

History of a case, terminating successfully, in which an inverted uterus was extirpated / by Alexander Hunter.

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Publication/Creation

[Edinburgh] : [publisher not identified], 1799.

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VII.

History of a Case, terminating successfully, in which an Inverted Uterus, was extirpated.
By Mr Alexander Hunter, Surgeon, Dum-barton.

A YOUNG woman, about five years after her marriage, became pregnant for the first time. During gestation, she had no uncommon symptoms, except a great tendency to sleep; which was often so excessive, that, notwithstanding all her exertions, she could not keep herself awake.

On the 27th of January 1795, she was taken in labour; and, after a few hours, delivered of a stout boy. The placenta was soon after delivered.

A very considerable flooding directly took place, and continued till she fainted. It then abated.

She took a draught, composed of elix. vitriol, and tinct. theb.; was ordered to be kept

kept cool; and to take, now and then, a little port-wine and water.

Next day, she was tolerably easy, but had got no water made. Complained of faintishness, and continued in this situation till about six the following morning; when she became very uneasy, from the distension of the bladder.

The urine was drawn off with a catheter; and, as she complained of some pressure on the neck of the bladder, I introduced my finger into the vagina, and felt a tumor, of the size, and nearly the shape, of a large pear, adhering to the uterus with great firmness. The apex had projected beyond the os uteri, which was soft, and easily dilated. The hand was introduced into the uterus, and an endeavour made to separate the excrescence, by pushing the finger between it and the womb, but without effect; and the woman turning faint, obliged me to desist.

On the following day, the tumor had descended considerably. Again, an attempt was made to separate it, by insinuating the fingers between it and the uterus; but it still failed. All this time, the woman was easy,

*By this attempt it seems probable that
disposition was given to the uterus to become
verted: the fundus being depressed by the
re-ward to separate the Polypus.*

except when her water troubled her. Slept well, and had a tolerable appetite.

As it was not probable, that the water could come away without assistance, in the present situation of the tumor, and as the patient was at a considerable distance from me, I instructed a neighbour of her's how to use the catheter; and determined to wait the further progress of the disease.

On the eighth day after delivery, her husband came to me in a great hurry; and told me, that the lump was come down, but that the end of it was still fast.

I went to her, and found the tumor protruded; and, together with it, the whole body of the uterus completely inverted. Pains, similar, and nearly of equal strength, with those in labour, had come on, about half an hour before the protrusion.

As I had never seen any case of inversion, it gave me much alarm. With some difficulty, the lump was separated from the fundus uteri, to which it strongly adhered. I endeavoured then to reduce the inversion. But, after using every mean that I could think of, and sometimes considerable force, for about

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two hours, without the smallest alteration, it was thought best to leave off. During the whole trial, the patient felt no pain; and although the womb was several times squeezed with considerable force, it appeared insensible.

The leaving the uterus in that situation, gave me a great deal of uneasiness. And, being afraid that exposure to cold would produce fatal symptoms, after considerable trouble, it was forced back into the vagina, in its inverted state.

Next day strong pains came on; and it was again protruded.

The womb was a second time returned into the vagina; and continued in that situation for eight days. During all that time, no pain was experienced, except the slight inconvenience of drawing off the water twice a-day.

On the morning of the ninth day, the prolapsus again took place, attended with pains as formerly. It was now wished, that it might be allowed to remain in that state, as the water would be thus discharged. And the supporting it with a bandage might be better than using force to place it in an unnatural

situation within the vagina. Excepting a slight shooting of pain through the tumor, no other uneasiness was yet felt.

When the womb first came down, it was nearly of the size of a small pine-apple, and felt hard. The second time it was smaller, but still harder. Before returning it into the vagina, a trial was always made to reduce it; but after the first time, the fundus was only dented by any force that could be used.

The prospect before the patient was now deplorable. The restoring the uterus was absolutely impracticable; and, if allowed to remain in its present situation, it must be very distressing.

About a fortnight elapsed in this way, when a new set of symptoms took place. A discharge of a thin watery nature began to flow from the whole surface of the womb, which gradually increased in quantity, and became so extremely foetid, that it was very disagreeable to enter the room. And, though great attention was bestowed, the bed was always wet. Her strength was soon much reduced. And, notwithstanding a liberal use of

of bark, elix. vitriol. and port-wine, severe hectic attacks came on.

In this state of the business, no plan could be figured for saving the patient, without amputating the uterus. Every endeavour I had used, for procuring information, either from medical men or books, left me still in the dark; as in every case of inversion mentioned, not one was to be found, where the patient had survived for any time, unless the womb was directly returned. But, after considering that the organ was not immediately necessary to life; that very extensive wounds, even in its distended state, has been made, without any ill symptoms; and that, in its present situation, the functions were for ever destroyed; indeed, that it was now only a burdensome mass; and the woman herself wishing eagerly to be relieved from the miserable way she was then in; it was determined to extirpate it.

I began the operation, by fixing a strong ligature on the neck of the tumor, close to the os externum. But being fearful of spasmodic affections from this compression, I waited six hours without proceeding farther.

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During all that time, however, no complaint was made, no pain was felt.

With a scalpel the whole uterus was then cut off, close to the ligature. Still neither symptoms of pain, nor even uneasiness, were perceived. And, I believe, the operation was over before the patient knew it had been begun. She was then laid to rest, and an opiate administered.

During the night, she slept well; and, next morning, was very much refreshed. The hectic symptoms went off; her appetite returned; and, in fourteen days, she was able to get out of bed. At the end of a month, she was perfectly recovered.

Since that time, she has enjoyed a very good state of health; except now and then, some touches of hysteric headach, and sometimes fitches and plethoric symptoms in the spring and summer months. She does not menstruate, although still a young woman. She has a tendency to obesity, and even all her precautions cannot counteract it.

From what happened in the preceding case, it will probably be allowed, that the womb, when not in an inflamed state, may

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be handled, or even wounded, without pain ; that the whole of it may be cut off, without injury ; and that, in case of inversion, attended with severe flooding, if the womb cannot be returned, the hæmorrhage may be prevented, by tying a ligature round the neck of the uterus.

Some months after this case happened, I gave the uterus to Dr Jeffray, of Glasgow, who, I believe, still has it.

VIII.

A singular variety of Chorea Sanct. Vit. considerably relieved by the use of the Argentum Nitratum. By Dr Thomas Hall, Physician, East Retford, Nottinghamshire.

THE following Case was not drawn up with a view to exalt above the rest of its kind, any one particular article in the Materia Medica, (though, in the sequel, I think, it will be found, that the most considerable advantages have been gained by the use of one medicine in particular), but more on account of the attendant singularities, in its mode of attack principally, in its progress, and in the various phenomena exhibited during the whole course of the disease.

By adding my mite to the general stock of medical information, I hope I am going no farther than doing a duty; which, at the same time, while instructive to myself, I trust, will be no less useful to the generality of medical readers.

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