AN ACCOUNT
OF
A RARE CASE
OF
COMPLICATED LABOUR,
FROM LOCKING OF THE HEADS OF TWINS:

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED
NOTICES OF TWO RECORDED CASES OF THE SAME DESCRIPTION;
WITH A SUGGESTION OF A METHOD FOR EFFECTING
DELIVERY UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

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COMMUNICATED BY
DR. DAVIS.

Read April 8th, 1823.

AT one o'clock in the morning, on the 11th of August, 1822, I was called to Mrs. Welch, a small spare woman, thirty years of age, in her third labour, who was stated by the midwife in attendance, to have been eight hours in strong labour, with an arm presenting.

I found the membranes entire, but apparently containing no liquor amnii. The labour had so far advanced, that the os uteri was obliterated.

The presenting limb proved to be a left knee, and with it the vertex of a head. I attempted to push up the knee so as to cause the head to descend, but ineffectually, owing to the powerful and painful contraction of the uterus. The membranes being unusually tough, and not distended with fluid, were lacerated with some difficulty by the fore-finger introduced between the thigh and leg, so as to hook the child's ham. The knee was then pulled down, and the head at the same time was felt to retire upwards. The body having descended, the right arm was observed to be wedged between the occiput and the symphysis pubis, and was not disengaged without some difficulty after the left arm had been extracted.

No pulsation being perceptible in the cord, I was proceeding, in the usual manner, to introduce two fingers of my left hand into the child's mouth, for the purpose of bringing the chin down to the breast, and hastening the delivery, when I discovered that the hollow of the sacrum was occupied by the head of another child, of which the body was still above the brim of the pelvis. The face of this second child was towards the sacrum, and its occiput was closely applied to the throat of the first-mentioned child. The back of the neck of the latter was closely applied to the symphysis pubis of the mother, and its face to the back of the neck of the child whose body remained within the uterus. With the heads thus situated it would have

been impossible, even had the firm contraction of the uterus been out of the question, to have pushed upwards the one next to the sacrum, without carrying the other before it; and every attempt to extract that which was next to the pubes had the effect of pressing the other so forcibly downwards as to threaten a rupture of the perinæum. In this dilemma I was at first rather doubtful what course to pursue, the case, so far as then known to me, being without a parallel: but after a little consideration, I resolved upon a mode of completing the delivery, which will be described presently, and which may, perhaps, be advantageously adopted on similar occasions in future. Owing to the smallness of the children, it proved unnecessary in the present instance, both heads having been simultaneously expelled from the pelvis by one powerful parturient effort, without any assistance from art. Both children were irrecoverably dead. They appeared to be six weeks or more before the full period. The mother had a smart attack of hysteritis, marked by uterine pain and suppression of the lochia, and accompanied with great excitement of the vascular system, and severe intolerance of light. Three bleedings, amounting together to seventy-six ounces, and free purging, with other appropriate means, removed these symptoms, and she recovered perfectly.

In the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* for January, 1822, a case very similar to this is de-

scribed; in which, however, there was the peculiarity that the head occupying the hollow of the sacrum had its occiput towards that bone, and the head next to the pubes had its face towards the left side of the pelvis.

It is stated, that the head nearest to the sacrum was perforated, with the design of making room, if not for extracting the other head entire, at least to admit of applying the perforator to it also. The latter alternative was found necessary; but even after both heads had been broken down, it was not without considerable force exerted by the operator, as well as by two gentlemen who assisted him, that the head next to the pubes was extracted. The extraction of the other child was then effected without further difficulty. The patient died of inflammation of the uterus and parts lining the pelvis, on the eighteenth day after her delivery, notwithstanding very active treatment and great attention on the part of her medical attendant.

Another case of this kind is related in the *Journal de Medicine* for November, 1771, in a letter addressed to M. Levret, by M. Eneaux, a surgeon at Dijon, who states, that he succeeded in extracting, with the forceps, the head next to the sacrum, while the body of the other child, which had passed the os externum, was held up in the hands of an assistant over the pubes of the mother. The head of this last child was extracted with ease after the

body of the other. The writer adds, that the child which he extracted with the forceps survived, though not larger than a seven months' child; but that the other died, though corresponding in size to an eight months' child. The mother recovered well. M. Eneaux further states, that he ascertained, by examining the placenta, that both children had been contained in one set of membranes. This, I have some reason to suspect, was likewise the case with the woman whom I delivered; but on this point I cannot speak positively, having inadvertently lost the only opportunity for making the inquiry.

Should a case of this description occur about the seventh month of pregnancy, the mode of delivery by the forceps, which succeeded in the hands of M. Eneaux, might perhaps be attempted; but with twins near the full period of gestation, such a mode of delivery, if practicable at all, would be manifestly incompatible with the lives either of the mother or the children. I may, therefore, perhaps, be allowed to suggest for such cases, the operation which, had the natural efforts proved incompetent to the delivery, I had resolved to perform in the case described above. This consists in detaching the body that has passed the os externum from the head, pushing the detached head further above the brim of the pelvis than it is already situated, and then extracting, with the forceps, the head occupying the hollow of the sacrum, provided the natural

efforts should still prove inadequate. After the extraction of this child, the separated head of the other would remain to be extracted with the forceps, or such other suitable instruments as might be necessary. In this manner the lives of the mother and one of the children would most probably be effectually saved; while the life lost would only be that of a child so situated that it would appear impossible to devise any practicable method for its preservation. Its death must inevitably ensue in a few minutes, even if no operation whatever were attempted, from the pressure that must unavoidably be made upon the umbilical cord; so that there will be no necessity for applying a cutting instrument while the child is alive.

In concluding this account of the present case, I have great pleasure in acknowledging, that, for the opportunity of treating it and others, I am indebted to the friendship of Dr. Davis.

Leicester Square,
March 1st, 1823.