

to a long labour, and were strictly preventable accidents.

Few, I think, will deny that unnecessary delay, after the head is in the pelvic cavity, is not only useless, but pernicious, and that by timely interference we lessen the risk both to the mother and the child. It is quite impossible, however, to lay down any precise rules as to when the forceps should be used in lingering labour. Every case must be treated on its own merit, after careful examination of the effects of the pains.

Perhaps I may be allowed to conclude these imperfect notes by quoting what I have said on this point in my work on the *Science and Practice of Midwifery*, as I do not think I could put it more concisely in fresh words:

"What has to be done, I conceive, is to watch the progress of the case anxiously after the second stage has fairly commenced, and to be guided by an estimate of the advance that is being made and the character of the pains, bearing in mind that the risk to the mother, and still more to the child, increases seriously with each hour that elapses. If we find the progress slow and unsatisfactory, the pains flagging and inefficient, and incapable of being intensified by the means indicated, then, provided the head be low in the pelvis, it is better to assist at once by the forceps, rather than to wait until we are driven to do so by the state of the patient."

'POSTHUMOUS LABOUR.'

A correspondent writes:—"At Moglia, in the province of Mantua, occurred a case of post-mortem delivery in some respects unique. A woman, Lavinia Merli by name, subject to chronic epilepsy, had suddenly lapsed into the cataleptic state when in the eighth month of pregnancy. So death-like was the trance that she was certified as dead and ordered to be buried. The coffin containing the unfortunate woman was closed and deposited in the mortuary chapel pending the gravedigger's work, when next morning it was found with the lid raised up. The woman's body—now a corpse—was horribly con-

tracted, and, closely pressed between the knees, lay a new-born child, quite dead. The gravedigger and his men, for reasons of their own, kept their discovery a secret and buried the two corpses. The facts, however, leaked out, and the judicial authorities, aided by physicians from Mantua, at once proceeded to exhume the coffin and examine its contents. A very minute and prolonged inspection was made, with the result that the physicians declared themselves satisfied that the mother was already dead when the child was expelled from the womb. From the position of the bodies and the commencing decomposition in which they were found, taken in connexion with other considerations set out at length in the official report, the conclusion was arrived at that the gases, disengaged by the putrefactive process, and seeking an exit, had forced out the fœtus; that, in short, the case was one undoubtedly very rare, but by no means unprecedented, in obstetric experience, of "posthumous labour." The incident, however, has attracted notice beyond the Mantuan province, and medico-legal discussion on its details is yet far from being exhausted. It is asked, not unnaturally, if the woman Merli had really ceased to live, how the coffin lid came to be even partially raised? She is not by any means the only patient, in catalepsy or "nona," who in quite recent Italian experience has been certified as dead and treated accordingly; and the anti-cremationists, making the most of such cases, are warning the public how still more slender, in "apparent death," would be the chances of escape for Merli and her like, if, instead of the coffin, she had been consigned to the crematorium.

CURE FOR CONSUMPTION.

THE EMPEROR AND DR. KOCH.

Dalziel's agent at Berlin telegraphs:—"Every one at the Charity Hospital is under promise not to divulge anything respecting the experiments carried on by Professor Koch for the cure of consumption. The private patients under Dr. Koch's care belong to the highest aristocracy."