

vis, to the right of the rectum, and was somewhat irregularly flattened.

The case coming up before the legal tribunal, the parties being tried for the murder of the negro, and afterwards for the murder of the boy, my testimony was required in the latter case. The cause of death of course was palpable, and my evidence on that point, strictly speaking, all that was needed. It happened, however, that the examination of a witness, during the trial of the case of the negro, led some to infer that the ball which proved fatal to the boy had glanced from the earth, and thus inflicted the fatal wound. Although the law recognized no difference in the crime, whether the fatal instrument reached the victim in a direct or indirect manner, yet this afforded lawyers, with but little evidence for a defence, sufficient grounds for cross-questioning the medical witness, in order, if possible, to confuse the minds of an ignorant jury. And first, I was asked to state, from the facts obtained at the autopsy, what was the direction in which the shot entered the body. Three circumstances at once suggested themselves, as militating against the formation of a positive opinion upon this point: 1st. The *thinness* of the abdominal walls; 2d. The *movableness of the intestines* within these walls; 3d. The fact of the ball's having *neither made an exit, nor been imbedded in any of the structures*. The difficulty arising from the thinness of the abdominal walls I may illustrate by remarking, that if a sheet of paper be fixed perpendicularly in the air, and then perforated by a ball, it would be exceedingly difficult, from a mere inspection of the aperture in the paper, to say at what angle the ball had struck, or whether it had reached the paper in a horizontal direction, from below, or from above. It is true, the abdominal wall is much thicker than a sheet of paper; yet the elasticity of the tissues composing it prevents an additional barrier to our determining the question, from the mere appearance of the wound: so that the obstacle, in the one case, I conceive to be almost as great as that in the other. I introduce the comparison, however, merely for the purpose of illustrating my meaning.

In the next place, was the position of the intestines fixed and unchangeable, the continuity of the wound in these parts with that in the abdominal wall would, in the case before us, have been preserved, and thus afforded me a clue to the solution of the question. But, as such is not the case, the intestines being allowed a certain degree of motion—and the latitude of this, we can imagine, is not diminished in a patient suffering from peritonitis—no correct line of direction could be drawn.

Again, had the ball made its exit at the posterior part of the body, or had it been imbedded in some of the deep structures, I could, under either of these events, have traced a direct line of direction, and solved