CASE
OF
IMPERFECT DEVELOPMENT
OF THE
CIRCULAR MUSCULAR FIBRES OF THE
RECTUM AND VAGINA.

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EMMA D—, æt. 10, was admitted into St. George's Hospital, on the 9th of August, 1872. There was then a solid movable tumour in the abdomen, extending six inches above the pubis, and five inches broad. This was unaccompanied by any pain or tenderness, and there was no constitutional disturbance.

The mother of the child said that her daughter had not been right from her birth; when six months old nothing passed the bowels for three weeks. Injections and purgatives were then used, and the mother fancied that the part had been lanced (a scoop had probably been used). At twelve months old there was again an obstinate obstruction; since then the patient had been subject to obstruction of the

bowels more or less, but twelve months ago she was worse than she had ever been before. She occasionally had suffered very much pain round the sides, and in the right groin. When admitted into the Hospital she had passed nothing from the bowel for three weeks. She had taken castor-oil and salts repeatedly, sometimes as much as an ounce of either at a time without effect. Upon examination it was found that the sphincters of the rectum and vagina were deficient between the two passages, at the lower part, so that these had a common opening. The accompanying drawing, by Dr. Westmacott (see woodcut), shows the parts as seen from below. The fingers passed with great facility into the rectum, where a large mass of gritty indurated fæces could be felt. This mass was movable, and its motion was communicated to the tumour in the abdomen. It became evident that the abdominal tumour and the distension of the rectum depended upon the same cause, and that the contents of the lower part of the rectum and the bowel above formed one mass.

The indurated fæces in the rectum were broken up, and a large quantity was removed with a scoop. This however produced no sensible effect upon the size of the abdominal tumour. By means of repeated injections and purgatives of different kinds this was however gradually diminished, a large quantity of fæces, very offensive to the smell, being passed daily. On the 24th of August the abdominal tumour had disappeared, and on the 10th of September the patient left the Hospital. On the 12th of October, I heard from her mother that she was again suffering from constipation, accompanied by pain in her side. On the 4th of December this patient was again admitted into St. George's Hospital. The rectum was again distended by a large mass of indurated gritty fæces, and the swelling in the abdomen had reappeared, but not quite to the same extent as upon her first admission. Large doses of castor-oil were administered, and the bowels acted, but the indurated mass of fæces in the rectum remained unaltered. This was now again broken up and removed with a scoop. The gritty nature of the contents of the bowel depended upon the presence of grape

stones and other foreign substances, together with a certain amount of phosphate of lime. After a time the patient was again entirely relieved and left the Hospital, but was again admitted, on the 18th of June, much in the same condition as on the two previous occasions. This time, however, the accumulation was relieved by purgatives and injections, without any mechanical operation. After this had been completely accomplished, on introducing my finger into the rectum and placing my hand above the pubis, I found that they were separated apparently by nothing but the abdominal parietes. This led to a further examination of the vagina and uterus, in which I had the assistance of Dr. J. R. Lee.

The vagina always remained patent. The os uteri could be felt, but above this nothing could be distinguished. It appeared that if the body of the uterus were developed at all it must be in a very rudimentary condition. Examined through the rectum nothing could be felt in the position which the body of the uterus usually occupies. This patient left the Hospital again on the 4th of August.

Instances of a relaxed condition of the bowel, dependent upon deficient or perverted nervous power, the accumulation of fæces, or the repeated use of large injections, are not very uncommon; but the case now recorded is the only one I have met with in which the affection appeared to depend upon an imperfect development of the muscular fibres of the part.