

the symptoms of great constitutional irritation, which presented themselves. Dr. P. declared that he would not agree to the use of the forceps—by which declaration I was placed in a most painful position—destined to see the poor woman suffer, or die on our hands, or to act upon my own responsibility. I was sure I could give her immediate relief, and with little or no inconvenience. I weighed the matter in my own mind, and resolved that the woman should not be without assistance, be the consequences what they would. Dr. P.'s departure at once left me free to act as I judged best.

I may have erred in etiquette to a brother practitioner, but I am sure I fearlessly did my duty to the poor woman. I was sorry the urgency of the case obliged me to take the patient, in any measure, out of his hands. I told him so, and urged him to the only course left for us to pursue, but he would not comply. I am certain that after I had been called in, and saw the grave symptoms which presented themselves, I owed a duty to her which was paramount to every notion of professional etiquette. With her it was life or death, or certain deformity, which is, perhaps, even worse than death itself; agreeable to her speedy delivery or not. No doubt she experienced a great amount of suffering, but I am happy the reparative process has comparatively healed the parts, without opening up the rectum or injuring the bladder or urethra.

Reflecting upon the history of this case, I would ask why should the forceps not be employed at an earlier stage? If they had been used some eight or ten hours sooner, would not the child have been alive? While we are sure the mother would have been saved an enormous amount of suffering. No person in his senses would desire to use the forceps if the head was still descending, but with the os uteri perfectly dilated, and the head pressing upon the perineum—the pains severe—and no advance made in a reasonable time, say an hour or more, surely it would be safer to employ the forceps, than have the mother and child to struggle on without assistance. I would maintain that it was better to use the forceps *too soon*, than by an *unwise delay* to hazard the life of the child, and the safety of the mother. I think such cases are not unlike a recent strangulated hernia, where we delay the operation until mortification has happened, or is about to happen, so that by our timidity, we cast an unjust obloquy upon the operation. In this case ignorance or prejudice may accuse the forceps of the mischief that occurred while, if they had been employed at an earlier stage, such ill consequences would never have happened.

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