ing fit, it is generally found. The inference he should naturally draw from that circumstance was, that the deceased died in a faint or state of syncope, which would be accelerated, if not actually produced, by her being in that state of fainting placed in an erect position, similar to the position she was placed in when the salt and water was given to her as detailed by the witnesses. The contents of the abdomen were sound. The surface of her body was remarkably pale, and her face was exsanguineous, peculiar to persons who die in a faint. The blood of persons who died very suddenly is generally in a fluid state, but deceased's was not; has known persons die sitting in a chair from over dose of common salts.

In reply to Mr. Curran, Mr. Wright said, "I think the deceased died in a state of syncope by being kept in the erect position after the faint, and having the salt and water administered to her; deceased did not die from immediate violence, but it might have had an indirect effect towards producing her death."

G. W. Hatchell, M.D. and surgeon, was next examined, and corroborated the testimony given by Mr. Wright. He further stated, that the vessels of the brain were completely empty, and would corroborate what Mr. Wright had said—namely, that the deceased died in a fainting state; the exhaustion following from the quarrel with her husband would naturally produce fainting.

William McLeod, M.D., was examined, and corroborated the testimony given by Dr. Hatchell. He stated it to be his opinion that deceased died in a state of syncope or faint. His opinion was more strongly confirmed by the circumstance of his having seen the deceased two hours after her death, when the surface of her body exhibited that ex-sanguineous appearance peculiar to persons dying from syncope.

The jury, after about ten minutes' deliberation, returned the following verdict:—

"We find that the said Mary Connolly died in syncope or faint, produced by violent excitement, arising from a quarrel with her husband on Saturday last, and from the injudicious treatment she received subsequently, while in that faint, by her neighbours placing her in an erect position, and administering salt and water."

We have abridged the preceding account from "Saunders's News-letter;" it hardly requires any comment.

The next case, or rather series of cases, to which we would refer, occurred in London, and were the subject of a communication from Dr. Wilson to the Medico-Chirurgical Society. We notice some of the leading features briefly, as a full report will be found in another part of the Journal. A colour manufacturer was taken ill on the 1st of January, with griping and purging, which continued until his death on the 20th of the same month. The youngest child, aged two years, died on the 16th. The survivors of the family, consisting of the mother and two children, were admitted into the Middlesex Hospital on the 26th. The symptoms were very obscure. The mother died on the 21st of March; the time at which the other children died is not stated. Post-mortem

examination did not throw any clear light on the cause of death, or on the nature of the disease. The society, however, seemed to think that the fatal termination depended on the effects of poison. With this opinion we are much disposed to coincide.

The bodies of the father and youngest child were disinterred by order of the coroner, after the admission of the survivors into the Middlesex Hospital; a chemical analysis, it is said, was made, but no conclusion could be arrived at.

In truth, no other result can follow from investigations conducted after the fashion of coroner's inquests in this country. This we shall make the theme of some observations on a future occasion, our present object being merely to direct attention to certain facts illustrative of the state of medical jurisprudence in the United Kingdom.

ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY.

May 10, 1842.

Dr. SEYMOUR in the Chair.

Peculiar Symptoms affecting an entire Family, and terminating in Death. By JOHN WILSON, M.D., Physician to the Middlesex Hospital.

It appears that the family, consisting of father, mother, and three children, were in good health up to the evening of December 30, 1840. On January 1, 1841, the father, Giovanni Arzoni, a Neapolitan, and manufacturer of colours, was taken ill with griping pains and purging, which never ceased till death. He was sick at times, but never vomited; the motions were offensive and black; had frequent cold fits during the day, followed by much fever. The joints from the first were swollen, not red, but so painful that he could not be put into a warm bath. He was considered by the medical man who attended him to be labouring under typhoid fever. He died on the 20th of January. On examination after death, the stomach was found healthy, but slightly discoloured in one part, attributable only to a natural cause; it contained a small quantity of fluid (homogeneous), principally animal matter; intestines healthy; lungs and pleura presented strong evidence of inflammation, *quite sufficient to account for death.* The youngest child, aged two years, died on the 16th of January. On examination after death, there was no morbid condition of any of the viscera but the lungs, and they presented some little congestion only; the stomach and intestines were specially healthy. The above information was obtained from the evidence given at the coroners' inquest; the cases were not seen by the author. On the 26th of January the survivors, the mother and two children, were admitted into the Middlesex Hospital, under the care of Dr. Wilson. The mother, who was about four months advanced in pregnancy, was taken ill on the 2nd of January with a pain in her head, and sleeplessness during the night, and she lost her consciousness. The bowels were affected with severe pain, and there were frequent evacuations, sometimes only of fœtid gas, at others of matter like putrid flesh. Three days after

she lost the use of her limbs, and had pain in the joints. On the 6th day œdema of the feet, legs, and thighs, came on, and the urine was scanty, high coloured, and offensive; water flowed from the mouth which "had a cankerly taste." On the 15th of March, she gave birth to a very small infant, which only lived twenty-four hours; she herself died on the 21st of March, labouring under symptoms of puerperal fever.

The details of this case, as well as the cases of the two children who also died in the hospital, are carefully related by the author, to which our limits oblige us to confine ourselves.

In all the three patients the most prominent features of their sufferings were the general soreness of the fleshy parts as well as of the joints, exquisite sensibility of the skin when touched, and the pain produced whenever they were moved or their position changed, according to their so frequently expressed wishes.

Next may be noticed the œdema, and particularly that of the inferior extremities, which was present in all the three; the alkaline state of the urine, when admitted, and their desire for acid drink; the faces of all being pale, haggard, and so care-worn as to give to the children the aspect of aged dwarfs, from their hollow cheeks, sharp features, exsanguined and emaciated bodies. At the same time their appetites were great; that of Mary Ann ravenous. But the mother's never was good; on the contrary, at times it was difficult to induce her to taste even some trifling sustenance. The mother, at different times, was much exhausted by diarrhœa, and both the children suffered from it, but less severely. During their afflictions the intellects of all preserved their integrities; lastly, there was the "cankery" taste of the mother, the "metallic" of the boy, the watery state of the mouth and eyes, in each; the teasing, hacking, dry cough, common to all, and affecting the children particularly towards the last. Then their lying sometimes without any covering, even during the coldest season, when at nights the external atmosphere was 10 or 15 degrees below the freezing point, and their objecting to even a sheet, while their flesh was so greatly wasted, and their lungs became less and less capable of absorbing oxygen, from the gradual infiltration of blood into parts at their vesicular tissue, diminishing proportionally the respirable portions. The death of the mother was accelerated by parturition, and examination after death showed very extensive disease in both the abdomen and chest, yet probably differing considerably from what might have resulted had parturition not occurred, and had she died, like the children, of the affection common to all of them, and not been sooner carried off by a new disease supervening on the original one.

The ulcerations of the sulci of the stomach of the children have been noticed; but they were so slight that, in ordinary cases, they might have been overlooked, without attention having been particularly directed to that organ. Neither the mucous membrane of the intestines, nor other parts of the abdominal viscera, showed any particular change from the normal state.

But the organ by which death finally entered appeared in these two to have been by the lungs; for the blood at last seemed infiltrated into their tissue,

rendering portions of them dark, and so heavy as to sink in water, and resembling considerably the state of the lungs of those who died of the spotted fever in 1837, and which I have described as non-circumscribed pulmonary apoplexy, caused by the blood becoming so altered as to escape from its proper vessels into the tissue of the lungs, thus rendering portions of them (as in these) black, and so heavy as to sink in water. Yet these parts were not circumscribed by healthy lung, but they gradually shaded off from the heavy dark parts to the respirable portions.

The author abstains from giving any opinion as to the cause of these deaths.

After the admission of this part of the Arzoni family into the hospital, the coroner caused the bodies of the father and infant to be disinterred, and examined. A chemical analysis was made, and an inquest held; yet no conclusive evidence resulted. So that legal, chemical, and medical investigations, combined, have not been able to unravel the mystery which envelops the cause of death.

A Case in which Pregnancy was unattended with the usual Signs, and in which Parturition occurred without Labour Pains—Rupture of the Funis, which remained untied forty-five minutes. By THOMAS LEWIS, Esq., Liverpool. [Communicated by Dr. C. J. B. Williams.]

The case was that of a lady, aged 41, who had noticed an enlargement of abdomen for six or seven months. She felt certain she was not pregnant, because she had not experienced symptoms similar to those of her first pregnancy. Catamenia appeared last, eight or nine months ago. External examination not proving satisfactory, examination *per vaginam* was made, which disclosed the nature of the case. The os uteri was dilated to the size of a shilling, the neck entirely expanded, and the membranes and child's head could be felt. Though informed she was pregnant, she was sceptical, and made no preparation for the event.

On January 5 the author was sent for, and found the child born before his arrival: the funis was ruptured about four inches from the umbilicus. It appears the lady had suffered for diarrhœa for two days previous. At one o'clock, a.m., she awoke, she says, with griping pains in the belly; these continued until six, when she got out of bed for ease. She walked into an adjoining room, and, bending herself, rested her hands on the table. Suddenly the waters broke, and the child was expelled, and fell on the floor. She states positively she had no pain in the loins, nor bearing-down pains, previous to the expulsion of the child. The author considers the following facts established by the case:—

1. That pregnancy may occur, and nearly reach its termination, without many of the ordinary signs.
2. That the arteries may contract, like other hollow muscular organs, without the consciousness of the mother.
3. That rupture of the funis is attended with little or no bleeding.

The practical doctrine he infers from it is, that in cases of illegitimate births occurring suddenly, and where the child is found dead, the circumstances should be of a very decided character before the guilt of infanticide be fixed on the mother.