

MANAGEMENT OF THE PLACENTAL STAGE

From the moment the head is born the hand of the obstetrician or the nurse should be held on the abdomen over the fundus of the uterus till the placenta is expelled and the retraction of the uterus is complete. There is usually an interval of from three to five minutes after the birth of the head before contractions are resumed. During this time the hand on the fundus may make gentle friction to promote the normal contractions *if there is any vaginal hemorrhage. If, however, there is none, the fundal hand should remain passive.*

The placenta is usually expelled spontaneously in the course of fifteen to twenty minutes. Should this not be the case at the end

of half an hour, no hemorrhage occurring in the interim, attempts at expression of the placenta after the *method of Credé* may be employed.

Credé's method is to reinforce the expulsive strength of the uterine contractions by grasping the fundus through the abdominal wall, with the thumb in front and the fingers behind, and, at the

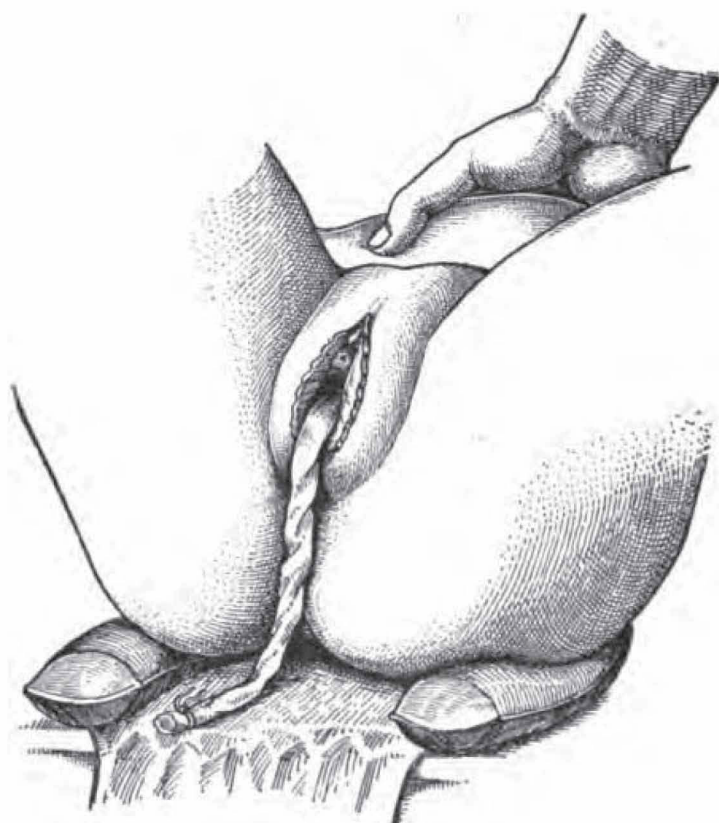


FIG. 61.—GRASPING THE FUNDUS ACCORDING TO CREDÉ.

acme of the pain, not sooner, compress the fundus firmly downward in the axis of the birth canal. The fundus should be carried well back during the manipulation to bring the uterine axis more into the line of the vaginal axis. This process may be repeated with each pain, at the acme of the contraction, until the placenta is delivered. Vaginal bleeding will appear in the interval between contractions when the placenta begins to separate. This bleeding is from the placental site, which cannot retract until the placenta is completely detached. No traction should be made on the cord to

assist the delivery of the placenta. Occasionally, when the placenta is in the vagina or in the grasp of the lower segment, funic traction is admissible. The separation and expulsion of the placenta from the upper, contracting segment of the uterus may be recognized by an upward movement of the fundus, as the placenta passes into the lower segment and vagina.

Expression by the Credé method may frequently be aided by the patient straining forcibly during the manipulation. Should

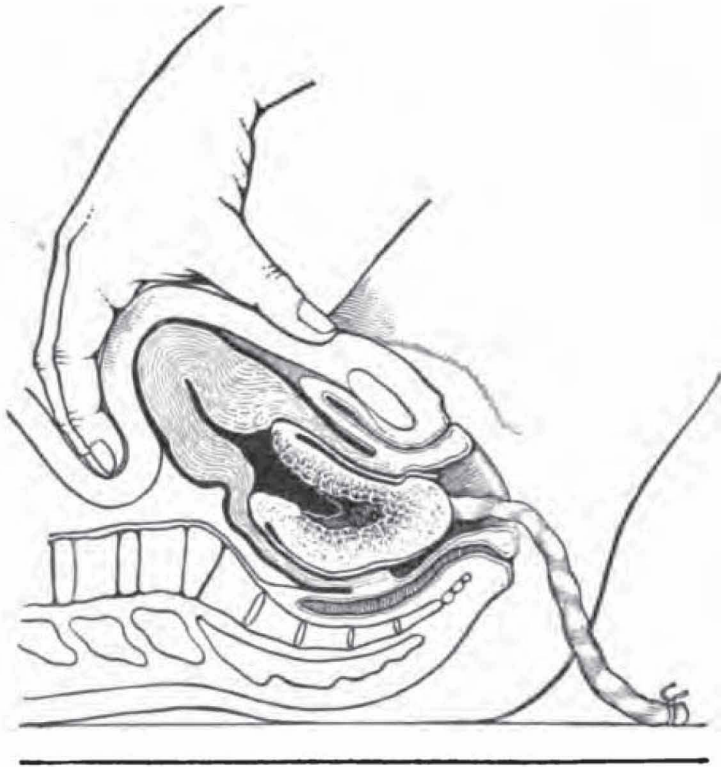


FIG. 62.—EFFECT OF CREDE'S METHOD ON THE UTERUS.

expression of the placenta fail, and there be no uterine bleeding, the placenta may be left in the uterus for several hours, without injury to the patient, at the end of which time spontaneous delivery may occur or a single expressive effort may cause its expulsion. These external methods failing, or in event of uterine hemorrhage, the placenta may be removed manually by seizing its lower edge with the gloved hand in the vagina and the fingers passed through the cervix. Great care must be exercised to see that no fragment is left behind. A digital exploration of the interior of the uterus

will determine if the afterbirth has come away complete. On expulsion of the afterbirth it should be turned into the membranes with its fetal surface out, that the membranes may be twisted into a rope and gently pulled away from the uterine attachment by slight traction in the axis of the uterus. This traction should *only be made when the uterus is in relaxation*, as during its contraction the membranes may be held in its grasp, torn off, and left behind.

Examination of the Placenta and Membranes.—The placenta and the membranes should be carefully inspected to learn whether fragments of either have been left behind in the passages.

The membranes are best examined by transmitted light, to see that both amnion and chorion are complete. When viewed in this manner, a single membrane is quite translucent; both together are somewhat opaque.

Fragments of membrane, wholly or partly in the vagina, *should be removed*. When wholly in the uterus they are better left to be expelled with the lochial discharge, the patient being placed in the Fowler position in order to secure postural drainage.

Manipulation within the passages, especially within the uterus, for pieces of retained placenta or membranes, at the close of labor is unnecessary and exposes the woman to infection.