

# Canada Medical Journal.

MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1870.

A case of a most extraordinary character, resulting in an extraordinary charge of mans'laughter returned by a coroner's Court, against a physician of standing in his locality, has recently been disposed of by the grand jury, before the Court of Queen's Bench, held in the town of St. Johns, P.Q., who in our opinion very justly ignored the bill. We give the circumstances as related to us by one of the medical men examined by the Crown, and who was summoned to give testimony, as a skilled witness. Dr. Robert C. Morehead was called to attend a Mrs. Bertrand in her confinement, on the morning of the 13rd November; he remained with his patient and delivered her between four and five o'clock of the afternoon of that day, of a living child. Shortly after her delivery, hæmorrhage set in, and the Doctor proceeded to extract the placenta: on making traction on the cord, it gave way; when he was about to introduce his hand to remove the placenta, he was resisted by his patient, and in this she was supported by her husband, and some female friends in the house. The friends then sent for Dr. Larocque, some miles distant and on his arrival he advised the husband to send for the priest, to administer the last rights of the church, as the woman was dying. No attempt was made by Dr. Larocque to remove the placenta or arrest the hæmorrhage. As might be expected, two hours after the arrival of this sapient adviser, the poor woman died. Dr. Morehead remained with the patient to the last. In this latter particular we think Dr. M. was in error. He had done his duty, he had suggested and attempted to perform what was the only rational means of saving the woman's life and these attempts had been forcibly resisted by the patient, her husband and friends. Having therefore waited until another physician had been summoned, and finding that that individual did not coincide with him as to the propriety of acting, and acting with promptness, he should simply have retired, and thus thrown the full onus and responsibility of the case on Dr. Larocque's shoulders. The next stage in the proceedings was, that Dr. Larocque, with two other medical friends, proceeded to make a post mortem examination of the body before burial, and on their report Dr.

Morehead was arraigned before two magistrates, but these gentlemen seeing the whole proceedings were irregular, submitted the case to the Coroner of the District. A jury of twenty-three persons was empaneled, the body disinterred, and the three worthies who had before performed the post-mortem, were ordered by the jury to repeat their examination and give before them the results. The jury after a patient hearing, returned a verdict that the testimony, and especially that of the medical men, established that Robert C. Morehead, was guilty of criminal conduct, the grossest ignorance, and most criminal neglect. The coroner issued his warrant and Dr. Morehead was arrested and lodged in gaol. The day following the case was cited before Mr. Justice Monk of this city who issued a writ of *habeas corpus* and liberated Dr. Morehead on bail. These, we believe, to be substantially the facts of this case. They are the facts as given to us, and we lay them before the profession without comment. This we would, however, say that we think Dr. Morehead has a just and good cause of action for damages and defamation of character against Dr. Larocque, and we would very much like to see the matter tried and carried through to the very utmost. It has fortunately very seldom been our lot to record a similar case of so gross and unusual ignorance, not against Dr. Morehead, but against his opponant Dr. Larocque, as it was manifestly Dr. Larocque's duty to second his confrere by resorting to all means in their power to arrest the hæmorrhage, which result more than likely would have been attained on removal of the placenta.