ON THE
DESTRUCTION
OF
THE FŒTAL BRAIN.

By MR. HAMMOND.

COMMUNICATED

By MR. TRAVERS.

Read Jan. 14, 1823.

A YOUNG woman of the name of Atfield having an unusually narrow pelvis could not expel the fœtus by natural means; and it became necessary to diminish the size of its head.

An opening was made in the skull near the fontanelle, and a portion of parietal bone was removed; three fingers were introduced into the brain of the fœtus, the cerebrum was completely broken down, and about two ounces of brain taken out: the head and the whole of the fœtus were then quickly extracted. The child immediately cried heartily, and breathed in a perfectly healthy manner, and with the usual apparent strength. It bled considerably from the wound in the head; a dossil of lint was applied, and kept on by adhesive plaister. This seemed to moderate, but not to stop the hemor-

rhage; the child passed fæces and urine, and for twelve hours the functions of life seemed to be carried on in the usual and healthy manner; the child frequently crying loudly. After that time it became weaker, cried more feebly, looked very pale, and seemed gradually sinking; for ten hours it continued in this state, during the last two it was slightly convulsed. The bleeding from the wound though not violent, never ceased, and the child appeared to die more immediately from the hemorrhage.

On examining the brain after death, I found the dura mater considerably torn, the cerebrum throughout both hemispheres torn and broken down, so as to appear a mere mass without organization; where the ventricles should have been was filled by clotted blood. The cerebellum, medulla oblongata, and spinal marrow were not injured. The child lived forty-six hours.

This case may perhaps be useful in a practical point of view, as it tends to show that the removal of a part, and the destruction of the whole cerebrum, does not insure death to the fœtus; and in such cases, where the head must be opened, it would be better to divide the medulla oblongata or the spinal chord; for the mother, who is generally prepared for the operation by the assurance that her child is already dead, suffers considerable pain on finding it born with life, but without brains.