BRIEF NOTICE
PRESENTED TO THE
MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY
WITH THE
ORIGINAL
OBSTETRIC INSTRUMENTS
OF THE
CHAMBERLINS.

By H. H. CANSARDINE, Esq.

Read March 17, 1818.

IN depositing the Obstetric Instruments of the Chamberlins among the archives of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, I beg to offer a few facts and observations, which may serve to authenticate their genuineness and their originality.

The estate of Woodham Mortimer Hall, near Maldon in Essex, was purchased by Dr. Peter Chamberlin some time previous to 1683, and continued in his family till about 1715, when it was sold by Hope Chamberlin to Mr. William Alex-

ander, wine-merchant, who bequeathed it to the Wine-coopers' Company. The principal entrance to the mansion is through a porch, the masonry of which, being carried up with the building, serves as closets to its respective stories. Two or three years ago, a lady with whom I am intimately acquainted, (and from whom I had the particulars,) discovered in the floor of the upper closet a hinge, and tracing the line, she saw another, which led to the obvious conclusion of a door; this door she soon found means to open. There was a considerable space between the floor and the ceiling below, and this vacancy contained divers empty boxes, &c. Among those was a curious chest or cabinet in which was deposited a collection of old coins, trinkets, gloves, fans, spectacles, &c. with many letters from Dr. Chamberlin to different members of his family, and also these Obstetric Instruments. Being on terms of intimacy with the family resident at Woodham Mortimer Hall, these Instruments have been presented to me, and I have now the satisfaction of depositing them with your Society for the gratification of public curiosity, and to secure to Chamberlin the meed of posthumous fame, due to him for his most useful discovery.

With respect to these Instruments I would briefly observe, that they appear to me to contain *within themselves* the most direct and conclusive evidence of originality of invention; and that even the pro-

gress of this invention may be distinctly traced in its different stages as it passed through the mind of the inventor. First, we have a simple vectis, with an open fenestrum, (supposed to be of much more recent invention.) Then we have the idea of *uniting two* of these instruments by a joint, which makes each blade serve as a fulcrum to the other, instead of making a fulcrum of the soft parts of the mother; and which also unites a power of drawing the head forward. This idea is at first accomplished by a pivot, which being *rivelled* makes the instrument totally incapable of application! Then he goes to work again, and having made a hitch in each vectis for the joint, he fixes a pivot in *one only*, which, projecting, is to be received into a corresponding hole in the other blade, after they have been applied *separately*. It may be observed, that although there is a worm to the projecting part of the pivot, yet there is no corresponding female screw in the hole which is to receive it. Every practical accoucheur will know that it is not easy, or always possible, to lock the joint of the forceps with such accuracy as to bring this pivot and hole into apposite contact. This Chamberlin soon discovered, and *next* produced a more light and manageable instrument, which, instead of uniting by a pivot, he passes a *tape* through the two holes and winds it round the joint, which method combines sufficient accuracy of contact, security, and mobility.

From the roughness of the workmanship, I am led to conclude that Chamberlin was his own artificer; a practice, I am told, not uncommon in those days, when mystery and empiricism were not regarded as contemptible even among the enlightened professors of science.

H. H. CANSARDINE.

London, February 6th, 1818.