On the anatomy of the breast - Of the fat of the breast

Sir Astley Paston Cooper, Bart.

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OF THE FAT OF THE BREAST.

Nature for several reasons has abundantly supplied this organ with adipose matter.

First, to preserve the contour of the organ, by filling up all the depressions between the glandules.

Secondly, to regulate the temperature of the gland under exposure, whether from the poverty which preludes the possession of proper covering, or the caprices of fashion, which forbid its being worn.

Thirdly, for the purpose of allowing the breast to float in an oily fluid, for the adeps is fluid in the heat of the living body; and the gland thus eludes the injuries to which it might otherwise be liable.

Fourthly, to defend it from, and to lessen the effects of violence upon the part, which heavy blows or falls might occasion.

In a large and fat person, the breast is far removed from the skin, and from the pectoralis major muscle, by the immense quantity of adipose matter placed before and behind the gland, and in the intervening structures.

On the anterior surface between the gland and the skin,
we find the fat deposited in very large lobes between the ligamenta suspensoria and anterior folds of the glandular substance on every part of the breast, and it also exists between the layers of fascia beyond it.

It is not a secretion of the fibrous tissue of the ligamenta suspensoria, but of a vascular membrane, which lines those ligaments, and which is of the cellular adipose kind.

If, then, the breast be minutely injected by the arteries, and then dried and put in turpentine, this membrane is directly demonstrable, loaded with fat in its interior.

But it is not a simple containing membrane, for it forms processes which cross the fat in various parts of the lobes, dividing, but supporting them.

Beside these dividing processes, numerous minute cells are formed in the vascular membrane, into which the fat is deposited as in other adipose structures of the body.

It is, then, a thick cushion of fat placed under the skin, which enables women of the lower class to bear the very severe blows which they often receive in their drunken pugilistic contests; for I have seldom known them to suffer immediately any serious consequences from such encounters.

Very thin women, whose breasts are unprotected by this mode of defence, sometimes show severe bruises; but these in a fortnight or three weeks disappear. Yet it is very certain
that at distant periods women apply with tumours in their breasts, which they frequently impute to blows.

The fat is also deposited behind the breast, in the posterior layer of fascia, and in the ligamentous or fascial loops which connect the breast to the aponeurosis of the pectoralis major muscle.

It is here formed in the same manner as on the anterior surface of the breast, that is, in a vascular, adipose, and secreting membrane, covering lobes of fat, which are situated in the fascial interstices, and which forms small divisions of the lobes, and little cellules, to secrete and contain the fat.

When the period of lactation is passed, and the breast begins to be absorbed, fat is abundantly deposited, to fill up the deficiency of glandular matter, and to preserve the natural form of the part. But in very old age, both the gland and the fat become absorbed, and the chest is then flattened like that of the male.