

that her husband's anxiety should not be excited about her. I left town about 9, a. m., supposing all was going on as usual, and having no message about her. About 10, she felt that labour pains were coming on; I was sent for, and in my absence another medical man was called in. She was delivered in a couple of hours of a still born infant. Very little flowing, and but slight after-pains. The uterus appeared to contract very well, and he left her in half an hour, supposing that she was doing well, simply administering an opiate to relieve some uneasiness of which she complained; this was about 1, p. m. I returned from the country about 5, p. m., and immediately called to see her. Upon entering the room, I was struck with the peculiarly anxious expression of countenance which she exhibited; found that her respiration was very laborious, and she felt very restless and uneasy; there was no flowing; the uterus pretty firmly contracted; she complained of no pain; pulse small and tremulous. Although there was no flowing, I feared she would sink, and sent immediately for the medical man who had been with her in my absence; commenced administration of restoratives, which we continued after his arrival; but, notwithstanding the use of stimulants and cordials, and every means we could devise, the breathing became more and more difficult; the pulse ceased to vibrate; in less than an hour after my arrival the vital spark had fled. Here was a mystery which could only be solved by a post mortem examination, which, after much solicitation, was consented to.

Cavity of the abdomen first examined; uterus contained some blood clots; was firmly constructed; presented the usual normal appearance a few hours after delivery; ligaments not strained or broken. Stomach carefully removed and examined; was half filled with some fluid, probably gruel; presented no appearance of undue vascularity or diseased action. The intestinal canal was examined throughout its whole extent, but nothing appeared unusual; there were some few spots which appeared slightly vascular. The mesentery much loaded with fat; mesenteric glands much indurated, and had a knotty appearance; gall bladder full; liver not enlarged or diseased; spleen and kidneys quite natural; bladder containing some urine; muscular coat appeared very thin, but exhibited nothing like rupture.

There was some effusion in the thorax; pericardium contained a small quantity of fluid; heart of the ordinary size, and firmly contracted. The lungs were next removed; they showed some extensive and old attachments on their sternal aspect; the right lung was small and wasted; and, from its appearance, only a small surface could have been available for purposes of respiration; there were no tubercles or abscesses, but the air-cells were completely engorged with venous blood. The left lung was also very small, and had a peculiarly exsanguine appearance; the air-cells were filled with air, but there was not a particle of blood to be found in them; no tubercles. It was evident from the appearance of the lung, that it could have been of no use in the arterialization of the blood; that the right lung, and only a portion of that same, could have been used for some time previous to death. It is probable that the cause of death

was from the loss of balance between the nervous and vascular systems; from the great effort necessary on the part of the right lung to accommodate itself to the large quantity of blood which would be forced upon it after the fetal circulation ceased; when the pressure was taken from the abdomen, and when the blood having no purpose to subservise in the uterine cavity, would so much sooner make the circuit before its return to be rarified in the lungs. It is probable that had the flowing been considerable, her life would have been protracted some hours longer; but the result in the end would be inevitable. The state of the left lung, and its incapacity to take its share in the function of respiration, would serve to explain why pressure of the right lung, by lying on the right side, had, for some time, caused her much uneasiness. There was nothing peculiar about the appearance of the child; it appeared to have been dead only a few hours, as there was no maceration, abrasion, or desquamation of the cuticle; it appeared in every way natural, except a great wasting of the muscles, probably from inanition on the part of the mother, which would, readily enough, cause its death.

In this case, then, the insidious disease of the lungs had been concealed in such a way, by assuming symptoms very common in the pregnant state, that it was difficult to ascertain the dangerous nature of the disease till it was too late. There was also during my occasional attendance, so much of that delusive hope which we observe in the last stages of phthisis, buoying up the patient to the last moment, and with her also so strong a desire to make light of her troubles, at all times, when she was questioned about them, that, in fact, the consideration of the nature of her disease, was, with difficulty, at any time, forced upon her, and danger was scarcely apprehended till death was at the threshold of the frail earthly tenement.

Brockville, February 24, 1848.

ART. XI.—REPLY TO DR. MACDONNELL'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE CASE OF THE LATE CAPTAIN H., R. E.

To the Editor of the *British American Journal*.

Sir—By the politeness of a gentleman in this place, I have been favoured with the perusal of a recent number of the medical periodical, published in Montreal, of which, I understand, you are the editor. The number in question contains a paper, written by Dr. Macdonnell, purporting to be a narrative of the case of the late Captain H., R. E., in which there are several uncalled-for personalities and allusions to myself.

In my position, and in the exercise of my duty, I do not conceive myself called upon to enter into a medical controversy with any one, or to notice such an attack, especially from so very young a practitioner as Dr. Macdonnell, who, considering his standing in the profession, certainly does not want for confident self-assurance.

I shall therefore confine myself to a simple statement of my connection with the case.

As head of the medical department in Canada, surgeons of all corps are responsible to me, as well as to