

To the Editors of the Medical and Physical Journal.

GENTLEMEN,

I Transmit to you a singular case of Ossified Uterus; which I trust you may think worthy of a place in your very interesting Journal; and am, with much respect,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient servant,

ARTHUR MACKIE, M. D.

Lewisham,
April 3, 1800.

ON the 28th of January last I was called on to open the body of Mrs. Ruff, who died the day before, in the 72d year of her age.

She had suffered much from disease, and desired that she might be opened after her death. What I could learn of her history was as follows:—She was born of healthy parents, and was herself strong and healthy till her marriage in her 32d year. She soon after was supposed to become pregnant; but symptoms of dropsy also appearing, she was attended by Drs. Fothergill and Watson, and an accoucheur, who all agreed that it was a case of pregnancy, (though her menses continued regularly) accompanied by anasarca; and they prescribed some diuretic medicines. These produced a copious discharge of urine; the

dropical appearances subsided, but the size of the abdomen continued to increase, with more than usual uneasiness, till the supposed time of her delivery.

This anxious period at length passed over, and to the great alarm of the patient and her family, no labour or delivery took place. From this time she had bad and irregular health; her bulk continued undiminished; she had obstinate constipations; she was frequently attacked with hot, burning, excruciating pains in her belly, that could only be relieved by opium; she became subject to violent gouty paroxysms, which confined her to her bed two or three months in the year, and left her extremities much distorted; and for a long while past, she had been a constant sufferer from the size and increased weight of the abdomen; and, particularly, on turning in bed, when the bulk fell to the lower side, in a lump, (as she expressed it) it never failed to give her the most distressing pain and uneasiness. A paralytic stroke, which deprived her of the use of speech, and of one side, preceded her death a few days.

On uncovering the abdomen, it appeared unusually large, hard, and incompressible; the bulk rather exceeding that of a pregnant woman at her full time, and inclining to the left side. In cutting along the linea alba, after dividing the skin, I found the muscles so much ossified, from about three inches above the umbilicus, that I could not separate them without a very strong knife. The ossification extended as much below the navel, and about three or four inches on each side, having some resemblance to the top of a child's skull. The inside had a smooth, shining polish, apparently from its friction on the uterus, between which and these ossified muscles nothing intervened; the peritonæum being entirely obliterated. On laying aside the separated integuments, the uterus appeared in full view, filling almost the whole cavity of the abdomen, and even pressing against the diaphragm. Its appearance somewhat resembled a very large pellucid bladder distended with hog's lard, and pressed a little flat at the fundus. It was some time before I observed the intestines, which were pushed into a space not exceeding a cube of two inches, in the lower part of the left side of the pelvis, and seemed crowded, shrunk, and empty. The omentum was obliterated. Near them lay above twenty hydatids of different sizes, of a beautiful polished white colour, and several of them as large as pullets eggs, but without any fluid.

On attempting to cut into the uterus, the knife made no impression, till great force was used, the ossification was so complete: the divided sides appeared of a chalky, brittle, dead white; no vestige of nerves or blood vessels remaining. The

fundus was about a quarter of an inch thick, and perfect bone; the body of the uterus thicker, and not unlike the thickest parts of the occiput. The ossification ended at the cervix, which was of a hardish sebaceous texture, and four or five inches thick. On cutting through this part, about a quart of strongly foetid pus was discharged; and on making a complete division of the uterus, (which was large enough to contain the body of a full grown foetus) I found a large detached unformed spongy mass, composed of soft and hard parts; the former resembling moist decayed wood, and easily compressible into a small bulk; the latter somewhat like the ends of the long bones, but no specific part ascertainable; though the whole conveyed to my mind the possibility of its once having been a foetus.

The uterus with this substance, when taken out of the body, weighed eighteen pounds three-quarters, avoirdupois.

The ovaria, Fallopian tubes, and ligamenta rotunda, differed little from their natural size and colour; the liver was small, hard, and of a dark red, and pushed backwards; the gall-bladder appeared as if squeezed by the uterus, part of which was stained with bile. The kidneys were larger than usual, and covered with watery blisters; the vesica urinaria small and empty; the stomach, spleen and pancreas appeared shrunk, and with the diaphragm pushed upwards.

I was not allowed time to make a more minute examination, or any further remarks; I thought these sufficiently curious to merit being recorded.