

*Case of Death from Placenta Prævia.* By Mr. HOLT,  
House Surgeon to the General Lying-in-Hospital, Lambeth.

OCTOBER 1st, at six a.m., I was summoned in all haste to attend a woman, an out-door patient of the General Lying-in-Hospital, residing at Cornwall Road, Lambeth. At half past six I was on the spot, but found that the patient had just expired. I was then able to glean the following particulars:—The patient, aged 27, tall, and of an apparently sound constitution, had reached the full period of her fifth pregnancy, and was daily expecting to be confined. About a month ago, whilst crossing Blackfriars bridge, she had a fall, not followed, however, by any evil consequences. On the 30th, whilst stretching out of the window, she felt a sudden pain in the hypogastrium, turned pale, and fell back in a chair, but soon recovered. At four o'clock on the following morning, she made use of the chamber vessel, sitting on it for about five minutes. Its contents were thrown down the closet by her husband; but owing to its then being dark he is unable to specify their nature, although he assures me that he believes a large clot of blood was passed, and thrown away in the evacuation. As soon as he returned, she said that the membranes had burst; a light was obtained, when it was found that blood was flowing from her in considerable quantity. A midwife residing in the neighbourhood was immediately sent for, who on examination found that the os uteri, which she had some difficulty in reaching, was only sufficiently dilated to admit the finger. Wet towels were applied to the pubes, but a fresh gush of blood having supervened, messengers were sent to the hospital, and to Dr. Meadows, physician to the out-door patients.

Meanwhile, the patient complained of cramps in her legs, convulsions ensued, her mind began to wander, and she shortly after expired. As the amount of blood, though considerable, was not deemed sufficient to cause death, I perfectly concurred with Dr. Palfrey, who arrived after the death of the patient at the house, in the necessity of having a post-mortem examination, and an hour was accordingly arranged for the following day. As soon as we had assembled, Dr. Palfrey called our attention to the singular fact, that whilst the other parts of the body were cold, the hypogastrium, especially the loins, still retained a remarkable degree of vital heat, a fact which was verified by all present. The abdominal parietes having been incised, the external surface of the uterus was found covered with irregular red patches, evidently the effects of congestion, as they occupied both the upper and under surface, and were not rendered fainter by pressure. The uterus, which, it may be remarked, presented an extreme friability, and its walls

exceedingly attenuated, was then removed and vertically incised, when after extracting a fine female child, the placenta was found firmly attached over the whole of the anterior portion of the organ, its centre corresponding to the os. This, it is needless to say, we had before ascertained by vaginal examination, but we were considerably surprised to find that the uterus contained no vestiges of internal hæmorrhage. It would seem probable that death was induced more by the sudden deprivation of the supply of blood to the brain during a gush, than by stoppage of the heart's action from absolute loss of blood. Had the patient been in an hospital, and hysterotomy been performed immediately after death, the child, judging from its appearance, might perhaps have been saved; but such an operation, however justifiable in a moral point of view, is totally impracticable in out-door practice, as it would demand on the part of the practitioner the assumption of a degree of responsibility which few would be found willing to incur.