CASE
IN WHICH
A CYST CONTAINING HYDATIDS
WAS
FOUND IN THE SUBSTANCE
OF
THE HEART.

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THE morbid appearances observed in the following case are of such rare occurrence, that it may not be uninteresting to the profession to have the particulars of it placed on record.

The subject of it was an unmarried female of about forty years of age, of slender make and weakly appearance, but who had generally enjoyed good health. During the last few years, however, she found her health somewhat decline; she was languid and indisposed to exertion, and was observed to be irritable. Since the beginning of last winter, especially, her strength failed, and she found that efforts which were

formerly easy to her, were now performed with difficulty. This was particularly the case in walking up any rising ground, or mounting a staircase: such movements she avoided as much as possible in consequence, but when she persisted in them, the result was extreme fatigue and shortness of breath.

These symptoms increased, and added to them she felt occasionally a sharp pain dart through her heart; it was momentary but most intense—so as to cause her to remark, that “it must be with such pains that people die suddenly.” As these sufferings, however, were transient, she did not pay much attention to them, but continued her usual occupation (of nurse) until the 20th of April, when, after running down stairs and up again rather quickly, she was seized with a violent paroxysm of dyspnoea, attended by throbbing and pain of the heart, which compelled her to go to bed, and from this moment she was never again able to leave it. She remarked to her companion, that she felt as if her heart had leapt from its place. The pain subsided a little by rest, but was followed by vomiting and purging to some extent. During the night, the effort of sitting up for the purpose of relieving the bowels, induced more than once a state of complete syncope, which lasted for some time.

On the following morning I saw her for the first time. She was much exhausted and felt very faint: the skin was bleached and the countenance sallow

and sunken. The pulse was so rapid as to be countless ; having the feel of a continued vibration of the vessel rather than of a *pulse*. The carotids and other large vessels also vibrated strongly. The motion of the heart was sudden, jerking, and violent ; its force seemed to increase under the pressure of the hand ; it was felt over a large extent of the chest, and below the sternum. The respiration was very hurried and laborious, and required a raised position of body for its performance in any degree of comfort. The pain in the chest had nearly subsided.

By the ordinary means the diarrhoea was checked, but the sickness was rather obstinate. From this period until the time of the patient's death, there was but little variation in the symptoms. She felt constantly faint and gasping ; the pulsation in the large vessels and heart became stronger, and the action of the latter was felt over a larger surface of the chest ; the least exertion, even that of turning round in bed, produced great palpitation and dyspnoea ; and occasionally without any such cause, paroxysms of difficult breathing so severe as to threaten dissolution, came on and lasted for hours. Once or twice, just after such paroxysms had subsided, the pulse became for a few hours more distinct, and might almost be counted. There was little sleep, and that little was disturbed and unrefreshing. The urine was scanty, but the extremities did not swell. The legs were often affected with severe cramps. Her strength gradually failed, and on the 1st of June she died.

The treatment was, of necessity, chiefly of the palliative kind, and but little effect was produced by it upon the disease. Once, the state of the symptoms permitting it, blood was taken from the region of the heart by leeches, and blisters afterwards applied: a slight and temporary benefit only was the result. The use of mercury combined with opium was pushed to the extent of affecting the gums: but this merely added a new source of sufferings, without relieving those already present. Large doses of opium and other anodynes, had not much effect either in alleviating the symptoms or producing sleep.

The body was examined thirty-six hours after death. On removing the ribs, the heart had the appearance of being much larger than usual. The cavity of the pericardium contained about an ounce of fluid. The membrane was coated by a layer of coagulable lymph over a small extent of its front surface. The apex of the heart was lost in a considerable tumour, apparently an elongation of the heart itself, and covered on all sides by pericardium. The tumour fluctuated to the touch, and there was an appearance on its surface as of cells within. On opening the heart this new growth was seen forming a round and considerable projection into the cavity of the right ventricle at its apex. It was smooth and polished, covered by the lining of the ventricle, and occupied about one fourth of its cavity. The tumour was globular, and about three inches in diameter. An opening being made into it from the interior, it

was found to be a cyst, containing a number of hydatids, varying in size from that of a pea to that of a pigeon's egg, the interstices between them being filled up by a soft curd-like substance of a yellow colour. The hydatids were precisely of the same character as those usually found in the human liver. On the inner side the cyst was covered by the lining of the ventricle only: but exteriorly, the muscular substance of the heart, considerably thinned, lay between it and the pericardium; hence it appears that the disease had its origin in the muscular substance of the heart. The other parts of the organ were natural.

The heart is preserved in the Museum of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Although hydatids are so commonly found in many parts of the body, it is very rarely that they are met with in the heart. The Transactions of this Society* contain the particulars of a case in which "a large hydatid was found in the muscular substance of the heart." Andral† mentions having seen these vesicles of the size of a nut in the heart of a patient who died at La Charité. I have not been able to find any other unequivocal instance of hydatid discovered in this viscus. The older writers, indeed, make mention of cysts in the heart, but their descriptions are too vague to enable us to identify such bodies with the true hydatid.

Hampstead, June 26, 1832.

* Volume XI. Part II.

† Anatomie Pathologique.