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CASE OF LIGATURE OF COMMON CAROTID.

Ligature of Common Carotid, for attempted Suicide. By W. E. HORNER, M.D., Prof. of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania.

ON Monday, June 18th, 1832, a criminal, named Washington Taylor, æt. 34, was brought up before Judge King, to receive a sentence of six years confinement in the State penitentiary, for counterfeiting. Upon the sentence being passed, he immediately drew a knife and plunged it into his throat, a little below the angle of the lower jaw, on the right side ; he then withdrew the knife, and not satisfied with the effects of it, he plunged it again into the same region of his throat, half an inch from the other wound. I was passing the court-house at the moment of this proceeding, and from that circumstance was accidentally called in by one of the persons in pursuit of medical aid.

I found the criminal in the court-room, sitting upright ; a handkerchief soaked with blood was held by the persons present, over the wounds ; it restrained somewhat the bleeding, but very imperfectly. On its removal the blood gushed out in a large stream, the size of a little finger, (but not per saltum,) from the wounds, and of an arterial color. Having got this glimpse of the parts, I directed an assistant to apply the end of his thumb to them, and to press firmly against the front of the cervical vertebræ, while I went home, a distance of two and a half squares, for my instruments. On my way I met accidentally Dr. Emerson, and engaged his assistance.

On my return, I saw that the pressure applied had been systematic enough to restrain almost wholly the hæmorrhage. I then had the patient inclined half-recumbently on a settee, and changed the pressure to the trunk of the carotid at the lower part of the neck, which arrested the hæmorrhage very insufficiently ; I then dilated the wounds by converting the two into one. I spent some minutes in attempting to take up the divided vessels ; but the incessant column of blood pouring from them, concealed them so completely, that I found it impracticable to succeed. By running my finger into the wound, I felt that the knife had passed in the direction of the carotid arteries and internal jugular vein, between the vertebræ and pharynx ; and it was evident, from the copiousness of the hæmorrhage and the redness of the blood, that a large artery was wounded, either one of the carotids or one or more of their large

primary branches. The extreme danger of the individual left no further time for attempts in this region ; I therefore determined to take up the primitive carotid, which I did by extending the wound downwards for two inches, and passing a ligature around the vessel on a level with the thyroid cartilage. The operation was very much embarrassed by the parts being continually overflowed with blood, so that I could scarcely get a glimpse of them for a moment at a time.

The patient resisted with all his might these proceedings, and protested with a loud voice against them, declaring incessantly his desire for the wound he had inflicted to take effect. Immediately on the ligature being drawn around the artery, the bleeding stopped completely, he became relaxed, and seemingly fainty ; and his voice, which had been previously coarse, fell to a whisper, and could not be raised above it. The respiration, however, was not disturbed. I apprehended that the par vagum had been enclosed in the ligature, and felt half disposed to put on another a little below, and remove the first. The danger from the hæmorrhage was so pressing, that not having an aneurismal needle at hand, I had used a common one with the point foremost and passed from within outwardly. The hurry of this operation, and the obscurity of the parts from blood, made it impossible, therefore, to use the caution requisite to avoid the par vagum ; and the sudden failure of voice led me to suspect this accident : but after watching the respiration for some time, it appeared to proceed so tranquilly, that I determined to let the ligature remain, and especially as it answered so completely the purpose of arresting the bleeding. The operation being finished, and the parts bound up, the patient was sent immediately to the penitentiary in a carriage, and put under the professional charge of Dr. Bache.

July 12th.—The patient is nearly well, his respiration is good, the voice is still in a whisper, though improving, and regaining its former tones ; I think, therefore, that the cause of the feebleness of the latter must have arisen from turning off the supply of blood to the larynx through the upper thyroid artery. The ligature has come away.

In our common dissections of the carotid, we find it in front of and against the muscles of the transverse processes. In this case I was surprised to find it much in advance of those parts. Is this common, and is it produced by the muscles of the throat drawing it off ?—*American Journal of Medical Sciences.*

RETAINED PLACENTA.

Case of Retained Placenta. By F. Y. PORCHER, M.D., of Charleston, South Carolina.

Mrs. —, the subject of the following communication, was about thirty-three years of age, tall, and of spare habit of body, had always enjoyed good health—been married about two years—been twice pregnant, and had an abortion each time in the third month : in the third pregnancy I was consulted occasionally for slight indispositions, and requested to attend on her in her approaching confinement. In the morn-