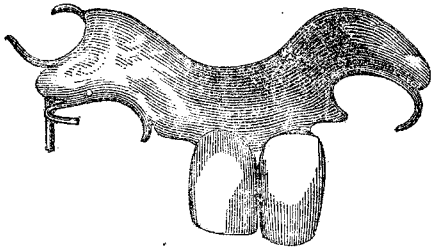


## A CASE WHERE AN ARTIFICIAL PLATE WITH FALSE TEETH WAS ACCIDENTALLY SWALLOWED, DISLODGED, AND ULTIMATELY PASSED BY THE PATIENT.

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THE interesting cases of lodgment of artificial teeth by Mr. George Pollock, and the extraordinary instance of the passage of a gold pencil-case through the intestinal canal reported by Sir William Fergusson in the pages of THE LANCET, must be familiar to the profession. To these I have now to add a case of much interest, where a very ugly foreign body, as will be at once seen by reference to the annexed plate, was got rid of safely, partly by the efforts of surgery and partly by those of nature.

On the night of November 30th, 1870, I was summoned to Mitcham by Dr. Hamilton, who had the wisdom to telegraph the nature of the accident; and I thus went down with suitable instruments. I found a corpulent butcher in great distress, he having six hours previously, by some means or other, allowed his false teeth, with their plate, armed, as is seen, with most formidable hooks on either



side, to slip down his throat. He at once sent for Dr. Hamilton, who, on passing his finger down into the pharynx, could distinctly feel the foreign body on the right side; but, unfortunately, he had not the requisite instruments, and in his endeavours to dislodge it, the body got out of his reach.

On my arrival, the patient pointed to just above the clavicle on the right side as the spot where the intruder lay. I at once passed a long pair of crane-bill œsophagus forceps, and imagined I could feel the foreign body, but I could not catch it. I tried carefully again and again with other instruments; but, as considerable bleeding ensued, and as there was great distress on the part of the patient, I determined to push the body down into the stomach, and with that view passed a full-sized œsophagus bougie into the stomach, when the sensation of the presence of the tooth-plate at once ceased.

The patient was ordered to keep perfectly quiet, and to take plenty of gruel porridge and oil. He had no pain at all except for about five hours on the day the foreign body passed away, which event happened nine days after I had pushed it down. The patient has suffered nothing since.

I am aware that it is a dangerous practice to adopt the course I did in this case. I know of two instances where death followed this plan of treatment, one of them from hæmorrhage; but I am not sure that prolonged and forcible attempts to extract such a formidable-looking body would not be attended with as much danger; and there are so many instances on record where such ugly bodies have passed through the intestinal tract with safety, that the surgeon is quite justified in resorting to the expedient I adopted, providing he has first made an effort to extract the substance. The attempts I made were quite sufficient to tell me that I should not succeed in extracting the false teeth; and, indeed, I necessarily put the patient to so much pain and distress, and brought about so much bleeding, that I was only too glad to desist from further attempts. If these attempts do not succeed at once, they are not likely to succeed at all. Remarkable cases have occurred where such foreign bodies have been extracted, and, among others, one happened in the practice of Dr. Vine, who succeeded in extracting with a probang a plate, armed with

seven false teeth, an inch and three-quarters in length, and which had become engaged in the lower part of the œsophagus.

Wimpole-street, March, 1871.

## CHLORAL HYDRATE: ITS INCONVENIENCES AND DANGERS.

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Now that the enthusiasm of novelty has worn off, and that the possibilities of adventurous administration have been nearly exhausted, it seems probable that chloral hydrate will take up its proper place amongst remedial agents, and will be regarded with neither unquestioning confidence nor universal distrust. Hitherto the tendency has undoubtedly been to exaggerate its merits. The agreeable character of the inebriation or obliviousness which it induces, the immediacy and obviousness of its effects, and the speciousness of its reputation as a substitute for opium, possessing all its soothing and none of its deleterious properties, have raised it suddenly into the highest place in popular and professional favour, and secured for it a reception more flattering and widespread than has been accorded to any medical agent since the introduction of its great congener, chloroform. A river of chloral has flowed through the land, and all diseases have been indiscriminately immersed in it. Proclamation has been made of its healing powers, but until quite lately little has been said about its treacherous propensities. It seems, however, to be high time that these should be explicitly set forth. When ladies in society are heard recommending chloral to each other as an agreeable restorative after the excitement of a ball-room, and a specific for all the little ailments of fashionable life, it appears to be quite necessary to point out that risks as well as benefits may attend its use. A considerable experience of it in this asylum enables me to confirm observations already made as to some of these risks, and to describe other inconveniences and dangers accruing from its use, which, as far as I know, have not yet been noticed.

When dwelling upon the evils of chloral, I would not be understood to overlook its real excellence. I am far from disputing its usefulness in that department of practice with which I am most familiar. I am persuaded that it has already proved an important adjuvant in the treatment of some mental diseases, and will take permanent rank as a valuable means of regulating nervous action. It is not my purpose here, however, to extol its usefulness, or to define the conditions for its employment. My object is to indicate some dangers which beset its administration, and to show that these are especially apt to be incurred wherever the nervous system is weak or disordered. From the proof of these propositions there will follow as inevitable corollaries that chloral ought never to be taken except under medical advice, and that it ought always to be prescribed with caution and judgment.

Soon after experiments with chloral were commenced in this asylum, in February, 1870, I noticed a singular tendency to flushing of the head and face in many of those patients who were subjected to its influence. It was no uncommon thing to find a pale anæmic patient, to whom chloral had been given, presenting at certain hours of the day a floridness of countenance which would have done credit to the rudest health. Of forty cases in which chloral was tried up to the month of June, and of which I possess notes, this blushing was remarked in nineteen, in greater or less degree; in a few suffusing only the cheeks, but in a much larger number involving the brow, neck, and ears, and assuming a depth of colour altogether unusual in the natural process. In one case, which is characteristic of many, I find it reported that half an hour after fifteen grains of chloral had been taken, the face up to the roots of the hair and down to the ramus of the lower jaw was of a dull-scarlet colour, very persistent under pressure, most intense over the malar prominences and bridge of the nose, and thence shading off in every direction. The ears partook of the same colour, which was also scattered in blotches