

day evening. The head must have been on the perineum early on the Tuesday morning, because Baron Stockmar tells us in his *Memoirs* that at that time delivery was momentarily expected. At 6 p.m. on the Tuesday evening the discharges are stated "to have become of a green colour." Even then Dr. Sims, who describes the case, says: "There never was room to entertain a question about the use of instruments;" and this luckless patient was actually not delivered until 9 p.m. on the Wednesday, and was allowed to exhaust herself with feeble ineffective pains for fifty hours after the rupture of the membranes, and not much less after the head was on the perineum. Naturally this case gave rise to much discussion at the time, but no one seems to have suggested that the physicians were to blame in allowing their patient to linger on so long in a labour that probably could have been terminated with the greatest ease on the Tuesday morning. It is a strange thought that but for this atrociously bad midwifery the whole destinies of the nation would probably have been altered, and our present Sovereign might never have succeeded to the throne she has so long and so admirably occupied.

The second case I take, almost at random, from Gooch's *Compendium of Midwifery*, and I select that book because its author was *facile princeps* amongst the obstetricians of the day, and was a man of the greatest shrewdness and practical skill. He tells us "if the labour has been a long time stationary, and you believe that it cannot safely be accomplished by the powers of Nature, your best practice will then be to apply the forceps." This is sound practical teaching, far above that which was prevalent at the time; but even he is so imbued with the dread of the forceps that this is how he illustrates it:

"I was sent for by an accoucheur," he says, "who had been detained at a labour for two days and a half. The head had been fixed in the pelvis and touching the perineum for fourteen hours. I said I would wait three hours longer, and, if she was not then delivered, I would apply the forceps and deliver her in ten minutes—which I was obliged to do after the head

had been retained low in the pelvis for seventeen hours." I venture to affirm that if any student of the present day were to tell the Conjoint Board of Examiners that it was an admissible thing to leave the head on the perineum between forty and fifty hours, as in one of these cases, or even seventeen, as in the other, he would infallibly be remitted to his studies for a very considerable period.

It will thus be seen that the practice of the practitioner as regards the use of the forceps was essentially bad and quite indefensible. It was, indeed, one of the most curious examples I know of the way in which practice is apt to run in a groove, and in opposition to what now seems to us the plainest principles of common sense. It appears to us altogether incomprehensible that men who could make such a fuss about so safe and simple a procedure as the application of the forceps when the head is on the perineum should at the same time proceed to perforation and the destruction of the fetus, then so common, with amazing lightheartedness, as if it were a matter of no moment at all. When we learn that in so great a school of midwifery as the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, between the years 1815 and 1821, out of 21,867 deliveries the forceps were never once used, no record being even made of the number of craniotomies, and between the years 1826 and 1833, out of 16,654 births, they were only applied twenty-seven times, craniotomy being performed 118 times in the same number of cases, we cannot but reflect with horror on the number of infants—to say nothing of the mothers—whose lives must have been needlessly sacrificed. Contrast this with the present practice of the same institution, in which the forceps are applied on an average of 1 in 16.5 cases, and the striking change which has taken place will be very apparent.

I think it will now be very generally admitted that the long train of evils which we were taught were likely to follow the use of the forceps, and which have hindered many a man from using them when they were obviously indicated, really arose from pressure on the soft parts, and from the exhaustion incident