

expelled, sometimes with an audible noise. Cases are recorded wherein, from want of irritability of the uterus, the organ has so greatly enlarged as to resemble pregnancy; but these are very uncommon occurrences. *Physometra* is a painful and very harassing disease, its very nature preventing the subject of it from appearing in company, for, as the uterine contractions are involuntary, she of course possesses no power of controlling them. The constitution of those who suffer from this disease is very generally weak and delicate, a collection of air in the cavity of the womb not being the only symptoms under which she is suffering, but one in common with many others. The air appears to be secreted by the menstruating membrane of the uterus, for, if pregnancy occurs, the disease is for a time, if not permanently, cured. I have seen no case of genuine *physometra* after impregnation. I know it has been said by some, that these explosions of air now and then take place at the time of labour; wherever this has happened in my own practice it has been invariably not the result of disease, but the simple expulsion of gas, arising from the commencement of decomposition in the child, the foetus having been always dead. It is possible, without care, for you to be mistaken with respect to the source whence the wind proceeds, air, as you know, being often suddenly and violently forced away from the bowel at the time of labour.

Treatment of Physometra.—The treatment of this disorder may be resolved into two indications—1st, to restore the tone of the system generally; and 2ndly, that of the uterus in particular. A very gentle laxative should at first be employed, which may be repeated as occasion requires, and then powerfully tonic remedies are required. From fifteen to twenty minims of the tincture of muriate of iron given thrice a-day in any aromatic menstruum will be found useful in most cases; or any other medicine of this class may be substituted, should iron disturb the stomach or bowels.

If hysteria, in any of its multiplied forms, should manifest itself, a draught, composed of compound tincture of cardamoms, ammoniated tincture of valerian, of each one drachm, camphor mixture one ounce and a half, will seldom fail in giving relief. Removal to a different air, and in the neighbourhood of some chalybeate spring, where your patient may “drink the waters,” is another remedial measure of great efficacy. Exercise, to a certain extent, is necessary; but fatigue must be avoided. Riding on horseback is to be preferred, where practicable. The second indication is fulfilled by directing an astringent solution to be injected into the cavity of the uterus, by means of the elastic gum bottle and curved pipe, heretofore recommended to your notice. Perhaps,

nothing will answer your purpose better than the sulphate of zinc dissolved in water, the strength about three grains to the ounce, at first, which may be gradually increased, should it be deemed necessary. You may quiet the female's mind by assuring her that, so far as the uterus is concerned, there is no danger whatever; that it is a mere symptom depending upon a deranged condition of the health, and that as the one improves the other will also.

THE PLUG, IN PLACENTAR PRESENTATIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Having perused, in a recent Number of *THE LANCET*, the interesting observations of Dr. Ingleby upon Placental Presentation, and a letter from a correspondent approving of the use of the plug under certain circumstances, I send you the abstract of a case I lately met with, as an example of its improper employment in others. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN CHATTO.

15, Leigh-street, Burton-crescent,
April 7, 1840.

On the 19th March an old patient, residing in Charles-street, Hatton-garden, whose delicacy, on account of an unsettled bill, prevented her applying to me in the first instance, sent me an urgent message, that she was in a state of imminent danger. I went to see her as soon as my engagements would permit, and learned the following history:—She supposed herself seven months advanced in pregnancy; and for several weeks past she had been at times subjected to great and sudden losses of blood from the uterus, which lowered her powers much (never very high, being of a nervous temperament), but which, as they entirely ceased at times, did not prevent her getting about in the intervals. Indeed, she was up so lately as the 16th, but since that time the flooding has been excessive and almost constant, so as to render her rigorous confinement to the bed essential. She says she has from time to time slight pains, and it is then that the blood gushes forth, accompanied often by huge clots. Had been attended for some time by the pupils of a charitable institution, and the vagina had been plugged with a view, as she was informed, to enable her to continue to her full time. These plugs have not been effectually applied, as the discharge in spite of them still escapes in abundance.

Her countenance was pallid and exhausted, her pulse excessively feeble, and from time to time she has had faintnesses,

necessitating the throwing open the window of her confined apartment.

Upon examination, I found the vagina filled loosely with some pieces of rag and abundance of clots, the removal of which was accompanied by an almost insupportable foetor. The os uteri was well dilated, with a thickish but very yielding edge. At the posterior edge, I found a portion of the placenta had passed into the vagina, the remainder of the organ being attached just above the margin. The source of the hæmorrhage was now evident enough, of which indeed the history had afforded a strong presumption. I at once passed my hand through the os uteri with the greatest ease, and brought down one of the legs. Shortly after a severe pain followed, and was accompanied by a large gush of blood. The remaining pains were very slow and slight, and the uterine contractions very inefficient. Under such circumstances I thought the remaining stages of the labour should not be hurried, seeing that it might be finished in a few seconds at any time that any symptom required it, and wishing to secure good eventual contraction of the uterus. Perhaps it resulted from an over-degree of caution in this particular that the child was still-born. After awhile the pains came on again at intervals; the child, being only a seven months' foetus, was easily expelled, and the placenta followed immediately after. The uterus contracted perfectly, and from that time no bleeding whatever occurred, even the lochiæ being very deficient in quantity.

She was faint and exhausted for a long time after the delivery, but in the course of an hour or two, by means of stimuli, smelling scents, &c., she was comparatively restored, so that when I left her she had a tolerably good pulse, considering her condition. Attacks of syncope, however, recurred in a few hours.

I will not trouble you with a detail of the symptoms which manifested themselves from day to day, and of the treatment adopted: it will suffice to say, that from the time of her recovery from the state of syncope above-named, until her death, her pulse continued invariably frequent, varying from 120 to 140, sometimes full, sometimes small, though always deficient in power. Frequent shiverings occurred, followed by flushing and sweats. An utter despondency from the commencement took possession of her mind, and her countenance throughout denoted the exhaustion of her powers. Her breasts were never troublesome, and no tenderness of the belly ever occurred. Indeed she had no local pain, with the exception of that accompanying a temporary diarrhœa, which was soon relieved; and others toward the few last days, seated in her various joints and limbs, and which indeed were very severe. Her tongue long

continued very clean, but, the last two or three days, became dry and brown. Stimuli, in the shape of wine, beer, ether, &c., were given her, and full doses of the preparations of opium, from which last the comfort and temporary relief derived by her were frequently expressed in grateful terms. She died on the 27th.

The examination of the body was made in the presence of my friend Dr. Pardoe, who also favoured me with his opinion upon the case during its progress. From limited time it was confined to the abdomen. No traces of inflammatory action were discovered, nor indeed any other sign of disease. Upon opening the uterus it presented the appearances usually observed after recent delivery; but the marks of the attachment of the placenta were found low down upon the cervix, instead of the usual position at the fundus. Upon showing the parts to Dr. Lee, he said that he thought some ulceration existed at the point of attachment of the placenta; but I have not seen him since to know whether a more particular examination proved this to be the case.

I have related the above case, because it seems to me that the cases in which the plug should be used are not sufficiently defined; and that the injudicious employment of a valuable resource might unjustly bring it into disrepute. I have no doubt that this woman lost her life from the effects of these repeated hæmorrhages, which, although they might not have proved fatal to one of a more robust constitution, were too much for her feeble frame, shattered by anxiety and privations. Without pretending to say, that even in her case the plug at some period might not have been proper enough, I am very certain, from the state in which I found the os uteri, that the hand might have been introduced into the uterus many hours, if not days, before I saw her. Indeed, so full was the dilatation, that, in a strong subject, I should perhaps have hesitated to turn, as by inducing pains the child's head might in all probability have been soon brought down, and the labour terminated without further hæmorrhage; but, in the state in which I found her, I thought that any further delay was inadmissible, as her powers were well nigh spent.

SUCCESSFUL REMOVAL OF AN ENORMOUS FUNGUS HÆMATODES, BY AMPUTATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—The following case of fungus hæmatodes occurred lately in my practice: the very great extent which the disease had