

on her bedding and on her under-garments when seized by the police a month later. Unfortunately a proper vaginal examination was not consented to at the time of the inquest, though we learned subsequently that she allowed herself at the request of the coroner to be examined by a midwife, who claimed to have found a condition indicating a recent parturition. There appeared to be no moral doubt that she had been pregnant and confined in reality at the time alleged, the only question being as to the identity of the child.

The body when received for examination was in an advanced state of decomposition and was swarming with *Dermestes lardarius* in both adult and larval stages, as well as large numbers of *Calliphora erythrocephala* larvæ and puparia of which a number were empty and some of the adult flies were found inside the coffin on opening it after it had contained the body for a few hours. The body was found on examination to be in an advanced state of decomposition. It exhaled a strong odour like that of old cheese, and the surface showed extensive pitting from the attacks of the insects. No microscopic or other evidence of acari could be found. The advanced state of decomposition made any decided opinion as to the cause of death impossible. The decomposition of the lungs was relatively far advanced, pointing to the probability of live-birth, but so far to let the question be decided positively. No marks of violence of the severer forms, alone recognisable under the circumstances, existed. The infant was between the 8th month and full term. There were no signs of its having been cared for.

Here we had the anomaly of very positive evidence of witnesses pointing to less than 5 weeks as the time elapsed since death, while on the other hand the state of the body, which according to Mégnin, the only authority on the subject, would require at least 3 months under favourable conditions for its production. The abundance of *Calliphora* did not correspond either with what is met with in early spring and in no other cases of one month's exposure have we ever personally met with the conditions found in this case. On the other hand the position of the body between the floors and over the kitchen was one likely to favour the drying which is so favourable to the *Dermestes*. Some experiments we made with the bodies of new-born infants showed that for the first month the *Dermestes* could not be induced to attack a body, but at the end of the second month they would do so. This latter period was the minimum and was only obtained in a dry atmosphere. The presence of the fatty acids in the vernix caseosa was thought of as a possible factor tending to hasten matters, but under experimental conditions it did not appear to make much difference.