

CANADA

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## ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

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*A Few Thoughts Respecting the Treatment of the After-birth.* By W. CANNIFF, M.D., M.R.C.S., England.

The function of the placenta is well understood. It is at once a bond of union between the new being within the womb, and the mother; and the organ by which the offspring's blood is aerated and its growth and development sustained. The hour of utero-gestation, at which the placenta begins its duty, may be doubtful; but the moment when it ceases its work is sufficiently certain.

The onset of parturition at once affects the placental circulation; for, as each pain comes and the uterus contracts, there must be a correlative arrest of the flow of blood into the maternal portion of the placenta. The only effect upon the child is such as may be experienced by holding the breath for a certain length of time. As the passage of the child by the natural way into the world progresses, the effect upon the child must be correspondingly increased; not only because of the increasingly intensified and prolonged bearing-down pains, but the necessarily increased contraction of the womb as its contents are expelled, and a diminution of the cavity takes place. At last, when the expulsive power overcomes all obstacles, and the head of the child or any portion of equal dimension is born, there must attend more or less displacement of the placenta in its attachment to the uterine walls. The placenta cannot contract, while the uterus in the whole of its extent does, and this, it is submitted, necessitates a partial or complete separation at this time of the placental organ. The child during this last pain, has been, as during the previous ones, deprived of the vivifying influence of the maternal blood; but does it now,