

Gynæcology and Obstetrics.

CRANIOTOMY ON THE DEAD CHILD.*

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I HAVE little doubt that the subject chosen for this paper has excited wonder. Yet that it is one of great importance I believe I will be able to show, and it is one that is seldom, if ever, found in our literature.

We read many wordy articles in the journals on "Craniotomy on the Living Child: Is it Justifiable?" etc. It is the intention of this paper to leave this subject entirely alone. It has been discussed and written upon *ad nauseam*, and can never be settled as long as religious views and sentimentality are allowed to cloud the horizon of scientific reasoning.

Happily in the consideration of craniotomy—or more broadly embryotomy—on the dead child we avoid all these difficulties, for who should have any sentimental regard for a dead foetus, and what religious discriminations reach it? Nevertheless, there exists in the minds of many medical men an abhorrence of this operation, even when performed on a lifeless foetus, and this has made many mothers permanent invalids, or even cost their lives.

The basis of this abhorrence is partly sentiment, partly an erroneous impression of the dangers and difficulties of the operation. There are many cases where, the foetus being dead, the method of delivery that is quickest and least harmful to the mother is by mutilation of the foetal body and extraction after reduction in size. In these cases the forced delivery of the foetus unreduced may, and does too often, cause irreparable injury to the mother, and what is gained in the end? Only a dead child!

The object of this paper is to show that the operation of craniotomy and other mutilating operations on the foetus are simple in performance, requiring little more skill than does the use of ordinary forceps, and are attended with a necessary mortality of zero. Further, that the bad results of the operations that are collated and published are due to the conditions which indicate the interference, or to errors of art, and should not be attributed to the operation

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