

the excrement accumulated in the bowels of the fœtus, gives it great pain, and causes it to make such efforts, that the matrix is at length obliged to give way, and to open a passage for its escape. I acknowledge I am not better satisfied with this explanation than the rest ; because, why cannot the fœtus void its excrements in the amnios, if it was pressed so to do ? Now this never happens ; it appears, on the contrary, that this necessity of voiding the meconium is not felt till after the birth, when the motion of the diaphragm, occasioned by that of the lungs, compresses the intestines and causes this evacuation ; for the meconium has never been found in the amnios of a fœtus of ten months who had not respired, whereas a fœtus of six or seven months voids this meconium a short time after respiration.

Other anatomists, and among them Fabricius de Aquapendente, have supposed the fœtus quitted the matrix through the need of procuring refreshment by means of respiration. This cause appears to me still more remote than all the rest, because the fœtus can have no idea of respiration without having respired.

After having weighed all these explanations, I suppose the fœtus's quitting the matrix depends