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UTERINE HYDATIDS SIMULATING PREGNANCY.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—I have now been practising midwifery for nearly half a century, and never having met with a similar case to the one I now send you, perhaps you will deem it worthy a place in your Journal.

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS POPE, SURGEON.

Cleobury Mortimer, Salop,
May 7, 1842.

On Thursday evening, the 21st ult., Jane, the wife of William Perkins, stone-mason, of this town, aged about 35, and mother of six children now living, with difficulty came to my house for advice. On inquiry, I found that in December last she thought herself pregnant, as her usual time of menstruating had just passed by; on the 14th of January last, severe uterine hæmorrhage took place, which continued uninterruptedly, attended with uterine pain and gradual enlargement of the hypogastric region, up to the time she came to me. She was greatly emaciated; pulse quick and weak; with thirst and anorexia. I agreed with her as to the fact of pregnancy; told her that I thought the placenta was near the cervix uteri, and that she ought to have had assistance earlier, and that nothing but the removal of the contents of the uterus would give her the least chance of recovery; I also blamed her for not applying sooner. She said that her husband had been out of work during the greater part of the winter, and that she had not the means of properly supporting her family. I desired her to go home, to confine herself to bed; ordered her diet and medicine suitable for hæmorrhage, and promised to see her in the morning.

On Friday morning she thought herself better; however, I examined the state of the uterus, per vaginam, and found the os uteri only sufficiently dilated to admit a finger, but with some force, I introduced the middle finger also, and dilated them as much as I could for two or three minutes. I saw her three or four times during the day; she had little loss of blood, and something like labour pains at night, when I examined again, and found things in the same state. I ordered her husband to call me if she got worse during the night.

On Saturday morning I found she had passed a restless night, with considerable labour pains, and was much reduced in strength, with a scarcely perceptible pulse, though no hæmorrhage had ensued. On examination, there was no trace of os or cervix uteri, but the whole uterus seemed quite patulous with something of a peculiar and soft feel; no fœtus or placenta could be discovered; I grasped a handful of something, and brought away what proved to be hydatids, varying in size from a pin's head to that of a hen's egg, and of an amber colour; I emptied the uterus of at least five or six quarts of these hydatids, which adhered to every part of the uterus, and also to each other. At their point of union with the uterus there appeared to be a net-work with a thin and soft substance, similar to linen, forming the threads of the net. The uterus appeared to be very thin, and was very sensitive. After the lapse of thirty or forty minutes, I examined and found the uterus much contracted, the cervix formed, and the os tincæ collapsed. I gave the patient an opiate, which procured sleep, but she gradually sank, and died early on Monday morning. I did all I could to obtain an examination of the body, but in vain. Much may be said on this interesting subject. Had the scanty and impoverished diet of the patient anything to do with the production of the hydatids? From her sallow and jaundiced appearance, with the clay, black, and green-coloured stools, and constantly bitter taste in the mouth for some months, is it not probable that they also existed in the liver?