

To the Editors of the Medical and Physical Journal.

GENTLEMEN,

IN your last No. 148, p. 185, I observed a paper on the case published by Jones, on the subject of twins, by one who calls himself an Essex Practitioner, and very modestly, an inexperienced practitioner. The writer "condemned himself for rashness," for doing, what in my humble opinion, founded on both theory and practice, he ought to have done two hours before. He says, "in the absence of any particular bad symptom, delay cannot be very hazardous, whereas, producing delivery '*per artem*,' is always attended with danger, both to mother and child." In the above, he may, possibly, be deceived, from not *seeing* any particular bad symptom; but he little knew or suspected what was going on in the dark: and the hidden works of darkness ought always to be suspected. Was he certain that no unseen hæmorrhage was going on. Was he certain that the placenta of the first child continued to adhere firmly to the uterus? Was he certain that the vessels of the two placentas did not anastomose, and the first being detached, hæmorrhage would take place from both uterus and placenta. He says "no hæmorrhage succeeded the birth of the child, the placenta was retained by the undelivered child." So was any blood which had escaped from the vessels of the uterus or placenta; and as there was no appearance of blood there was no alarm. "I waited two hours, no pains returned, nor was there any hæmorrhage, but a great degree of languor." The cause of the last will soon appear. During these two hours the woman was losing blood; but being prevented passing the os externum, by the placenta of the first, and by the body, membranes, and waters of the second child, it did not, or could not, make its appearance. As soon as he delivered the second child, "flooding to an alarming extent instantly succeeded; and after bringing away the two placentas, the gush was such as I had never before witnessed." These, the flooding and the gush, were composed of the great pool of blood, which, I take for granted, was accumulating during two hours, from the detachment of the first placenta, which was confined, as mentioned above, till a passage was opened for it. The loss of this blood very readily accounts for the "great degree of languor." The writer's expression helps to confirm me in the above opinion. He says "the flooding soon abated, but this arose from the sunk state of the

patient, who had, in a few moments, lost not less than six or seven pounds of blood." The loss of so much blood in a few moments, in my opinion, proves that it was, as hinted above, ready, in an extravasated state, to gush out at the first opportunity. I deny that the vessels of any uterus can discharge six or seven pounds of blood in a few moments: is he aware that moments signify the more usual modern name of seconds?

The writer then condemns himself for what he did, forms a resolution, whenever he meets with twins in future, to deliver the first '*per artem*,' and leave the second to nature. However he may despise my advice, which is just the reverse, I caution him, before he unsheath his *Tire-tetes*, that he is perfectly certain that there are two or three children. If he ever attended any respectable teacher, or read any respectable book on the subject, he must have heard or seen that few or no practitioners have been able to discover a twin case before the first is born. If he can point out any certain mode of discovering twins or triplets, erit vetustissimis nobis obstetricibus magnus Apollo. I may further presume to add, that if he had been of his present opinion and left the second to nature other two hours, he would, very probably, have witnessed the death of both mother and child.

He has contradicted the assertion he set out with, "that delivery *per artem* is always attended with danger to the mother and her offspring." Instead of which he had recourse to delivery *per artem*, and although, in my opinion, too long delayed, yet it narrowly saved the mother; there is no account of the child.

Dr. Denman, in a late publication, says, the science of midwifery has been improved in the present age beyond our utmost expectations; or words to that purpose, as I have not the book before me. I confess I am of a very different opinion, and have not kept these opinions secret; particularly in the case treated above. I am inclined to believe that the doctrines the philosophising and forbearing Dr. Hunter has instilled into his pupils will continue to prevail, and that the science is rather in a retrograde state. Do nothing; give no assistance; leave all to nature, but *guard the perineum*. Some observations on this fashionable forbearing practice will, possibly, be made in future. And also on the absurdity of the practice of guarding the perineum, opposing the passage of the child, and protracting the labour, which at the best is bad and long enough.

I am, &c.

A. FOGO.

Newcastle, June 8th, 1811.

To the Editors of the Medical and Physical Journal.

GENTLEMEN,

ALLOW me to say a few words in reply to Mr. Fogo's Remarks on the Case of Twins which I sent for publication in your Journal for June last. He begins by a misstatement in saying that I called myself an "inexperienced practitioner." I acknowledged myself a young man, and that confession surely ought to have disarmed criticism of any unusual severity. It was the first case in which I had attended the delivery of twins; I never before delivered a foetus with the forceps, nor had my hand till then been introduced into a uterus for the purpose of turning and delivering by the feet. I was alone; no medical man resided within five miles of me, and the only resource left me was my own immatured judgment, and Denman's Introduction to Midwifery which I had taken with me. "I condemned myself for rashness" because Denman writes as follows: 'Without regard to those who are fond of speculative opinions, or the determination of those who are guided by practice alone, I have concluded that we may safely, and ought to wait *four hours at least* after the birth of the first child, before we deliver a patient *by art* of a second child, if there be no particular cause for delivering her sooner; by this decision we shall avoid many unnecessary operations without detriment to the patient, without increasing our own difficulties, or hazarding our reputation.' And, further, I was not convinced that any particular symptom rendered immediate interference necessary. The woman was very languid and low before labour-pains first came on; some circumstances made her situation peculiarly distressing; herself and friends were placed in a middling station of life, and she had been seduced under a promise of marriage, and, at an advanced period of pregnancy, arrangements were concluded for the celebration of the nuptials; even a dinner for the occasion was prepared, and the friends of the young woman had assembled in order to accompany her to church; at this moment the young man receded from his engagements, and left the poor girl a prey to wretchedness and remorse. Surely, then, such a peculiarity of situation would account for "great languor" and dejection of spirits without any other cause; and was that sufficient ground for the immediate delivery of the second child? I waited two hours after delivering the first, "during that time" (says Mr. Fogo) the woman was losing blood; but being

prevented from passing the *os externum* by the placenta of the first, and by the body, membranes, and waters of the second child, it did not, nor could not, make its appearance." He also takes it for granted, that during this period a great pool of blood was accumulating from the detachment of the first placenta, which was confined, as before mentioned, till a passage was opened for it. Now had this really been the case, I must have met with these obstructing causes on introducing my hand; on the contrary, neither the placenta, membranes or coagula were to be felt either at the *os externum* or the *os uteri*; that part of the uterus which had contained the child delivered was unoccupied, at least so much so, that my fingers passed some distance from the *os uteri* before they were opposed by the membranes of the second *fœtus*; the placenta which Mr. F. has so conveniently placed at the *os uteri* was not to be found. I traced the chord till it was lost behind the membranes, enveloping the remaining *fœtus*. The entire absence of pains during the delivery of the first child, and subsequent to it, accounts for the uterus being in this state; it appeared to have lost its usual powers of contracting; one or both placenta adhered to the uterus, which rendered separation with my fingers necessary. I cannot now state whether they were united; this is an omission for which regret is now useless. The hæmorrhage was truly such as I had never witnessed. I stated the loss of blood was six or seven pounds; I spoke within bounds: the expression "in a few moments," I admit was indefinite and vague; it was thrown out with great rapidity, and continued to flow till she sunk without any appearance of life. One of the children is now alive, the other lived several months. I pretended not (as Mr. Fogo insinuates) to the knowledge of discovering a twin case prior to the birth of the first child; surely there was no vanity in stating that the child which I had delivered with the forceps being a little undersize, connected with the large appearance of the woman, led me to judge there were twins. I can also assure Mr. Fogo that I have attended a respectable teacher, (Dr. Haighton,) and that I have also read respectable books on the subject of midwifery. As I advance in years I hope to add to my small share of knowledge; his criticisms will, perhaps, stimulate my exertions, but at present they fail to convince me, that I delivered the woman "but just in time to save her life," or that if I had delivered her two hours sooner I should have been justified by both "Theory and Practice."

I am, Gentlemen, &c.

Your most obedient servant,

AN ESSEX PRACTITIONER.

August 10th, 1811.

P. S: I shall expect, with impatience, Mr. Fogo's Observations on the "Retrograde" State of the Obstetric Art, and on the "Absurdity of Guarding the Perineum." If it is really necessary for us to "unlearn" that which has cost most of us much expence and labour to acquire, the sooner we begin the better.