

a child from taking its first breath. Stevenson says: "A wet cloth may be placed over the child's mouth, either during birth or afterwards, and before or after the performance of respiration." I have been told of a case where a midwife had a large number of "stillbirths" in her practice, and where she was found to have placed a hollow sponge (cup shaped) over the child's mouth and nose, so as to prevent it from breathing while being born. It is well known how easy it is to allow the fully born living but non breathing child to lie on the bed without making the slightest endeavor to make it respire, and that such want of action cannot be uncommon among a certain class. Also that many children are stillborn because the mother allows herself to remain in labor for too long a time before calling in aid. It has been suggested that one reason why efforts are made by some to have dead liveborn children interred as stillbirths is that by so doing the burial fees are greatly lessened.

If a stillborn child can be interred for 1 shilling and sixpence, and a live born child for 10 shillings and sixpence, we may expect this to make a difference. Perhaps if we had the system of burial by municipal authorities as in Germany, there being no private undertakers; and where the funeral of a child is carried out for about 3 pence, this would meet the above argument.

A practitioner who has watched the practice of midwives writes me as follows: "There exists a deplorable (might one not say criminal) amount of negligence in the treatment of apparently stillborn children. I have repeatedly saved children that have been thrown aside by the *diplomated midwife*. The whole system is shocking."

A strong incentive to the criminal causation of stillbirth is *illegitimacy*. In 1890, of 896,937 births in England and Wales,

38,412 births were illegitimate, or about 1 in every 22 births. This shows there is a large field for criminal stillbirth business. I ask, what father or pregnant woman of an illegitimate conception would not pay a large sum to any one who guaranteed that the child was to be stillborn? The experience of our police and coroner's courts answers: We know that large quantities of drugs are consumed so that the child may be stillborn, and that in every city the professional abortionist makes a large income. Is it likely then that when these methods fail, not to mention the many "checks" used to prevent conception, that others will not be used when the child is being born? The fact that in this country a woman condemned to death can not have her execution stayed, unless she prove she has quickened, encourages the present disregard for infant life in the womb. That is, the infant in her womb, although a living child, is legally not worthy, in such a case, of any consideration. The plea of pregnancy in bar of execution holds good only if quickening has taken place, the vulgar idea being that the child receives life only when the woman quickens. Otherwise, not only she but the child in the womb are both killed. It would be well if some Member of Parliament would raise the question—Has the Crown the right to take the life of the child in the womb of the woman condemned to undergo the sentence of death? In France this law does not exist, for there the proof of pregnancy, not of quickening, is sufficient to stay execution.

It may be suggested that the Act relating to the concealment of birth lessens the value of the demand for registration. By the 24th and 25th Vict., Chap. 100, it is enacted that, "if any woman be delivered of a child, every person who shall, by any secret disposal of the dead body of the said child, whether such child died before, at or after birth, endeavor to