

When it is remembered that both of these unhappy women had denied and attempted to conceal their pregnancy; that both of them had been previously delivered of many children; that both could have obtained instant female assistance, had they wished for it, but that both got as far as they could out of the way of such assistance, we can only draw one conclusion as to the intention betrayed by their conduct. Every humane man must dread to consign any individual to capital punishment, and judges as well as jurymen gladly seize upon any reed that may support a merciful verdict. Yet mercy is also due to the hundreds of infants annually slaughtered in these kingdoms.

I beg leave to request, through the medium of your Journal, answers to the following queries.

1st, Is the floating of the lungs of a child recently born, and free from putrefaction, a sufficient proof that it has respired?

2d, Have any conclusions, drawn from the test of Ploucquet, been given in evidence before British Courts of Justice?

3d, Is the blood of the fœtus which has never respired, incapable of acquiring a florid colour by exposure to the air?

4th, Is there any instance of a still-born child's assuming a florid colour by such exposure?\*

Lancaster, September 10, 1814.

## VIII.

*Case of Deafness successfully treated, by the Removal of a Splinter of Wood from the Bottom of the Meatus externus.* By JOHN STEVENSON, Esq. Surgeon, Oculist, and Aurist, to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, and Lecturer on the Anatomy, Physiology, and Diseases of the Eye and Ear, &c.

**L**IEUTENANT-Colonel Webbie Smith, (by whose desire the case is published with his name) of the Royal Horse Ar-

\* To the first of these questions we have no hesitation in replying in the affirmative, and to the second, in the negative, so far as we know. To the third and fourth we request answers from gentlemen who have practical opportunities of elucidating them. We also take this opportunity of mentioning, that the particulars of trials, whose results depend, in a great measure, on medical evidence, will always be highly acceptable; and we wish our correspondents to point out, as accurately as possible, the objects which the Council and Court seemed to have in view in their examination of the witnesses, as well as any observations by the judge on the medical evidence.—*Editor.*

tillery, Woolwich, consulted me, on the 25th of last July, respecting a troublesome discharge from his right ear, accompanied with an almost total loss of hearing.

The following particulars were communicated in reply to my inquiries into the origin of his complaint. A spirited horse, upon which he was riding when on duty near Bayonne, the beginning of May, took fright, and, springing from the middle to one side of the road, forced his rider with great violence against some shortened branches of an oak tree, from one of which he received a most severe blow on the right side of his head. The concussion, for a while, so nearly deprived him of his senses, that it was with extreme difficulty he maintained his seat on the saddle. Immediately on recovering himself, he felt a very acute pain in the injured ear. He hastened to camp, and sent for medical assistance. The staff-surgeons found the integuments of the auricle considerably bruised and lacerated, and the concha and meatus externus filled with coagulated blood. The latter was removed by syringing with warm water, and the wound dressed. The local pain and irritation, instead of subsiding, as was expected, rapidly increased, and soon induced a high degree of sympathetic fever, with slight delirium. These symptoms were, in a few days, alleviated, principally by the formation and subsequent escape of a considerable quantity of pus from the meatus internus. After this period, scarcely any uneasiness remained, except on passing the tragus, which was invariably followed by a very pungent and deep-seated sensation. This, together with the deafness and discharge, were regarded as the mere consequence of the preceding inflammation; for which the ear was regularly washed with warm milk and water, and various injections every night and morning. On the arrival of the patient in this country, he took the opinion of several eminent practitioners, and was subsequently recommended to me. An attentive inspection of the organ enabled me to discover something projecting from an accumulation of matter at the farther extremity of the passage, which, by the introduction of a probe, was ascertained to be a solid and slightly moveable substance. The Colonel instantly suggested the probability of its being a portion of fractured and detached bone;—a suspicion he had constantly hinted to his different medical attendants. It was extracted with some difficulty; and, when cleared from adhering discharge, it proved to be a rough angular flat splinter of oak, five lines in length, and three in breadth; one extremity of which, being pointed, had penetrated anteriorly, and in an oblique direction, to the depth of nearly two lines between

the cuticular lining and the parietes of the bony canal, close to the membrana tympani.

Size and shape  of the splinter.

The presence of this hard foreign body, by mechanically obstructing the auditory passage, accounts for the greatly impaired function of the organ; and its situation satisfactorily explains the source of the discharge, and the cause of the pain arising from pressure upon the tragus. Its removal afforded immediate relief from pain, with the *most perfect* restoration of the sense of hearing; the ulcer also, from this time, rapidly healed, and all discharge ceased.

The most remarkable circumstance relative to this very interesting case, is, that greater and more permanent mischief did not result from the retention of a rough irregular fragment of wood, in the farther extremity of the meatus externus, close to the membrana tympani, for the space of nearly a *quarter* of an *year*! Several instances are on record, and a few similar ones have occurred in my own private practice, in which extraneous substances introduced into the tube, have given rise to the most distressing symptoms, which have continued as long as the foreign body has remained impacted in the canal.

Among others of this description, I may quote the history related by Hildanus, (4th observation of 4th cent.) of a girl 12 years of age, who accidentally let a glass ball drop into her left ear. Such was the succeeding inflammation, and so violent the pain, that the whole half of the head, and even the extremities of the same side became affected. To these were added other alarming symptoms, which continued for *eight* years, and only subsided by the removal of the offending cause. In the 5th observation of Bartholine's Journal, is the statement of his wife's case. She is represented to have been for a long time tormented with a pain round the ear, which was at last remedied by small stones spontaneously discharged from the auditory passage.

The object of this communication is to impress, on the minds of your numerous readers, the necessity of minutely investigating this delicate organ, whenever the diseases, to which it is so very liable, do not yield to common remedies.

Great Russel Street, Bloomsbury, Nov. 19, 1814.