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A CASE OF MONSTROSITY.

Read before the Union Medical Association, By JOHN GEO. METCALF,
M.D., of Mendon. [With a Drawing.]*

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

THE author of the following communication has been induced to furnish a copy of it for publication, not that he expects thereby to extend, in any great degree, the bounds of medical knowledge, or add new store to the list of remedial agents; but, simply, that an account of a case, sufficiently designated by the caption to the present article, may be preserved for future use. But what use? To assist in the discovery of the *laws* which regulate and govern such, at present considered, *abnormal* productions; to lay by, an isolated case to be sure, for future occasion, but which may serve to aid in bringing to light the philosophy of these "freaks of nature," as they have, irreverently, been called.

With regard to this matter of deformity in children, we now "see through a glass darkly." So they once did with regard to the circulation of the blood, until Harvey cleared up all doubts on that score; and who shall deny that some future physiologist may not be able to clear up the doubts which envelope the present subject, and that the laws which govern in the development of these untoward specimens of humanity may not come to be as well understood as any other physiological rule already established.

But if the publication of the present article shall subserve no valuable professional purpose, it may, at least, aid some future D'Israeli in the collection of a volume of *medical "Curiosities,"* and be found, no doubt, in the chapter appropriated to the relation of things wonderful and unaccountable. But to the case.

Mrs. —, after a day or two of more than usual hard labor, was attacked with severe abdominal pains, soon followed by a slight uterine hæmorrhage. These symptoms continued through the succeeding night without any abatement, the pains being so constant as to allow her but little, if any, sleep. At half past 9 o'clock, A. M., on the following

* This Association is, at present, composed of Drs. Allen and Ballou, of Woonsocket, R. I.; Dr. Marsh, of Slaterville, R. I.; Dr. Robbins, of Uxbridge; Dr. Flek, of Milford; and Drs. Wilder, Southwick and Metcalf, of Mendon. It was organized May 12, 1834, and, with one intermission, has continued its regular monthly sessions since. At each meeting some one reads a dissertation, and the other members contribute accounts of cases and papers upon medical subjects; after which the remaining time is taken up with unrestricted but friendly criticism. Its meetings are held on the Monday preceding the full of the moon, at the office of Dr. Abel Wilder, in Blackstone village, in this town.

day, I was called to visit her. On my arrival I found her walking about her chamber, and, apparently, in strong labor pains. She supposed herself between six and seven months advanced in pregnancy. She has never suffered abortion; usually enjoys good health, and is the mother of two fine children. I advised her to go immediately to bed, hoping, peradventure, the premature delivery might be avoided. Complying with my advice, examination was then made, and the vertex of the fœtus was found resting upon the external organs. The hæmorrhage was slight, and the membranes were not ruptured. All hope of restraining the threatened abortion was now abandoned, and the customary preparations were directed to be made for the approaching delivery. The pains continued to grow stronger and more frequently occurrent until 10 o'clock, A. M., when the membranes were ruptured and an *extraordinary* flow of water followed. A few more contractions accomplished the delivery.

The child was stillborn, exhibiting no signs of life except a few feeble, convulsive motions of the extremities, which soon ceased. On examination the child was found to be deformed, as follows. The hand, if such it could be called, consisted only of the thumb and fore-finger; the other fingers, with their corresponding metacarpal and carpal bones, being absent. The thumb and finger were well formed, and the nails perfectly developed. On examination of the fore-arm, the ulna was also found to be wanting, so that the fore-arm and hand, in their osseous organization, consisted only of the radius, the ossa scaphoides, trapezium and trapezoides, the metacarpal bones of the thumb and index, together with their respective phalanges. The fore-arm was bent up towards the humerus, and could not be straightened, being apparently held in that position by a rigid contraction of the skin and muscles at the flexure of the elbow-joint.

The organs of generation presented the following malformation. A little fullness of the skin upon and below the pubis constituted what may be termed the rudiment of a scrotum. The usual site of the penis was occupied by a membranous tubercle about the size

and shape of a large pea, attached by a base of about two thirds its own diameter. At first no orifice was discovered in this tubercle, but on turning it up, upon its inferior portion and partly in its base a small orifice was found, which proved to be the opening of the urethra, as a probe, properly bent, passed through it readily into the bladder.

Referring the reader to an inspection of the accompanying engraving, further description is presumed not to be necessary to a distinct apprehension of the ideas intended to be conveyed. Could permission for dissection have been obtained, some further account of this case might have been herewith communicated.

The mother, on being informed that the child was deformed, immediately answered, "I expected it would be; it has a hare-lip, I suppose." On being asked why she supposed this would be the case, she said an acquaintance, who was thus deformed, had been at her house two or three times during her pregnancy, and that she invariably felt *very disagreeable* while he was present. Mothers frequently trouble themselves about the anticipated deformity of their children, but I never knew their predictions verified except in a single instance.

Mendon, June 10, 1839.

THE TOBACCO QUESTION.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—Our patients often say, "we regret to trouble you to call so frequently," not reflecting that it is through such calls that we live. I may, with equal propriety, say to you that I am sorry to trouble you with another communication, but as it insures another grist to your mill (though it may be short measure), I trust that it will be taken in, the mill repicked, and receive "its turn."

The tobacco question has really created quite a breeze in your vicinity, if we may judge from the gentle fummy zephyrs that so frequently salute the senses, *jusqu'ici*. I have read the *pros* and *cons* on the subject, as they have been presented to the public through your prolific Journal, from all quarters, and reluctantly, though with truth, can subscribe to the verity of the old adage, "how wonderfully doctors disagree," even upon every-day questions.

In the various answers called forth, much discrepancy of opinion exists. One rails at all theory whatever, and after attempting to dislodge those which have been presented under circumstances almost irrefutable, again sets up another (for which he claims the exclusive patent), although unsupported by scarcely a tittle of evidence. For example, "The throat affection is the result of cold water taken during speaking." How this may be with the clergy in Gray, Me., I am unable to say; but really, so far as my observations extend, I doubt exceedingly whether one clergyman in one hundred, I had almost said five hundred, habitually practises water-sipping while in the desk, unless he be *ex-officio* 4th of July orator, on which occasions it is accredited as a part of the ceremony. Again, did the practice generally obtain, we have the