

FORCIBLE REMOVAL OF THE UTERUS AND  
A PORTION OF THE LARGE INTESTINES  
IN A PARTURIENT WOMAN: INQUEST.

Considerable excitement has prevailed in the parish of Costessey for the last five weeks, in consequence of the death, after child-birth, of a married woman, named Mary Jane Lovett; the melancholy event being attributed to grossly ignorant treatment on the part of the medical man who attended her. The poor woman was the wife of a carpenter in the village, and the mother of nine children. She was buried soon after her death; but as the excitement continued, and, in fact, appeared to increase, it was deemed proper, by the authorities, that an enquiry should take place. The proper steps were, therefore, taken for an inquest being held before Mr. Pilgrim, one of the county coroners; and on Friday morning the body was exhumed, for the purpose of undergoing a *post-mortem* examination. The inquiry was held at the White Hart Inn, Costessey, and was attended by many medical gentlemen, among whom were, Mr. Crosse, Mr. Scott, Mr. A. Master, Mr. Gowing, Mr. Spencer, Mr. Chater, Mr. W. B. Francis, Mr. Wiles, Mr. Phillippo, Mr. Cooper, and others, who kindly rendered every assistance during the inquiry in suggesting questions. Mr. Gaches, the practitioner who attended the deceased, was also present; and he was asked, if he could produce the substance he had taken from the deceased? He said that he could not, for he had made away with it, but he could show where it was put. The Coroner told him, that he was not bound to criminate himself by any statement, but what he did say would be taken down and might be used against him. The Coroner also said, he was happy to see so many medical gentlemen present, and would be obliged by their assistance in the inquiry.

The following evidence was given before the jury:—

Ann Cannell, the wife of Jacob Cannell, of Costessey, farmer, deposed:—I was well acquainted with the deceased, Jane Mary Lovett; I have known her many years; I have been a widow four or five years. I was sent for by Mrs. Lovett, on a Sunday, five weeks ago. She was unwell, and supposed to be in labour. I went to the house immediately; the nurse and deceased's mother were there. Mr. Gaches, who resides at Costessey, was sent for; he came soon after. The deceased got worse, and Mr. Gaches came upstairs to her; she was then going on very well. There was, I think, some little difficulty from what Mr. Gaches told me, but she was delivered safely of a female child. I did not think she was going on well after the birth of the child; I thought so from what I had seen before in her previous confinements. She is the mother of nine children; I think five are now living. She had gone her full time. There was nothing more difficult than I have seen on former occasions up to the birth of the child. The after-birth did not come; Mr. Gaches tried to get it. Mrs. Lovett said to him, "I cannot stand it." I made answer, and said, "It must be got." I then asked Mr. Gaches if he did not want some further help? He said, he did not think that any other doctor could do more than he was doing for her. I said to him, "Let her rest a little time." Mrs. Lovett then said, she wished very much to see her husband. I sent for him; he came instantly to

her room; she said to her husband she thought she was dying. I have heard her say the same when she has been in her labour on former occasions. I did not hear Mr. Gaches say at this time there was any danger or difficulty. Mr. Gaches was with the deceased some little time before the birth of the child. She said to her husband, "Let me lay and die; don't let me be meddled with any more." I said, "There must be something further done." I did consider the means used were similar to those used by other surgeons. [The witness here deposed to the removal, by Mr. Gaches, of a round substance, unlike anything she had seen before; and continued.]—I did not consider there was more violence used than I have seen on former occasions. I think, from the birth of the child to the removal of the substance, was about two hours. When the deceased was delivered of a child, the one previous to this confinement, it was about 20 minutes from Mr. Wm. Cooper's arrival to the removal of the after-birth. I cannot say how long the child had been born when Mr. Wm. Cooper arrived; it might be three-quarters of an hour. Mr. Gaches did not, to my recollection, express any danger or difficulty. The substance removed by Mr. Gaches was taken away by him, I never saw it afterwards. Mrs. Mortar, the nurse, was present nearly all the time. Mr. Gaches appeared kind and attentive to the deceased. After Mr. Gaches left the woman, I said to her husband, "For God's sake go for Mr. Gaches, I think your wife is dying." The husband went for him; he came directly, but the woman died before he arrived: it was, I think, half an hour from the time the substance was removed to the time the poor woman died. I never heard Mr. Gaches say or express any fear that the woman was in danger. There was but little noise when the substance was removed, and she appeared to suffer but little. Mr. Gaches never said to me what he thought the substance was. I did state to Mrs. Lovett, when I went to her, on her being first taken ill, that I thought she did wrong in having a fresh doctor, for I thought it straight-forward work to Mr. Cooper or Mr. Phillippo, because I knew there was great difficulty in removing the after-birth in previous labours.

Mr. Gaches said, this witness gave her evidence fairly. He had no questions to put.

Honour Mortar, of Costessey, widow, the next witness, deposed.—I knew the deceased well; I have nursed her in her confinements four times. I was sent for on Sunday morning, I think it was the middle of January; I got to her house a little after nine in the morning; she was then very ill. I sent for Mrs. Cannell; she came very soon. Mr. Gaches came about ten o'clock. She apparently was going on very well; she was delivered of a child about two o'clock; I was present when the child was delivered; I did not consider it a very difficult birth; I did consider she was going on well after the delivery of the child. I saw part of the after-birth removed; it was about two hours after the delivery of the child; there was great difficulty in removing it; I consider there was no more violence used than was necessary in removing this part of the after-birth. I saw the other part of the after-birth removed; it was very soon after the removal of the first. There was something attached to this latter part of the after-birth which I did not

understand; I made no observation, but I thought it something very singular; it was put into a chamber-mug; I think it would fill a quart basin; I never saw anything of the kind similar to this substance; it was round, brown, firm, and looked to me to be heavy; Mr. Gaches took it away with him, and he left quickly after its removal; I never saw it afterwards; there was a string attached to the substance; I do not mean the after-birth. I think Mrs. Lovett lived about half an hour after its removal. Mr. Gaches was asked whether he thought it proper to have another doctor? He said, he thought if there was a room full they could not do more than he was able to do. I could not see there was any fault in Mr. Gaches; I saw no unnecessary violence used; I did not see there was anything improperly done. I did not hear Mr. Gaches, at any time, express any fear or difficulty. I saw no fear until after the substance was removed, and my suspicions then arose from what I saw attached to the substance; what was attached was long, it was a of flesh colour. I talked about this to Mrs. Cannell, and said, "I never saw an instance of this kind before;" this was in the presence of Mr. Gaches, but whether he made any reply I cannot say. I saw the part which was attached to the substance cut off by Mr. Gaches with a pair of scissors. The string attached to the substance was not like the navel string. There was a solid substance lying a few inches from the mother, attached by a string differing in appearance to the navel string, which was divided from the mother by Mr. Gaches with a pair of scissors. There was a part remaining attached to the woman after the removal of the substance. There was not much bleeding at the time of the cutting. This appearance altogether was very different to what I ever saw before. I cannot say whether the string which I saw attached to the substance was part of the bowel. The mother of the deceased was in the room nearly all the time, but occasionally went down stairs.

Mary Ann, the wife of Money Elden, of Costessey, deposed:—The deceased is my daughter, she was taken ill on Sunday morning, the 19th of January last, I went to her first about 10 o'clock; I knew she was in her labour; Mr. Gaches was sent for; he came instantly; my daughter was upstairs, and Mrs. Mortar and Mrs. Cannell were with her. Mr. Gaches was below stairs for about a quarter of an hour, he then went upstairs and I went with him; my daughter was delivered of a child a little after two o'clock; I was in the room when the child was born; I did not consider she had a bad time; I thought she was not so faint and so exhausted as I have seen her many times on a former occasion. I was on the bed by the side of my daughter I think about two hours after the birth of the child. I saw Mr. Gaches use great exertion with my daughter, I supposed; endeavouring to remove the after-birth; he removed a large substance, it was more long than round. It was different to what I had ever seen before; there was a long string attached to it, which was as thick as my little finger, and was several yards long; it appeared to me, and I have thought so several times, to be part of the bowel. I made no observation at that time to Mr. Gaches, but have mentioned it to him since; Mr. Gaches told me it was attached to the substance and would come away with it. I asked him what it was, and I told him it looked

very much like the bowel; he said it was attached, he could not help it, and it would come away with the substance. It was very different to what I had ever seen before, and this I have told Mr. Gaches since. Mr. Gaches never intimated to me that my daughter was in any danger. Immediately after the removal of the substance I saw a change in my daughter, and then I suspected she was not going on so well. Mr. Gaches took the substance away in a chamber-mug, where he had placed it when it was removed from my daughter. Mr. Gaches told me on the Sunday about half an hour after the death of my daughter, that it was a false conception; this I did not understand. Almost immediately after the substance was removed Mr. Gaches took it away. On the Monday morning, the day after my daughter died, Mr. Gaches called on me, and said, he had found it out, that it was a tumour, weighing 3lbs. 3oz. I asked him then, what he was going to do with it? He told me he had put it into spirits, and intended to take it to Mr. Crosse, of Norwich, directly; which I thought he had done until last Sunday, and then there began to be a stir in the parish respecting this tumour or substance; till then I considered Mr. Crosse had it. I thought Mr. Gaches left in a hurry when he took the substance away. I saw Mr. Gaches cut the string attached to the substance; the moment this was cut, I saw my daughter's countenance change. The string attached to the substance appeared to come away at one time.

Mr. Gaches had no questions to put to this witness, who was much affected while giving her evidence.

Letitia, the wife of John King, of Costessey, labourer, deposed:—I knew the deceased. I was sent for to her house on the Monday morning after her death; I went, and Mrs. Mortar, who was there, gave me the bed-linen to wash. I had the linen which was on the bed where she died; when I saw them, I thought I never saw such a scene before. When I pulled them about, I thought it was the after-birth which the doctor had pulled in pieces; when I came to examine further, I thought it appeared more like flesh. I did not examine it particularly, and cannot say what it was.

During the examination of the foregoing witnesses, several medical gentlemen were proceeding with the post-mortem examination of the body; after which the following evidence was given:—

William Bransby Francis, of Norwich, Surgeon, deposed:—I have examined the body shown to me, as the body of Jane Mary Lovett. On opening the cavity of the body, I observed the stomach, small intestines, bladder, and some blood effused into the parts about the pelvis. I then tied the swallow, and the parts leading from the stomach, and divided them; I took out the small intestines, which had no attachment below. The stomach was then removed, but there was no large intestines; the bladder contained about three ounces of urine. The small intestines were then measured, and found to be fifteen feet and eight inches, and another seven inches of the small intestines, was attached to the stomach. The lower end of the intestines was torn. On removing the kidneys, I found them healthy, as well as the liver. On removing the parts from the pelvis, I found thirteen inches of the large intestines, and the vagina, which was lacerated, but there was no womb. In my opinion,

death was caused by the injuries inflicted in removing so large a portion of the larger intestines and the womb. In the most difficult case of child-birth there ought not to be any of those parts removed. I never met with a case in which they were removed. In removing these parts I consider there was a great want of skill and judgment. I should think no practitioner at all acquainted with midwifery would remove them; their removal was almost instant death. I see no reason why, after the birth of the child, if proper skill had been used, the life of the deceased might not have been saved. The length of the intestines in an ordinary case, is about twenty-seven feet, or about five or six times the length of the body.—By Mr. Gaches. What might have caused these appearances independent of what you have stated? Answer—Nothing could have caused those appearances but violence used from without.—Mr. Gaches put no further questions.

John Green Crosse, of Norwich, deposed:—I have also examined the body shown to me as the body of Jane Mary Lovett, in company with Mr. Francis. I have heard the whole of the evidence of the last witness, and confirm what he has stated in reference to the parts found in the abdomen. The parts entirely absent were the womb, with all its appendages, and all the great bowel, except thirteen inches. A small portion also of the small intestines had been removed with the large one, so that altogether many feet of bowel had actually been removed. At the two places where the separation of this removed bowel had occurred, there was every appearance of the removal having been made by laceration. The removal of the womb, and such a quantity of the intestines must necessarily prove quickly fatal. There are no circumstances that would admit of or require the removal of either one or the other. Such an injury could only have been inflicted in error; no circumstances could have required or justified such a practice. I have heard all the evidence, and from that I cannot see any reason why, after the birth of the child, if the deceased had been properly treated, her life might not have been spared.

Mr. Gaches was then asked, if he wished to make any statement? After some private conversation with Mr. Crosse, he declined to give any explanations as to his mode of treatment, or the circumstances of the case; merely observing that he was a practitioner duly licensed. He produced his diploma from the Apothecaries' Company, but he was not a member of the College of Surgeons.

The Coroner addressing the jury said, it was clear that, if a person of sufficient skill and knowledge made an accidental mistake in such a case, he could not be chargeable with murder or manslaughter; but he considered there was sufficient evidence of gross ignorance and inattention on the part of the practitioner in this case to warrant a verdict for the latter offence. It would be for the jury to say whether the poor woman came by her death from gross ignorance, or merely accidentally. If they were satisfied that the practitioner was incompetent, or that he was grossly ignorant, or negligent, they were bound to return a verdict of manslaughter; on the contrary, if they thought it was only a professional mistake they would say so.

The jury, having consulted a short time, returned a

verdict of "Manslaughter" against Mr. Gaches.—Mr. Gaches said, it was completely an error of judgment.

The Coroner then told him, that he must consider himself a prisoner, and must be committed for trial. He was given into custody of two policemen, and at his request, not sent immediately to the Castle, in order that he might have some time to find bail, which he said he could find to any amount. He was allowed till the following day, and during the night effected his escape, and up to the present time has not been retaken into custody.