

ANOTHER CASE OF NEGLIGENCE OF A MIDWIFE.

THE STOCKPORT BOARD OF HEALTH.

Another of those deaths which have so frequently arisen from the negligence or carelessness of the midwife, occurred the other day, being another illustration of the daily *advantages* of a "free trade in medicine and no monopoly." It was that of a young woman named Pickering, aged 20, who being pregnant of an illegitimate child, and belonging to the above institution, was attended in labour on Saturday, the 11th Dec., by Thomas Barton, a young lad 16 or 17, now apprenticed to Mr. Pigot, the accredited surgeon to the Stockport Board of Health. It appears that Barton left his patient in about ten minutes, having neglected to remove the placenta, in consequence of which omission she died on the 29th.

Information of the circumstances having reached the coroner, he authorised Mr. Graham, surgeon, to make a post mortem examination of the body.

Mr. Graham, the first witness examined, stated in effect that he had made a post-mortem examination of the body of the deceased. Found the brain and contents of the chest in a perfectly healthy state. On examining the abdomen, &c., had no doubt, from the appearances, that the deceased had met with her death owing to the ignorance and unskilful treatment of the individual who attended her.

The evidence of Mrs. Selby, Mrs. Gallimore, and Mrs. Bunting were then taken at some length. The result of their testimony was that Barton delivered Pickering of a boy (which is living), but did not bind up the body of the mother or bring away the whole of the placenta, though he gave them to understand that "all was right." Portions of the placenta were removed three days after by other parties than by her medical attendant.

Mr. Richard Pigot said he was surgeon to the Board of Health. It was a society who enjoy by subscription the advantages of medical attendance. The number of members was upwards of 2,000; there was only one surgeon, an assistant, and two apprentices. The assistant had not "passed," but thought he was now out of his time. Thomas Barton had been an apprentice four or five months, having been with Dr. Ryan previously, perhaps altogether eighteen months. Witness was of opinion that deceased died in consequence of a part of the placenta having been left in the womb, inflammation, and he suspected mortification, having ensued. She would have recovered had the whole of it been taken away, as it ought to have been. She was not labouring under any disease other than that in question. Barton had been in the habit of attending young women in labour; he had attended, to witness's knowledge, a dozen. He must have attended some when with Dr. Ryan. Cannot account for this negligence, or the reason why

he did not send for some other person, when he found he could not accomplish his duty. From what the father had said, when he came for witness, he suspected that the placenta had not come away and accordingly went to Barton in the parlour, and asked him the question. He answered he had not removed it, because he could not!

This being the whole of the evidence for the crown,

The coroner, having cautioned Barton, who was in charge of the constables, asked him what he had to say in this matter.

Barton declined saying anything.

The coroner then summed up the evidence; and stated that, from the testimony of Mr. Graham, the surgeon, and the admission of Mr. Pigot, the death of the deceased had undoubtedly been occasioned in consequence of this young man having failed to bring away the "afterbirth." The question for the jury was, whether the neglect was of such a degree as to amount to a verdict of manslaughter against him. There had been many decisions where professional men had been made amenable to the law; but then that must be proved either criminal negligence or gross ignorance on his part. Certainly in the present case there had been a great degree of rashness and neglect of duty, for it was his duty to have remained with this young woman until the "afterbirth" came away. When he went home he told Mr. Pigot that all was well, and that the birth was an easy one. It was therefore for the jury to consider whether, having taken the duties upon him, Barton had exhibited a want of care or a want of proper skill, by either of which this female had died: if they thought so, then it would be their duty to find a verdict of manslaughter against him.

The jury consulted for some time, and returned as their verdict, "Manslaughter against Thomas Barton for gross neglect, and the jury also say that it is their opinion, that any medical man, by sending apprentices to attend to cases of labour, is guilty of great negligence, unless the apprentice is properly qualified to undertake such cases, and that it is the duty of all medical men, in any case where their apprentices have attended, to see the patient as soon as possible afterwards."

The coroner then made out his warrant, and Barton was fully committed for trial at Chester Assizes.—
Abridged from the Stockport Journal.