HERPES AS A TYPE OF VICARIOUS MENSTRUATION.

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In February last, C. W., aged 27, was referred to me by Dr. Wallace Beatty. She complained of getting a sore on her left cheek every month, which Dr. Beatty described as catarrhal herpes; it remains for about a week and consists of a small cluster of small vesicles on the left cheek; sometimes it consists of one large vesicle which is probably the result of coalescence of several smaller ones. There is the faintest (almost imperceptible) mark after the herpes has disappeared. When it is present she gets the sensations which some women feel previous to menstruation.

She had been given medicine by various doctors to bring on the flow; these had been without effect, and there had never been any sign of vaginal discharge. The herpetic eruption commenced when she was eighteen and had appeared monthly ever since.

On examination the patient was found to be fully developed. Under an anaesthetic a bimanual examination was made and absence of the uterus tubes and ovaries was diagnosed. As the case appeared to be full of interest, and as it was thought well to confirm the diagnosis of absence of the uterus, especially in order to prevent the continued administration of drugs, the abdomen was opened. At first sight it appeared as if none of the internal genital organs were present, for in place of the uterus tubes and ovaries a cord-like structure, slightly less in circumference than the normal round ligaments, was found stretching from one internal abdominal ring to the other. There were no tubes, but on a close examination of the right side of the abdomen an ovary of normal size was found attached to a very thin fold of peritoneum, which might have been intended to represent the broad ligament; this ovary was anterior to the peritoneal fold and had very slender attachments. No ovarian or ovario-pelvic ligament was present, and the
ovary must have been supplied with blood from some circulation in the peritoneum in which it was nestling. The appendix was examined, was found to be inflamed, and was removed. The abdomen was then closed.

Blair Bell describes true vicarious menstruation as occurring when the patient bleeds from some mucous surface other than the endometrium, or in the absence of or with rudimentary development of the uterus. In the first type of case the vicarious menstruation takes the place of menstruation or leads to its suppression, and in the second, which is very rare, vicarious menstruation represents menstruation. My case belongs to the latter class, except that, according to the definition, it cannot be classed as vicarious menstruation. However, if an herpetic eruption could be taken as equivalent to a menstrual flow the definition of Dorland: "A menstrual flow from some part or organ other than the vagina" would allow it to be ranked as a definite case of vicarious menstruation, especially in view of the absence of the organs. Rinsema, who has apparently devoted much time to this subject, states in a recent paper that herpes menstrualis, as he calls it, is found nearly always on the genitals or face. It has been described on the buttocks, back of the hands, breasts and cervix uteri. Antipyrin is a common cause. Rinsema's case is different to mine in that herpes preceded menstruation and the woman had several pregnancies.

The explanation of the case I have mentioned is not easy; there was probably some fault in internal gland secretion due to the absence of important organs. It would appear possible that the rupture of the graafian follicle and the formation of a corpus luteum caused some change to occur in the general circulatory or gland apparatus, which was followed by the presence of the herpes. It would have been an interesting experiment to remove the ovary in order to determine if its removal would cure the skin affection, but the patient would have suffered by the absence of the secretion from the ovary. Most authorities recommend that where the uterus is absent and vicarious menstruation occurs, that the latter should not be stopped as it relieves congestion.