

ABSENCE OF THE UTERUS AND VAGINA.

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A medical friend once said in my presence that "No woman should get married till it was known she would make a good wet-nurse;" and Meigs says, "A woman ought not to be married who has never menstruated, until it shall have been ascertained that she is not amenorrhœal from faulty development."

However much force there may be in both these statements, yet the cases are widely different in the relative importance of their influence on the subsequent lives of the parties concerned, for while the deficiency in the first can be easily compensated without any infraction of the moral law, the defect in the latter, if undiscovered till after marriage, can hardly be supplemented this side of Utah, without doing violence to the moral sensibilities of civilized society, and is very apt to entail permanent misery on all concerned.

Meigs says he has seen two pretty women who were allowed to marry before it was ascertained they had no wombs or vaginæ, and although I have heard a lady physician say that many women would rather consider that a blessing than otherwise, yet it was evident in the case of my patient that *she* would have preferred the full development of *all her faculties*.

In October last, I was asked to see a young woman 22 years of age, about 4 ft. 8 in. high, rather pale, but moderately well developed, comely in appearance, with feminine voice, modest and retiring manner, well formed breasts, and who at times experienced rather strong sexual desires. She had never menstruated, although she had taken many tonics and emmenagogues.

A year or two ago she was to have been married, but *fortunately* the match was accidentally broken off.

I could find nothing in the general health to account for the persistent amenorrhœa, and as the lady who asked me to see the patient, suspected absence of the uterus, I made a very thorough examination.

I found the breasts and nipples well developed, the mons veneris well covered with hair; the labia majora, minora and the clitoris fully formed; there was no hymen present, and the vagina terminated in a *cul de sac*, about one inch and a-half within the vulva. She stated, with every appearance of sincerity, that she had never attempted sexual intercourse; and I know that she belongs to a respectable family, her father being a farmer within a few miles of this city.

All the external organs and appearances indicated a properly developed, modest, good looking girl, well calculated to engage a young man in matrimonial enterprise.

On the most careful digital examination by pressure above the pubes, through the vagina and rectum, I failed to detect anything like the uterus, or any tumor within the pelvis.

I then passed a male sound within the bladder and my forefinger

into the vagina, while an assistant passed a finger into the rectum ; then by turning the handle of the sound, I made its point completely sweep the anterior wall of the pelvis, and in doing so I could distinctly feel it, as it passed by the point of my finger in the *cul de sac* of the vagina, with nothing but the thin vaginal wall intervening ; at the same time my assistant's finger in the rectum distinctly felt the point of the sound, as it passed over the bowel in completing the circuit of the pelvis.

We thus became satisfied of the complete absence of the uterus, an almost total absence of the vagina, and the probable absence of the ovaries ; but as these latter organs are usually beyond the reach of the finger, their absence or presence was left an open question.

From the well developed breasts, the state of the *mons veneris*, and the occasional experience of strong sexual desires, combined with the usual feminine voice and instincts, one would be inclined to think the ovaries were present somewhere. But on the other hand there had never been anything like that periodical *nixus*, which is said to mark the return of the catamenial epochs in those cases of absent uteri where the ovaries are known to be present.

Altogether it would seem as if the clitoris was, after all, the seat to a great extent of the aphrodisiac sense ; and a case recently reported in which that organ was removed for the relief of epilepsy, in a girl addicted to masturbation, would, by the success which followed the operation, still further strengthen this view.

Under all the circumstances, we felt it our duty to advise our patient against any further matrimonial propositions, an advice which, it is needless to say, appeared to give the poor girl very great pain.