

UMBILICAL FÆCAL FISTULA IN AN INFANT CURED BY RADICAL OPERATION.

(ILLUSTRATED.)

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CASES of umbilical fæcal fistula in infants are comparatively rare, and when they occur are caused by the inclusion of prolapsed intestine in the ligature used to tie the cord. This intestine may be a herniated portion of small bowel, or, as is most commonly the case, a persistent omphalo-mesenteric duct extending down into the cord. This duct not infrequently persists as a diverticulum from the ileum, ten to sixty inches from the ileo-cæcal valve. It is then called Meckel's diverticulum, and is usually two to three inches long, and of about the same diameter as the bowel. It occurs in about two per cent. of individuals, and chiefly in males. In some rare cases it is connected with the umbilicus by a cord which represents the obliterated duct, and is one of the causes of internal strangulation of the bowel. In still rarer cases the duct is patent not only as far as the umbilicus, but even some distance down the cord. In such cases when the cord is ligatured at birth the duct is included in the ligature, and as the ligature ulcerates through and separates, it cuts through the duct, and hence a fæcal fistula is the result. Now the cure of these fistulæ has always been difficult and unsatisfactory. Holmes asserts that as far as he has seen they are incurable, and Mr. Owen "Surgical Diseases of Children," says no plastic operation or cauterization is apt to succeed, but asserts that he has cured two cases by cleaning out the contents of the bowels with rhubarb and soda, and then keeping the bowels at rest for a fortnight with

* Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, November 20, 1891.