CASE
OF THE
EXTRACTION OF A LIVING FŒTUS,
FROM
A WOMAN KILLED BY VIOLENCE.

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I AM induced to present the following narrative to the Society, as the opportunities are necessarily rare of witnessing cases similar to that which is the subject of this communication ; and as it affords an illustration of the measure recommended, and in some few instances adopted, of extracting the child, when the mother has died from violence during her pregnancy.

On the 15th of April 1820, Mary Morgan, thirty years of age, and in the ninth month of her pregnancy, was run over by a heavily laden stage-coach, near the end of St. Thomas's-street, Southwark. It was said that she had been knocked down by one of the leaders, and that both the fore and hind wheel of the carriage had passed over her body. This happened twenty-five minutes before eight

o'clock in the evening, and she was immediately carried into St. Thomas's Hospital. She was there undressed, and put to bed ; but during this time, expressed violent pain, was restless and agitated, shortly after fainted away, and expired five minutes before eight o'clock, which was twenty minutes after the occurrence of the accident.

It so happened, that I was in the ward upon other business at the time, and was requested by the dresser to see the unfortunate woman. It was evident that no surgical aid could be available to the mother ; but it suggested itself that the child might possibly still be saved. I sent therefore, immediately, for Dr. Blundell, our esteemed teacher of midwifery ; and after a short consultation, in which we agreed on the propriety of the Cæsarean section, I proceeded to perform the operation, at eight minutes past eight.

An extensive incision was made through the linea alba, into the cavity of the abdomen. Through this opening, a considerable quantity of blood gushed out, apparently the effect of previous extravasation. A second incision was then carried longitudinally through the uterus, and continued through the placenta, which was attached to its anterior surface. Dr. Blundell now introduced his hand into the uterus, and drew out the child, which exhibited, however, no sign of life. The umbilical cord was then tied and divided.

The child was removed immediately into an adjoining apartment, where there was a fire ; and a tracheal pipe having been introduced, no time was lost in inflating the lungs, and carrying on artificial respiration. After the lapse of fifteen minutes thus employed, we had the satisfaction of seeing the child first gasp ; and in about two minutes more the efforts of inspiration were audible at any part of the room. The pulsation of the umbilical cord had now become distinct. The inflation of the lungs was continued at intervals only, and at the end of the next five minutes three complete natural respirations might be performed in each minute. Having thus far succeeded in calling into action the vital power, through the medium of the lungs, it was thought advisable to try the effect of other stimuli, and a small quantity of brandy was given with this view. This, however, evidently produced an injurious effect, for the breathing became weaker and less regular. With some assistance, the lost ground was regained, and in another five minutes the respiration might be considered regular and natural ; and at the same time the pulse at the wrist could be distinctly felt.

The next measure, which presented itself, was that of aiding more effectually the maintenance of the temperature, and the action of the heart and arteries ; and for this purpose, the body of the infant was immersed in warm water. The effect was not such as was anticipated, for the pulse dimi-

nished in force and frequency, and the respiration was again obviously deranged. The child was, therefore, immediately taken out of the bath, and after it had somewhat recovered, was just dipped into cold water, for the purpose of exciting a reaction of the vascular system. This produced no marked effect. After a time, the breathing and circulation became natural, and seemed completely established: and at this time, which was fifty-two minutes after the first use of the tracheal pipe, the infant opened its eyes.

We had now considerable difficulty in disposing of our acquisition, for the establishment of an hospital does not, of course, provide for emergencies of the kind in question; and there was no female at hand, capable of exercising the maternal offices, to whom the charge could be entrusted. We could only, therefore, give directions for preserving the warmth, and administering sustenance, whilst a fit substitute for the mother was sought for. On the same night, the child was taken from the hospital to a house in the neighbourhood; but for some reason, with which I am unacquainted, it was removed the next morning, and was placed under the care of a female, who was at the time suckling an infant.

At our visit on this day, we found that the child had taken very little nutriment; it had not cried; and the breathing seemed impeded by mucus col-

lected in the air-tube. Its condition did not, indeed, promise that our efforts would be attended with the success which we had indulged the hope of in the first instance. On the subsequent morning we were informed of its death, the child having lived thirty-four hours after its removal from the uterus,

On inspecting the body of the mother, it was found that the liver, on the right side of the suspensory ligament, was nearly divided by a deep rent through its substance. A considerable quantity of blood was still in the abdominal cavity, and it was plain that this, as well as the blood which flowed from the abdomen, during the operation, had been poured out from the lacerated vessels of the liver. The ninth and tenth ribs, on the same side, were broken near their angles.

The circumstances of the foregoing case, it is scarcely necessary to remark, afford an illustration and a proof that a fœtus may be recovered, if promptly extracted from the uterus, when the mother has been killed by violence; this too, notwithstanding the additional very unfavourable circumstance of death under a profuse hæmorrhâgy. There seems, also, no reason to doubt that the child possessed the conditions for the continuance and permanency of the vital functions; as the actions of the brain, the heart, and the respiratory organs were established. At least, there could be reason-

ably a question only as to the competent degree of the *vis vitæ*, not as to its existence, nor as to the possibility of exciting those actions, by which it is at once manifested and maintained. The death of this child was, we may I think safely presume, the result of want of proper care in maintaining the animal temperature, in supplying fit and sufficient nutriment, and of the obstruction to respiration produced by the mucus collected in the trachea. It was suspected that the last circumstance might have arisen from the irritation of the tracheal pipe; but as permission was not granted to examine the body, nothing further was ascertained respecting this point.

In conclusion, I would beg leave to notice that the depressing effects of the brandy, and of the warm bath, noticed in the process of the recovery of the child, are not uninteresting, as they regard the means to be adopted for the resuscitation of persons apparently dead.

The particulars of the preceding case have been drawn up from notes taken at the time, and the statement has been revised by Dr. Blundell, to whose judicious suggestions, and prompt measures, the success of the treatment, as far as it was successful, must be principally attributed.