through it. The child was born alive; the mother died six weeks after.

"On returning home from attending a case of labor, Dr. Merriman was informed by his uncle, the late Dr. S. Merriman, that the patient had a scirrhus of the os uteri—that he thought she would never have another child, and would die from the disease. That, he said, was the result of his experience in other cases. She conceived again, however, and died soon after delivery. The child was born alive, and neither in this nor in the last case was any operation performed." The following letter contains the third case:—

"My dear Dr. Lee,—The following case, which I did not recollect last night, will interest you; I do not remember any one very similar:—

"Aug. 12, 1824. I was desired by my excellent friend, Mr. Clifton, of Leicester-place, to visit Mrs. George, whose husband kept the Coach and Horses public-house in Compton-street, Soho. She told me that she had been long ill, and had consulted Dr. Bree, who thought her disease was ulcer of the womb, and treated her accordingly. She said, however, she was quite sure of being pregnant, and not liking to continue a mode of treatment which she imagined must be improper, had ceased to consult him. On making inquiry into her symptoms, it appeared that Dr. Bree was justified in taking the view he did of her complaint; they were extreme pain in the back, constipation, emaciation, and especially extremely offensive discharges from the vagina. These symptoms had occurred after a lying-in two years before, and had continued ever since; indeed, there was some reason to believe that they had shown themselves before the termination of that pregnancy. Upon this point, however, the evidence was not quite satisfactory.

"Having learnt thus much, I inquired what were her reasons for thinking herself pregnant; her reply was, that she distinctly felt the motions of the child. As no examination per vaginam had been instituted, I obtained permission to pass my finger, and was not a little surprised to find that the os uteri and part of the cervix were entirely destroyed by a species of *ulcus exedens*, yet that the body of the uterus was enlarged to the size it usually attains between the fifth and sixth month, and that it contained a living fetus; so that this was a case of pregnancy in a uterus deprived of disease of a large portion of its substance. Whether the os uteri had taken on disease before the pregnancy commenced must remain uncertain, but, at the time of my examination, which was made with as much care and exactness as was in my power, the whole of the os uteri and a large portion of the cervix were literally eaten away by ulceration.

"On conferring with Mr. Clifton, who accompanied me, on the treatment to be adopted, I expressed an opinion that the fetus could not be much longer retained, for the distension of the uterus was already beginning to intrench upon the cervix, and as the distension proceeded, the ulcerated cervix would be pressed upon, and must necessarily give way, and the fetus be expelled; accordingly, on the 31st of August, the fetus and placenta passed into the world without pain; the child, of about six months' gesta-

tion, was born alive, and lived a few hours. The poor woman, who now began to entertain hopes of recovery, was not at all benefitted by the delivery, but continued to live in a state of great suffering, sometimes mitigated by narcotics, till the month of February, when death gave her a happy release.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours, with great truth,

"SAMUEL MERRIMAN."

It must be observed that, in all of the above cases, there is no mention made of the os or cervix uteri being *exceedingly bulky* from disease, excepting in Madame Boivin's and Dr. F. H. Ramsbotham's case of fungoid excrescence. Of these two, the first terminated by an occurrence which can never be anticipated—protrusion of the diseased part as far as the vulva, by which it ceased to encroach materially on the diameters of the cavity and outlet of the pelvis; and the second, from its soft and compressible nature, would afford no particular impediment farther than would arise from the *indurated*, but *not bulky*, disc of the os uteri, from which the fungoid disease sprang. We are warranted in concluding from the above cases that, where malignant disease of the os and cervix uteri, attended with considerable induration, exists, provided the *bulk* of the parts is *not materially* increased, labor will probably terminate safely for the child. It must be observed, however, that patients in this condition are apt to have abortion or premature labor, which at once diminishes the risk to the mother, but increases it to the offspring.

Out of 8 cases, the children were born living in 5, dead in 1, and this is not stated in 2. Two of the labors were premature; one at the sixth, the other at the seventh month. Of the mothers, *all died*, but at such different periods that the deaths could not in all cases be traced to the effects of the labors, but rather to the nature of the disease. The period of life after delivery in the cases was respectively fourteen months, twelve months, five months, four months, six weeks, two weeks, "a few days," and "soon." There can be no doubt, however, as Sir Charles Clarke has remarked, that the process of labor must aggravate the disease very much.

[To be continued.]

ON POLYPUS UTERI.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—In your number of the 23rd of September is a paper on polypus uteri, by Dr. P. Murphy, of Liverpool, in which he states as the result of his experience "that polypus is not a disease of the virgin state," and that its "removal is attended with very little danger or difficulty."

These conclusions are somewhat at variance with the experience of other writers. Dr. Denman in his Introduction to the Practice of Midwifery, 6th edition, pages 49, 51, gives two cases occurring in unmarried females, in one of which the operations caused death; and also two other fatal cases after ligature; and Dr. Lee, in the "Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine," vol. iv., page 393, says that "the operation is not without danger," quoting as a proof the experience of Dupuytren, who "met with eight or

ten cases where patients were destroyed after the application of a ligature around the root of a polypus of the uterus, and where the symptoms were those produced by the absorption of pus into the system."

Dr. Murphy seems to think that the occurrence of gangrene of the ovary, which was the cause of death in his last case, was a mere coincidence. The majority of your readers will, I dare say, be of opinion that it was the result of inflammation produced by the operation.

The only case which has occurred in my practice is also unfavorable to the conclusions of Dr. Murphy, although it terminated favorably. I will briefly relate the case from notes taken at the time.

On July 16, 1838, Ann Ward, aged forty-eight years, unmarried, applied to me, having been afflicted with profuse menorrhagia for three years, by which her strength is very much reduced. Lately the hæmorrhage has recurred every fortnight with leucorrhœa in the intervals. Has frequent desire to evacuate the bowels and bladder. On examination, a smooth, solid, insensible tumor, the size of a child's head at the full period of utero-gestation was found occupying the vagina. Neither the neck of the tumor nor the os uteri could be reached with the finger. The uterus was felt to be much enlarged by applying the hand on the abdomen. On the 20th, a ligature of strong whipcord was passed round the tumor as high up as possible by means of Gooch's double canula. On tightening the cord and measuring the length of the part which embraced the tumor, after allowing one inch for stretching, it was found to be thirteen inches. On the 21st, five inches were gained on tightening the ligature, and it seemed to slip up higher. The cord was tightened daily until the 25th, when it broke, and with great difficulty, after several ineffectual attempts, another ligature was passed round the polypus, but not so high up as the first one. This was cautiously tightened daily until August 7. The discharge was profuse and very offensive, notwithstanding constant ablation with lotions of chloride of lime. The lips, gums, and tongue were covered with aphthæ, and irritative fever from the absorption of putrid matter came on. Finding my patient's strength fast failing, and that the only chance of preserving her life consisted in separating the tumor as fast as possible; I drew down the polypus by means of a hook, and excised the remaining part of the neck, which was undivided between two and three inches in circumference, with a narrow bladed curved bistoury, wrapped with thread to within an inch of the point, and introduced flat on the forefinger of the right hand. Very little bleeding ensued. The polypus was easily extracted, being reduced by ulceration and sloughing to the size of a goose's egg. She rapidly recovered from this time, and on the 14th of August no portion of the polypus could be discovered on examination per vaginam, and no enlargement of the uterus on applying the hand to the abdomen.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

J. NESS, M.R.C.S.

Helmsley, Yorkshire,
Sept. 29, 1843.

PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1843.

We took occasion, a few weeks ago, to comment on the frequency with which we believed the crime of producing abortion to be committed, in the case of young unmarried females. Hideous as this kind of murder is, yet some shadow of excuse may perhaps be framed for the unhappy perpetrators of it. The impending ruin of their character and worldly prospects; their ignorance of the enormity of the crime; the influence exerted over them by others, may perhaps be urged in extenuation of their guilt.

It could scarcely be believed, however, that the same crime could be perpetrated by persons in married life, anxious, like brute beasts, to enjoy the pleasures of sensuality, without the trouble of rearing a family. Yet, to the disgrace of human nature, the following details show that it is attempted, and probably not by one person only, but by others who consult the code of instructions which this culprit too implicitly followed.

A man named Haynes has been committed to Newgate on a charge of wilful murder, committed in an attempt to produce abortion on his wife. It appears from the evidence adduced at the coroner's inquest, and before the magistrate, that Haynes and his wife led a very unhappy life, as he was afraid she was pregnant, and he detested the idea of having children. In order to prevent this, he procured a large quantity of sulphate of potass; he gave her a quarter of a pound of it in small quantities during the fortnight preceding her death; on Tuesday, the 26th of September he gave her two ounces more of it; on Wednesday night, again two ounces; and during that night she died.

We believe this is the first time that the salt in question has been known to act as a poison. Common salt and sulphate of magnesia have both caused death when given in inordinate doses; and in this instance the effects produced were the ordinary ones of an irritant poison—vomiting, followed by fatal collapse. Some discussion was raised as to whether the sulphate of potass could properly be called a poison or not; and this may, perhaps, like many other trifles, furnish matter for quibbling among the lawyers; but it is very certain that any saline matter given in sufficient quantity will act as an irritant or sedative poison. The largest dose we ever saw mentioned in any work was six drachms; and two ounces, given half dissolved, would be quite enough to produce death.

The worst feature of the whole affair—(we say the worst, because it gives us reason to fear that this is only one of a number of instances in which the same