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On the anatomy of the breast, by Sir Astley  
Paston Cooper, 1840

Rare Medical Books

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1840

## On the anatomy of the breast - Of the changes from age

Sir Astley Paston Cooper , Bart.

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## OF THE CHANGES FROM AGE.

AFTER the cessation of menstruation from age, when pregnancy is no longer possible, the ducts of the breast still continue open, and loaded with mucus, which may be squeezed from the nipple.

When the ducts are cut open, the mucus, at an age of between fifty and sixty years, is in a fluid state, and the ducts are extremely distended by it.

I collected from the ducts of an old person a quantity of the inspissated mucus, and sent it to Dr. Prout, who found that it was united with oily matter, and with phosphate and carbonate of lime.

This state of the tubes arises from the mucous secretion still proceeding in the lining membrane of the ducts, and not being able to escape at their narrow orifices at the nipple, an absorption of the watery part ensues, and the more solid remains united with ossific matter.

Although the ducts in age are often very open when the woman has suckled several children, yet the milk cellules are generally incapable of receiving injection, and the ducts inject but imperfectly. The glandules are extremely diminished, and often become entirely absorbed, so that in old age only portions of the ducts remain.

The lactiferous tubes in old persons appear cellulous from their being increased where branches of ducts are entering the larger trunks.

But there is another and still more curious, but an almost invariable change in age, which is, that the arteries of the breast are ossified as they become useless; not only the larger branches of the mammary arteries, but their trunks also; so that they often become obliterated, and always very much diminished canals, and are with great difficulty injected; but it is not necessary to inject them to render them visible, as they are sufficiently apparent, from the load of earth which they contain, when they have been macerated and dried.

The veins of the breast are much diminished in age, but the nerves are more easily traced than when the gland is in its most developed state. The nipple becomes long, wrinkled, and relaxed, but in very old age it generally contracts, and resembles a warty excrescence.

It appears, then, that the effect of age is to absorb the glandular structure, to load the ducts with mucus, to obliterate the milk cells, to excessively ossify the arteries, and to thin and wrinkle the nipple, and at length in a great degree to absorb it.

But although the glandular structure, be thus absorbed adipose matter is deposited and occupies its place, and the general contour of the breast is in fat persons thus maintained.