the reason that the child was born with less disease than in the preceding case.

The disease of this case, as we have said before, had been already moderated by the use of mercury, but that the irritability of the patient would not allow of it's being continued sufficiently long. A great number of remedies are employed for the space of two years, in vain; the disease reappears repeatedly under different forms, and there is nothing at length, but the continuing the use of mercury, which completes the cure. This argument added to the number of proofs that we have found in the infection of the nurse, the symptoms of the



JOHN HUNTER.

Dr. MAHON.

child, and those of the mother, make it appear to us, that we have proved the following facts evidently.

1st, That the disease of the woman was venereal.

2ndly, That she received the infection by suckling a strange child.

3dly, That the local infection she at first received, became constitutional.

4thly, That the two children born during the time of the infection of the mother, were infected with the venereal disease.

5thly, That the first of these children had evidently communicated the disease to the nurse, who died in consequence.

Thus, this second observation of Mr. Hunter demonstrates two points which he disputes; that is, the infection of the children in the womb of their mother, and the communication of the venereal virus from children to their nurses.

## OBSERVATION III.\*

## CRITICAL REMARKS.

The parents of the child, who was the subject of the following history, were and are to all appearance healthy people. The child was weakly when born; and the mother having little or no milk, when it was three weeks old she gave it to a nurse whose milk was then seven months old, and was

\* Hunter on the Venereal Disease, page 387.



## JOHN HUNTER.

giving suck to her own child. The foster-mother allowed her own to suck the right breast while the other sucked the left.

The nurse observed that the skin of the foster-child began to peel off; but no rawness or soreness took place except about the anus, where it looked as if scalded. The same kind of peeling took place on the lips, but they did not appear to be sore, although the people in the country said it was the thrush. The inner surface of the mouth and tongue appeared sound. In a fortnight after her receiving the child it died, and then she allowed her own child to suck both breasts for three weeks; at the end of which she came to town to nurse a gentleman's child.

She gave suck to this second child; but after being in town about ten or eleven days, she did not feel herself perfectly well; which made them suppose that the new mode of life, confinement in town, and probably better living, might not agree with her, and she went into the country and took the gentleman's child with her. About three or four days after she went to the country, for instance, about a fortnight after she took this child, and five weeks after the death of the

## DR. MAHON.

We find on examination, that children born of infected mothers are very subject to having the epidermis macerated, we place the ulcerated excoriation about the anus, as one of the most frequent symptoms; but have looked upon it as equivocal when unattended with any other symptom, or when it exhibits itself upon weakly born children, or badly nursed in their early birth. The scabbing of the lips, joined with the two preceding symptoms, ought, nevertheless, to render the child's case very suspicious. But that which ought to decide the fact, is, what has happened to the nurse?

The habitual indisposition of the nurse, after the death of the first nursling, the anxiety and restlessness that she exhibited when in town, are they not like the symptoms that appear during the time of the eruption of the small pox? But that which is decided, is, that the symptoms lasted until the appearance of the ulcer on the breast.



## JOHN HUNTER.

first child, her left nipple, which the first nursed child had always sucked, began to be sore, so that she could not let the child suck it.

This ulcer on the nipple became extremely painful, and in a day or two, eruptions came out on her face, which were soon followed by the same over her whole body, but most on her legs and thighs; they continued coming out for about a fortnight, and had at first very much the appearance of the eruptions of the small pox, on the third day of their eruption attended with fever, universal uneasiness, and great pain. The salt of wormwood mixture, with the testaceous powders, was given every four hours, with some opening medicines, as the infusion of sena, soluble tartar, &c. every second or third day, but without effect, the complaints increasing.

## DR. MAHON.

Ragged wounds are not uncommon on the breasts of healthy nurses. They are caused by irritation occasioned by the pulling and biting of the child; but although these ulcers put on an appearance very different to those of a venereal ulcer, they have a character which they are always known by; when they are of a short duration, or when the cause which gave origin to them is taken away, they cure of themselves. This is not the case when ulcers are venereal; when their progress is not stopped by common remedies; nor when their progress is rapid; nor when the nursling has consecutive symptoms. After an eruption of pustules, fever is not very common. I have seen it, nevertheless, many times; among others, once in the autumn of 1790, on a woman upon whom the pustules and the chancres at the ulcerated part had disappeared.

That which proves that these eruptions had no similarity with the common humoral eruptions, is, that they persevered for a long time, and that evacuating and



JOHN HUNTER.

Two or three days after the eruption on the skin appeared, one of the glands of the arm pit began to swell, and formed matter, and was opened within a fortnight after its first appearance, and healed almost directly.

Some of the eruptions increased fast and became very broad sores, nearly of the size of a half-crown, especially on the legs and thighs, and were covered with a broad scab; many remained small and only appeared like pimples. About a fortnight after the first appearance of the eruption, some began to die away, becoming less sore; and about four weeks after this appearance a foul ulcer attacked the left tonsil.

The surgeon in the country, from all these circumstances, finding he could not get any ground by the before mentioned treatment, determined to give her the solution of the corrosive sublimate,\* of which he gave half a grain in solution night and morning; in about a week there seemed to be a stop put to the spreading of the ulcers, and the discharge to be lessened something,

\* This surgeon must have been one of John Hunter's pupils, or he would have known better than to depend upon sublimate. J. F.

DR. MAHON.

alterative remedies which are not specifics, were not of any service.

We have remarked in the history of all the nurses that were infected, that the glands of the arm pits were affected, and the same thing happened to the nurse in the preceding observation. All those that have seen and observed the progress of venereal diseases, when they are allowed to take their own course, will discover here, the most decided symptoms of the venereal disease, and will think, I believe, that it must be a prejudiced opinion, and not a spirit of system, not to see a truth so evident.

Every thing had been done that could be, in prescribing every other treatment, excepting antivenereals. Before that was began, an ulceration of the throat was the principal symptom, and the better appearance of that ulcer during the administration of mercury, was a new motive for the continuance of that remedy.



JOHN HUNTER.

the ulcer in the throat putting on a better appearance. It was at this period I first saw her, which was about six weeks after the first appearance of the eruption, and a fortnight after the appearance of the ulcer in the tonsil. The eruptions were then very much as before described; but the ulcer in the tonsil was clean and healing. From the history of the case I did conceive it not to be venereal; I therefore desired that all medicines might be left off, which medicines could only have been taken for a fortnight at most, because it was after the appearance of the ulcer on the tonsil the mercury was given, which was only of a fortnight's standing when I saw her. She soon after recovered.

DR. MAHON.

Mr. Hunter ought to have explained well to us, in this history, the symptoms and the proofs which so well explained to him that the disease was not venereal. If, during the administration of mercury for the space of fifteen days, the ulcer on the glands of the throat had altered so much for the better, for instead of being an obstinate ulcer, it began to improve, it is necessary, in order to reason justly, to conclude, that the mercury was the cause of the alteration, and on the contrary to decide on the continuation of the



## JOHN HUNTER.

After being well for some time, she again applied to the surgeon in the country, an abscess having formed where the complaint first began in the breast, attended with fresh eruptions on the face.

The abscess was opened, and it healed up in a few days, and upon taking some cooling physic the eruptions disappeared. She has continued very well ever since without any other bad effect than the total loss of her nipple. This case was certainly understood to be venereal.

About five days after the appearance of the eruption on the nurse, the gentleman's child was taken away and given to a healthy woman of a florid complexion, aged twenty-four years, and who had lain in with her

## DR. MAHON.

mercury, for fear that the alteration may be only palliative.

It is very probable that these new symptoms depended upon the venereal virus that yet remained in the habit; for as the fifteen grains of the sublimated mercury had corrected the general infection, it is not astonishing that the use of bitters and purgatives had caused the disappearance of the symptoms. In order to proceed with method, they ought to have continued the antivenereal medicines, to eradicate the disease which ought to be feared was only palliated, and that it would reappear under another form, at a greater or lesser period. But as it is to the doses of sublimate taken by this woman, and the other auxilliary remedies, that we ascribe the cessation of those symptoms, we think ourselves warranted in concluding, if this case was believed to be venereal, that it unhesitatingly deserved to be judged to have been so.

I am now going to confirm the infection of the nurse, by what happened to the second child which she suckled when the ulcer on the breast manifested itself.

The child which we now speak of, and which we will



## JOHN HUNTER.

first child eleven months when she became wet nurse to this child. After a few days she observed eruptions on the child's head, not unlike those already described on the first nurse which it had sucked. It's mouth soon after became excoriated, so that it sucked with difficulty. After a short time those eruptions on the head became dry and peeled off, others appeared on the face, knees and feet, but wholly unlike the former, as the first matured, while the latter appeared only cutaneous, peeling off and leaving a circumscribed spot of a light dun colour, which continued increasing for five weeks. These eruptions continued nearly three months from their commencement, at which period the child was extremely emaciated, but no particular treatment was indicated, so no medicine was exhibited, and in a few weeks after it came to London and got perfectly well.

## DR. MAHON.

distinguish by the letter B. to distinguish it from the first, was evidently born of healthy parents, and the symptoms that succeeded were from sucking the nurse which we shall see was infected by the first nursing, and which we will distinguish by the letter A.

These symptoms, such as apthæ, suppurating pustules, mucous discharge which scabbed, and obstinate ulcers, are evidently the same symptoms which we have noticed at the Hospital du Vaugirard.

Although the symptoms of this child disappeared at the end of three months, without the making use of any remedy, it must not be concluded that it was not venereal: 1st, That it may happen that a venereal infection may disappear during the first months of lactation, to reappear at a more advanced age, some time after the weaning of the child, as we have proved by many examples: 2ndly, It is not impossible that a venereal infection may disappear without the application of any venereal remedies, when there exists external suppurations and discharges; but that which places the fact beyond a doubt, is, that the disease was communicated to the second nurse, to whom the child was entrusted.



## JOHN HUNTER.

The second nurse, a few days after giving suck to the child, had blotches appear on her left breast, precisely the same with those on the first nurse; with this difference only, that they were fewer in number, and attended with a greater degree of phlegmonous inflammation. They continued, and increased in size for seven or eight days; then the nipple of the same breast became ulcerated; the ulceration spreading so much as to endanger the loss of it; her thighs now became diseased, and afterwards her legs.

She suckled this child about twelve weeks. The disease seemed no longer to increase, and in twelve or fourteen days after this entirely disappeared without her taking any medicine, except a few ounces of the decoction of the bark. The only application to the breast was unguentum simplex.

The milk at this time became so small in quantity, that they were under the necessity of providing a third wet nurse for the child, and the second returned to the country. Her own child being weaned she had no further occasion for the milk, and in a few days

## DR. MAHON.

Here is, evidently, the communication of the same contagious disease, which it had received from the third hand. From what we have said of the second nurse, there does not remain a doubt of the nature of that contagion,

It has frequently occurred to me, in treating infected women, who at the same time were generally unhealthy, that by giving them decoction of bark, for a considerable time, pustules in great numbers would disappear; but you must be very careful in believing this change a radical cure. It was not so effectually as Mr. Hunter has shewn in what he has said in the sequel.

Here is a fourth degree of its transmission, which is very important; the nurse without any apparent disease of the breast, nevertheless communicated a disease to her own child, and which had apthæ in the mouth. This confirms all the observations I have



## JOHN HUNTER.

it wholly disappeared; but by way of amusing the child when peevish, she allowed it to take the nipple, which had been diseased, in its mouth; the consequence was, that in a few days this child also became diseased in like manner with the former. She now applied to an eminent surgeon for assistance, who not being acquainted with the history, supposed it venereal, and ordered a colourless medicine, supposed from circumstances to be the solution of sublimate, sixteen grains to half a pint of water; the dose a table-spoonful. She took this medicine as directed, and also gave it to her husband and child; the child a tea-spoonful only at a time. While taking this medicine she got well.

The third wet nurse, like the former, was in a short time affected, but the blotches in this case were still fewer in number, the disease appearing to lose considerably in its power, as each fresh infection became less malignant than the former. She got well without taking any medicine.

## DR. MAHON.

made on the communication of the venereal disease, from diseased nurses to healthy children by their sucking.

This observation exhibits a series of communications of contagious virus, in which we find: 1st, That a diseased child which we shall call A. which died at the end of one month, after having infected its nurse, which infected immediately a second nursling, which we shall call B.: 2ndly, This nursling infected a second nurse, who again infected a third nursling, which we shall call C.: 3dly, The nursling B. communicated



## DR. MAHON.

the disease to a third nurse, which was its last. These observations offer examples of the reciprocal communication of the disease from children to their nurses, and from nurses to their children.

In fact, on the one hand the three nurses were infected by the children, in the first instance by the child A., and in the second and third by the child B.

On the other hand, the child B. was infected by the first nurse, and the child C. by the second.

Mr. Hunter conceives that there exists, in this history, a contagious virus, transmitted thus from the child to their nurses, and from the nurses to their children; but we are not aware why he should be thus more disposed to admit of a reciprocal transmission of an unknown virus than that of venereal virus. What are the arguments which he advances to provoke a doubt upon the nature of the disease in his observations? \* There cannot exist but two. The first, that the child B. who infected the three nurses, is cured without having submitted to the remedies that

\* This is the question which I put to the same conceit of Mr. Abernethy. J. F.



## DR. MAHON.

are antivenereal: 2ndly, That the third nurse was cured without venereal treatment. We repeat, again, that the cessation of the symptoms, convinces us, that neither the child B. nor the third nurse experienced a radical cure, whilst the venereal symptoms in the first nurse, which infected the child B. and those of the second nurse which had been infected by the same child, are demonstrative proofs of the nature of the disease.

But is there any thing more convincing than the examination of the symptoms of the disease in the first and second nurses. The symptoms in both nurses began by the disease in the breast, after having suckled diseased children: both at nearly the same period, had the least equivocal symptoms: and both, after having been infected by their diseased children, communicated disease, and the same disease, to healthy children. We see in these two women, the disease take different forms, and disappear to renovate soon; we see, in fact, that these two diseased persons, so perfectly analogous in the origin of infection, in its progress, in its effects, are not relieved nor cured, but by an antivenereal treatment.



## DR. MAHON.

I conclude, by saying, that no person has demonstrated more explicitly than Mr. Hunter, the double communication of the venereal virus from children to their nurses, and from nurses to their children.

Here end the Important Researches by the late Dr. Mahon.

His Editor Lamauve, Professor of Anatomy, has given a mode of treatment in the sequel, in which a variety of mercurial preparations are proposed; as none of them are new, and all of them have been noted in the course of the Researches, I have passed them by, and shall close the subject with the following



## OBSERVATIONS.

THE French medical and chirurgical authors, have taken the lead in all important researches relative to the venereal disease, from the beginning of its history. The English have ever thrown the disgrace of the propagation of the venereal disease in the teeth of the French; they call it the French disease; and the following distich has been said long ago to have been spoken by a Westminster scholar before a French ambassador, as playing upon the word *Gallus*.

Ex Gallo Capo fit : fuerint si quique Capones  
Galli, quám fuerit Gallica rara Lues !

The translation of Dr. Astruc on the Venereal Disease, by the facetious Dr. Barrowby, in the year 1737, was the first work that realised any thing like a true opinion of the nature and action of the venereal disease; and for fulness, precision, and truth, no description before nor since has ever surpassed it. If theorists, instead of wandering from the path marked out by him, had kept it in their view, we should not now have had the ungracious task of tracing back our steps, of recovering our lost ground, of recurring to the



knowledge of half a century ago, nor of restoring the truth of an obscured and perverted theory.

That a father or a mother, infected with the venereal disease, can beget an infected child, there cannot be the least shadow for doubting. Indeed, the general history of the disease, with barely the exception of John Hunter and one or two more, proves the fact; and John Hunter would have been glad to have admitted it, but that the fact made against his new opinions; therefore he was driven by way of an escape from his dilemma, to act like a Jesuit, (as well as an illiterate person can imitate a Jesuit,) to call that which was the real venereal disease, a disease resembling the venereal. For if he had once admitted that the disease was venereal, all his theory, in short, all his book on the venereal disease, would then have been, as it now really is, waste paper.

It is not to be expected now from me, that I go over again the ground which I did, in my "Observations upon his new opinions," twenty-two years ago. I stand now upon a better foundation than I did then. I have lived to see more authors condemn his book: if I were



the first, it was only because I was nearer to him than many others, and could consequently look him better in the face, could trace his designs, and remark upon his intrigue, could see more clearly that his object was to confound true theory, in order to take advantage of the different opinions it would excite, to foment disorder for the purpose of creating a revolution, and of being supposed the author of a new theory, no matter whether true or false.

Since the time I presumed to write my Observations, there is not a single college or university in Europe, which has not borne testimony to the errors of every part of his work on the venereal disease. But although John Hunter be no more, and his book waste paper, yet there are left pupils behind him, who are now practitioners. These must embrace his opinions or none; for if they do not follow his lectures, they are now too old to attend to other teachers, and consequently if they do not bring into their practice what they learnt in their youth, they have no other knowledge in their possession worth imparting. They cannot praise their master and condemn his theory. They cannot treat pregnant women, new-born infants,



and nurses, as infected with the venereal disease, when their master has taught them otherwise. These mistaken cases may be victims to their opinions and practice; and it is better, (say they,) that the cases be victims to our opinions, than that we pupils should be victims to the recantation of our opinions.

I am well aware that many of the pupils at this time, who have formerly exulted as having been taught by John Hunter, would rather have that piece of information now become a prey to forgetfulness. Silence is their best friend. They would now be content to be ranked in the class of dumb surgeons. But it is not the class of dumb surgeons I mean to notice; it is those who write without grace, who apply bandages to inflamed arms, after first quoting Mr. Pott's cases in order to condemn his treatment of them, where the emollient method cured all the cases he mentions, because Mr. John Hunter, forsooth, had recommended tight bandages; and it is those who deny, like him, the general power and extent of venereal action.

In particular Mr. Abernethy ought, for his reputation's sake, for the reputation of the great



hospital to which he has the good fortune to be one of the surgeons, and to which Mr. Pott was a surgeon, to give us some of those successful cases of curing arms inflamed from bleeding by tight bandages ; some cases also by him of jugular veins inflamed from bleeding, cured by tight bandages, would be curious, especially when we consider where the ligature must be placed ; and also all the cases resembling the venereal disease, cured by him without mercury ! Suppose he were to throw aside a little sheep-faced modesty, and give us, in imitation of Lucian, some dialogues by John Hunter in the shades, upon cases resembling the venereal disease, but not venereal, and upon the digestion of the stomach after death, another of his and John Hunter's favourite hypothesis ! No one can be better selected for the undertaking than himself ; no one studies so closely the state of the stomach ; no one treads so hardily upon the province of the physician ; he swallows a medical chimera every morning for his breakfast. But I beg pardon for this digression. The provocation to my feelings was irresistible. I can have no antipathy to Mr. Abernethy. What vexes me is, that when Mr. John Hunter died, all his absurdities did not die with him.



After what has been seen in the course of this pamphlet, perhaps any more instances in confirmation of the question of a father or mother, or both, infected with the venereal disease, begetting an infected child, might be deemed superfluous. But as the subject is of the utmost importance, both as to the lives and characters of those who are implicated, I shall make some applications upon it, from two cases which I select out of an abundance, purely to explain by them, what will be found to be yet absolutely necessary in order to make the question better understood, and to expose it more fully to the observation of those who concern themselves about it, who mingle in the affliction, or who sit in judgment upon it.

*Case of a Father infected with the Venereal Disease begetting an infected Infant, the Mother escaping the Infection.*

A young gentleman who had been supposed to be cured of a recent venereal disease, married a beautiful lady of the strictest virtue and soberest education. Within the first twelve-months they had a son, born healthy, and has continued so. During the first year, the gentleman became unhealthy, complained of the



head ache with symptomatic fever. An ulcer opened behind his ear, and he appeared pale and sickly. They left London and travelled to the west of England, during which the lady miscarried. On his return for a short visit to town, he had an ophthalmia, which was attributed to the easterly winds as he travelled. The application of the unguentum hydrargyri nitrati induced both these appearances to a healthy state. At the expiration of about three years, (she having had two more miscarriages,) the lady was delivered of a living female infant, with eruptions on her face, sore eyes, sores in the angles of her mouth, without cuticle in many parts, squalid and emaciated; she had all the appearance of a little old woman. In a month after her delivery, the gentleman called upon me, when I discovered an ouzing of matter from his palate, and his nostrils were reddened and thickened by an offensive discharge of bad conditioned mucus from the nose. Upon examining his head, there was found a large node on his forehead; his right elbow joint was also thickened and tender, and he had excessive nocturnal pains. It did not take much consideration to decide upon his complaint. In my attendance on him, I was asked to see the infant, who was attended then by others of the faculty, without their being conscious of



the nature of the complaint. The infant as well as the father were both committed to my care. The case being established to be venereal, by two more surgeons of the first eminence in this town, the cure of them by mercury was commenced without loss of time. In the course of three months, the father got well, with the loss of his palate, but with the preservation of his nose, and as the cure was obtained by the common means of mercurial frictions, I shall not go farther into particulars of the father, but attend to the infant. The infant could not suck, because she could not breathe through her nose. As soon as she began to suck, she would break off from the nipple in the greatest distress. Therefore recourse was had to spoon-meat. Having ever thought that food and physic should be kept distinct, I gave up all opinions upon impregnating milk of animals with mercurial preparations, and depended upon mercurial frictions only. Ten grains of unguentum hydrargyrum rubbed in every night were readily absorbed, and within two months effected the cure. The infant is now become a very fine girl.\*

\* Where one wishes to cure a patient of the venereal disease, without apprising him of the nature of the complaint, and where to avoid suspicion, you cannot use mercurial frictions, in that case, I prefer the pilula hydrargyri to any other preparation.



According to the theory of John Hunter and his pupils, this case of the infant could not be said to be venereal : the father could not impart it, if his case were venereal. According to their theory, the mother must be infected, not with constitutional symptoms, for they cannot infect, but with local, recent, and active venereal symptoms, confined to the vagina, and infecting the infant in its passage of nativity. Thus, according to their theory, the whole of the infant's constitution is to become changed by disease, instantly in its passage through the vagina, or otherwise the disease is not venereal, but resembling the venereal ; and as John Hunter has also said, but as it is cured by mercury, and mercury only, we know that mercury cures many other diseases besides the venereal ! Also, according to the theory of John Hunter and his pupils, the defamation of a virtuous woman, suffering under the calamity of a diseased husband and infant is not of the smallest importance. It must be she and she only who has given the infection to the infant in this case ! This case answers exactly to the observations made by Dr. Nisbet in page 44.



*Case of a Father infecting both Mother and  
Infant with the Venereal Disease.*

A young man applied to me, for a long continued pain in his head. He described it as having originated from a stroke with a stick, and for which he had been attended by a physician for nearly twelve months, without being conscious of the true nature of the complaint. After he had referred me to an examination of his forehead, he talked to me of his being incapable to sit, on account of piles. Upon examination I found on his forehead a large node, and on his buttock near the anus, a malignant large ulcer, surrounded with extensive redness, and discharging a very thin and fetid matter. I did not give him at the time my opinion of the nature of his case, but desired him to poultice the ulcer, and take the pills I gave him, (*pilulæ hydrargyri*,) and I would see him again at the end of a week. Even in that short space of time, there was a change for the better; and then, after assuring him of the nature of his case, I commenced the cure by mercurial frictions, which were persisted in for more than two months. He got well. His wife was then with child, and towards the



latter end of her pregnancy, she had eruptions of a venereal appearance upon her face and body. To her I also applied mercurial frictions, but before the cure was perfected, she was delivered of a living female infant, exactly in the same stage of disease as the infant I have described in the former case; and like that infant, she could not suck. I recurred to mercurial frictions a fortnight after the mother was delivered, and she got well. The infant was fed with spoon-meat, and the mercurial frictions were applied to her in the same proportion they were applied to the former infant, and for the same duration; and she also got well.

No one but he who is under the influence of the most perverse state of his understanding, can attribute the diseased appearances of the infants in these two cases, to the infection by the mothers in their passage of nativity. But whoever reads John Hunter's own statement, or attends to the labour he takes to apologise for his opinion, that the cases throughout his work which he brings forward, especially those remarked upon by Dr. Mahon are not venereal but resembling the venereal, must see and feel the dilemma into which he has brought himself, by denying that the



blood can be contaminated, and that the blood and secretions can contaminate. If the reader will be at the pains to turn to page 391, of his first edition on the Venereal disease, where he treats of diseases supposed to be venereal, produced by transplanted teeth, and also to page 174, in the third part of my Observations upon the new opinions of John Hunter, in his late Treatise on the Venereal disease, he will there see the explanation of that fatal case, which proves that the blood of a contaminated subject can and did convey the contamination to a sound subject. As the late Mr. Pott attended this case to the last, I was extremely anxious to give a faithful report of it: I therefore submitted the manuscript of it to his perusal. It was carried to him, by me, at the desire of the brother of the unfortunate lady, and it was not until it had been fully verified in all its stages, by him, that it appeared in the state as it is now to be seen.

Mr. John Hunter's self-created theory on the limited extent of the venereal disease, unexpectedly brought upon him a public accusation by Sir William Watson, and he was put upon his defence, and a miserable defence he made of it, for the lady lost her life through his practice upon his new theory; and had Mr.



Pott not resisted the inclination of the lady's brother, the case would have found its way into Westminster Hall: at my time of life, said Mr. Pott, I do not want to bring for the second time, a nest of hornets about my ears.

THE END.

subject can and did convey the contamination to a sound subject. As the late Mr. Pott attended this case to the last, I was extremely anxious to give a faithful report of it: I therefore submitted the manuscript of it to his perusal. It was carried to him, by me, at the desire of the brother of the unfortunate lady, and it was not until it had been fully verified in all its stages, by him, that it appeared in the state as it is now to be seen.

Mr. John Hunter's self-created theory on the limited extent of the venereal disease, unexpectedly brought upon him a public accusation by Dr. William Watson, and he was put upon his defence, and a number of letters he made of it for the lady lost her life through his practice upon the new theory: and I had Mr.



