In the mucous cellular and cutaneous tissues this remark especially holds good; and even in the case of the pulmonary organs, which of all others might be supposed to be the least susceptible of such actions, it has been surmised, upon very strong grounds, that not only is vascular disease thus removable, but that even extensive solutions of continuity and cavities have been healed by the efforts of the constitution, when these have been properly supported. Why then should it be assumed that the uterine organs are incapable of the same reparative actions? I do not, as I have observed, wish to disparage the utility of topical treatment *within certain limits*; but I affirm, that it is an error to suppose that uterine derangement, which has sprung, as it were, out of a disordered state of the general health, or which is perpetuated by it, can be successfully treated by local measures, whilst its constitutional origin or cause is overlooked. Some, indeed, of the cases which I have reported prove the truth of this remark; for in several, local cauterisation, etc., had been assiduously employed for a lengthened period, by very competent practitioners,—and yet with but little success. Of this, at least, I am assured, that in proportion as the correct pathology of uterine disease is better understood,—in proportion as its relations to constitutional causes are more fully appreciated, and the earlier indications of uterine disorder more carefully investigated, will our treatment of them be more successful; and thus also will the necessity for those specific measures be done away with, which it must be equally painful for the practitioner to employ, as for the patient to submit to.

Chester Place, Hyde Park Gardens, January 1852.

(*To be continued.*)

CASE OF SWALLOWING OF ARTIFICIAL TEETH AND METALLIC PLATE, TERMINATING FAVOURABLY;

WITH OBSERVATIONS ON SIMILAR ACCIDENTS.

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EXTRAORDINARY or rare cases are always interesting, and have ever been deemed worthy of record. They are often, however, more curious than useful. But the case which I propose now to relate, is not only remarkable, but is capable of being made the subject of useful practical considerations. It affords striking evidence of the tolerance of hard and heavy and sharp bodies in the alimentary canal, and of the powers which that tube, delicately organised though it be, possesses to free itself from such dangerous contents.

CASE. On the 12th of March 1850, Mrs. B., of Hampstead, called upon me, to take my advice respecting an accident which had occurred to her. She was tall, and, though thin, of large make, forty years of age, and of good general health. She informed me that she had been

in the habit of wearing a plate of gold fitted to the upper jaw, made to hold several teeth, but at the time of the accident containing only three. She states that one night, in the first week of January preceding, she had, during sleep, swallowed the gold plate, together with the affixed teeth. She immediately consulted a gentleman in the neighbourhood; but from that time she had seen nothing of them. The day after this accident, the food which she swallowed caused a sensation as if it was arrested low down in the gullet. In a few days, she experienced a sense of uneasiness in the epigastric region, towards its right and lower boundary, over the pylorus and the duodenum. This had continued now a period of about two months. She did not complain of any acute pain, and no aggravation of her uneasiness was produced after eating. There were no symptoms of any general disturbance. The patient was told to keep her mind easy, and to take plain, soft, and liquid food. Oatmeal porridge or stirabout was recommended. Irritating and indigestible food was interdicted. In the way of medicine, castor-oil was ordered; and, with a view to the lubrication of the stomach and bowels, Castile soap was exhibited in the form of pill, combined with extract of hyoscyamus, which, unlike opium, besides relaxing the parts and allaying uneasiness, I have found to promote, rather than reduce, the amount of secretions from the alimentary canal.

I saw nothing more of the patient till April the 2nd. She no longer complained of uneasiness in the region of the pylorus. After taking the pills of soap and hyoscyamus, she was soon relieved; and she now experienced no pain whatever. The pills were again ordered, and the same diet recommended; and gum arabic was prescribed to be taken in her tea.

On the 21st of June, the patient again called, and reported to me that she had attended to all my directions, and had experienced no inconvenience from the presence of the teeth and plate in her bowels, until the 10th of May, when she felt some uneasiness at the anus, as if she "required physic", and that when at stool there was found a difficulty, as if she was constipated; and at length the foreign body, of which she was not thinking, came away without further trouble. Since that day, no pain or uneasiness had been felt, and she was in as good health as if the plate and teeth had never left the mouth. The patient brought the plate and teeth with her. It consisted of a metallic plate resembling gold, and three artificial teeth. The whole body was of semicircular form, particularly uneven, sharp, and rugged at its edges, exceedingly calculated to lacerate tender structures; those portions of the plate from which the absent teeth had dropped, were particularly sharp and rugged: at one extremity of the plate there projected a hook-like process, which had served to attach the plate to a tooth in the jaw. The teeth were incisors, enamel, and sharp at their edges. The length of the plate was one inch and six-eighths, independently of the hook-like process, which extended about a quarter of an inch more. The breadth of the plate was fully half an inch. But as the teeth projected forward, they added materially to that breadth, and caused this, the shortest axis, to be six-eighths of an inch. Thus we have passing down the *œsophagus* without material difficulty, remaining some time in the stomach, moving

along the entire course of the intestines, and finally evacuated *per anum*, with scarcely any unpleasantness, a semicircular body, which in its longest axis measured two inches, in its shortest, six-eighths of an inch, with sharp and rugged edges, and with a process singularly calculated to attach itself to the soft parts.

REMARKS. The fact is sufficiently remarkable to be worthy of record, that such a body should so have passed through the alimentary canal. It may be allowed to take its place amongst statements of a similar nature, recorded by different writers, entitled to more or less credit.

The time occupied by this body in its transit from the mouth to the other extremity of the alimentary canal, was more than four months; a fact which indicates the tolerant power of this canal, and suggests confidence for a happy issue, long after the descent of such bodies into the stomach.

The absence of symptoms of inflammation or material disturbance of the stomach, after the descent of the body into its cavity, attests in a striking manner the reluctance of that part to take on idiopathic diseased action from the presence of what, in most other parts, would almost certainly prove most injurious, and indicates in obvious characters the wise adaptation of that viscus to its important functions, almost implying, as they do, accidents of such a nature.

It is reasonable to conclude, from the uneasiness which was experienced during the two first months, in the region of the pylorus, that at that strait the body had been detained some considerable time, and was long in getting into that position most favourable for its transmission. It is obvious that the pylorus could not have permitted the body to pass with its longest axis presenting; and that, in order to accomplish its transmission, the stomach must, by an action similar to that performed by the uterus in labour acting on the foetal head, have so adjusted it as to cause the shortest axis to present, and thus convert an impracticable presentation, so to speak, into one of the greatest facility. No doubt the analogy may, with justice, be further extended; for it is not at all unlikely that, had the stomach, either spontaneously or by injudicious treatment, been urged to precipitate and violent exertions, the body might have become so impacted, as to produce most serious consequences.

After passing through the small intestines, the body (judging from the absence of pain, etc.) does not appear to have been detained in the caput cæcum coli, that portion of the canal in which, after death, such substances, as well as calculi, have most frequently been discovered.

The same adjustment which must have been affected at the pylorus, was beautifully executed likewise at the anus. The passage of this large, sharp, and rugged body, was effected with so much ease, that though the patient was daily suffering anxieties from its presence in the bowels, she did not, at the moment of its being discharged, suspect what was taking place. It came away with its short axis presenting, and thus obviated all the inconvenience and danger which must otherwise have been incurred. The most skilful surgeon, with the best adapted instruments, could not have done so much.

Whatever injury the mucous membrane may have sustained, no doubt was rapidly repaired.

It does not appear that any poisonous effects were induced by chemical alteration of the plate. This fact is of some interest in connexion with the recently mooted subject of poisoning by copper employed in the gold fittings of artificial teeth, particularly as the patient was not in circumstances to justify the belief that she could give a very high price for the article with which she was supplied. The plate looked like gold, and was not corroded or discoloured blue or green when I saw it; and I am inclined, so far as this fact goes, to believe that respectable dentists do not make use of plates, even for humbler patients, of a poisonous quality. No testing of the plate could be effected, as the patient was desirous of taking it with her.

With respect to the treatment, there will be found little or no novelty. It is in substance that recommended by Mr. Samuel Cooper for such accidents, in his universally-known "Surgical Dictionary", which cannot be materially improved upon. The soap and hyosciamus pill answered well, and would appear to be well adapted to such cases.

It does not appear necessary for patients similarly situated to remain quite at rest; on the other hand, the moderate exercise which was permitted to my patient, seems favourable to the progress of the dangerous body through the intestines. But in the event of pain being fixed in any part of the abdomen, and attended with vomiting or looseness, with furred or red tongue, dry skin, or heat of surface, total rest will be necessary; and should circumstances not forbid, leeches and fomentations will be useful.

Cold should be avoided, and a genial warmth of surface secured, as being favourable both to secretion and to muscular relaxation.

Stimulants, of course, except where extraordinary circumstances demand their employment, should be avoided. This, and attention to diet, will be particularly necessary during the autumn, when the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal is so prone to become disordered. Acids, and other astringents, are to be avoided in all such accidents, but particularly when the body swallowed is composed of, or contains, metals liable to form poisonous salts.

I may add, in addition to the above case, that I have, during a practice of some twenty years, met with not a few patients who have swallowed hard substances, such as buttons, single teeth, small coins, and beads, and that the results have uniformly been favourable under much the same treatment as has been indicated above.

It is a further reassuring fact when treating such cases, that we not unfrequently hear of prisoners when seized swallowing large coins in order to secrete them, without it coming to our knowledge that they suffer in consequence.

There remains only one further use to make of the case related above, and that is to warn those who wear false teeth to rid themselves of their adornment when they retire to sleep.

80, Park Street, Grosvenor Square, Jan. 1852.