

Correspondence concerning a fatal case of placenta proevia / prepared by Charles E. Buckingham and printed for the benefit of the profession ; republished with an appendix by D. Barnard.

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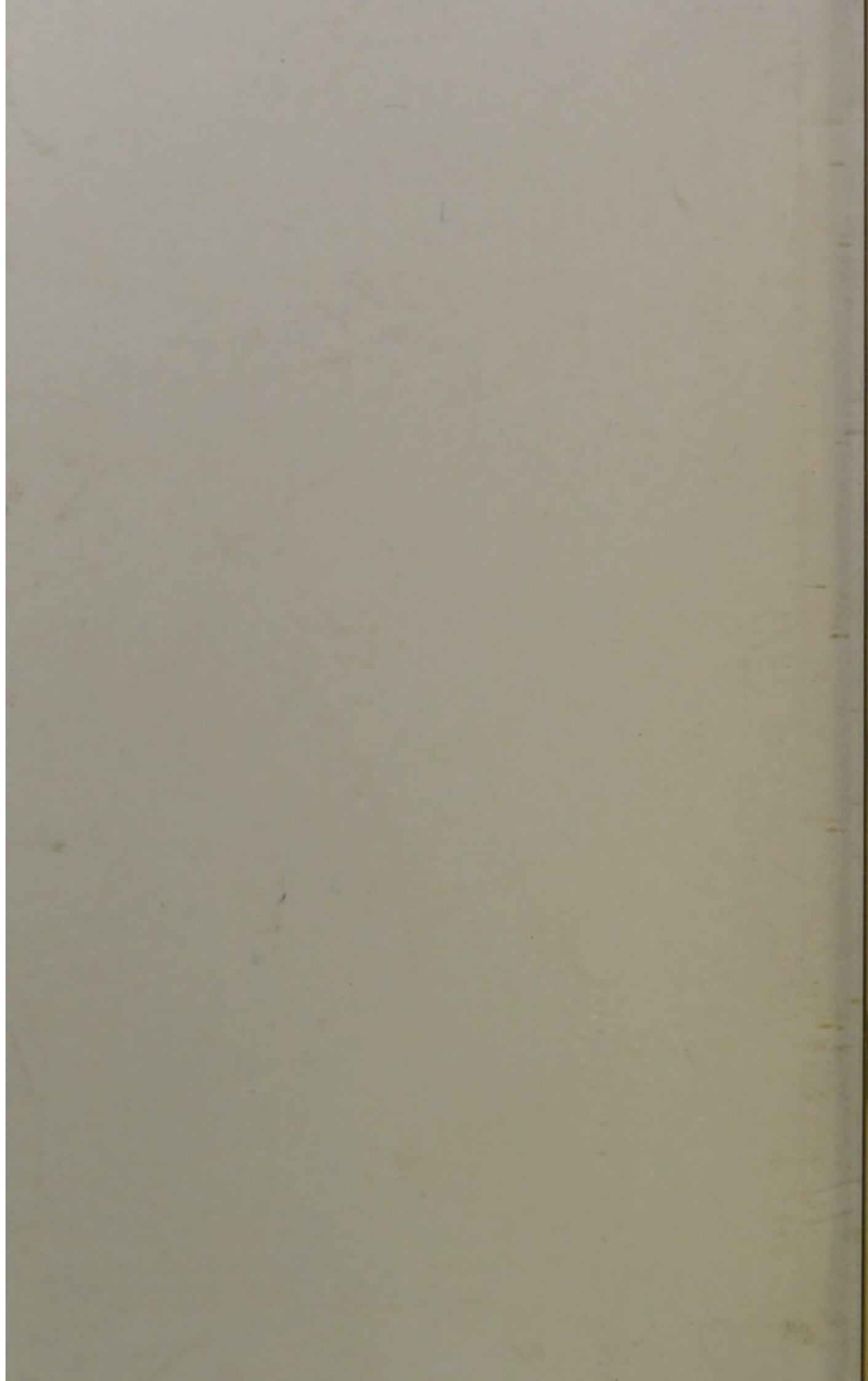
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CORRESPONDENCE

5

CONCERNING

A FATAL CASE OF

PLACENTA PRÆVIA

PREPARED BY

CHARLES F. BUCKINGHAM, M. D.,

Professor of Midwifery and Medical Jurisprudence in Harvard University,

AND PRINTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PROFESSION.

REPUBLISHED WITH AN

APPENDIX

BY

D. BARNARD.

BOSTON:

NATION PRESS, 21 AND 27 CORNHILL.

1870.

A FATAL CASE OF

PLAQUEMONTA PRUVIA

REPORT

CHARLES F. BUCKENHAM, M.D.

The following case of Plaque-monta Pruvia, which was fatal, was reported to me by Dr. J. H. ... of ... and ... in ...

APPENDIX

The following are the ... of the case ...

PREFATORY.

THIS correspondence is published for the benefit of the medical profession, and more especially for the benefit of those who are led to express opinions formed upon insufficient data.

It originated in a fatal case of Placenta Prævia. The cause of death was the general shock to the nervous system of a patient, attended by one unknown to her up to the hour of labor, and who was obliged by circumstances to announce to her the danger of her symptoms and the necessity of interference.

Certain expressions in one or more of the letters might lead readers to suppose that the patient was left too early by her attendant. From the beginning of the attendance, however, until after death took place, at least two physicians* were in the room; and there was no time when one or the other was not compressing the uterus.

The fact *that ice was not used* in treating the hæmorrhage led some physician ignorant of the facts to comment upon the treatment of the case, and, either thoughtlessly or maliciously to disturb the relations existing between the first two parties in the correspondence.

A portion of some of these letters having been read by

* Dr. Charles W. Swan was with me all the time, and just before death took place Dr. B. E. Cotting arrived.

Mr. Barnard to patients of mine, it was my intention, if possible, to find out the parties to whom he had given accounts of the case, and to hold them responsible for the statements said to have been made by them.

There was but one, however, who could be identified, and he denies Mr. Barnard's statements entirely, as will be seen by his letter.* Who may be the New York Professor spoken of, if such exist, I have no means of discovering; unless this document may, perchance, fall in his way, and lead him to say voluntarily whether he has written upon the subject, and what.

The conclusions finally arrived at, were as follows, viz:—

1st. That the treatment of the case having been what I considered correct, there is no reason, on my part, for preventing publicity.

2d. That not fearing publicity, there is no reason why the husband should have put upon him all the burden of telling the story.

3d. That whereas no one, except myself and the medical gentlemen who were with me, knows what the treatment was, further than that *no ice* was used; of course, no one except ourselves can tell whether the treatment was correct or not.

4th. That putting these letters into the hands of the younger members of the profession, may teach some of them the absurdity of commenting upon the treatment of cases of brother practitioners, as told by non-professional men who saw the cases, or by professional men who did not.

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM,

53 Worcester Street, Boston.

*NOTE.—The reader will please compare the passage on page 17, line 6, beginning with, "I got the opinion, etc.," and ending "has honored you," on the same page, with letters XIX, XX, and XXI.

No. I.

BOSTON, October 25, 1869.

Dr. C. E. Buckingham.

MY DEAR SIR, — I called upon you last Saturday evening for a conversation in relation to my wife's death; and you certainly seemed to entirely misapprehend the object of my call. Ever since that dreadful day, I have borne an anguish which is beyond all power of my language to express; and my sole object in calling upon you, was comfort to myself, and not trouble to you or any mortal. You were a stranger to me; I knew the extreme peril that Mrs. Barnard was in and upon the recommendation of one in whom I had entire confidence, I placed her case in your hands, as the fittest person to conduct it to a safe result. After such an indorsement, it never entered my mind to question the ability of her physician, till after the sad end, when so many friends asked if this, or that thing was done, which suggested to my mind that many of the means usually employed in such cases had been omitted in this. I therefore called upon you for the object of satisfying my own mind and bringing peace to my distressed heart. At our interview, you suggested that I put my questions in writing, to be answered in writing by you. In accordance with this request, I now propound the following questions:—

1st. You stated to me that Mrs. Barnard died from the shock. I presume you meant by this, the shock necessary to the forcible delivery of the child. If so, please state how it is possible, that about half an hour after the birth of the child, she could be considered as safe as any woman, as you stated to me at that time.

2d. What was there in the case of Mrs. Barnard, to

contra-indicate the use of ice, which is commonly resorted to in such cases?

3d. I am informed that the cold douche is very valuable in such cases. Why would it not have been well to have used it in this case?

4th. After your return to her side, you removed a large basin full of clotted blood. If your hand had remained in the uterus, would it not have been a stimulus to contraction and preventive of hæmorrhage?

5th. Is it not usually considered by the profession, that hot drinks favor hæmorrhage in such cases?

6th. Does a rapid pulse after child-birth indicate danger of hæmorrhage; and is a slow pulse favorable?

7th. Men eminent in your profession, declare that it is not safe to leave a woman's side one minute for one hour in such a case. Do you concur in this opinion?

8th. Will you please state what drugs you administered and in what doses and how often?

9th. How long before death did you consider her case hopeless?

10th. You sought a consultation. Was there any doubt in your own mind as to the best means to be used in the case?

Yours respectfully,

D. BARNARD.

No II.

53 WORCESTER STREET, October 25, 1869.

D. Barnard, Esq.

My Dear Sir,—I have received from you, this afternoon, a letter containing eleven* questions, to which you request answers in writing. After the experience of Saturday evening last, I shall decline any answer, until I have had opportunity to show these questions to other medical men,

*This was an error. There were but ten questions.

and to the gentleman whom I may find it desirable to consult. This I do with the kindest feelings towards yourself, and with the belief that you have been more unjust to me than you are aware of.

Very respectfully yours,
CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. III.

BOSTON, October 26, 1869.

D. Barnard, Esq.

My Dear Sir,—On the receipt of your note of yesterday, I was so much engaged that I was compelled to send you the answer which you undoubtedly received. I am disposed to receive you with perfect freedom, and to answer any proper questions. It was, what seemed to me, the style of cross-examination which led me to decline any further answer to you on Saturday night. It seemed to me as though some ill-disposed person had been exciting your suspicions, and furnishing questions for the purpose.

I believe that my position in the profession is sufficient, of itself, to allow me to judge what is to be the proper treatment of a patient in labor, under any circumstances, and with any complication. The particular department is one that I have cultivated for years, and there are those who considered me sufficiently competent to hold the position of instructor in midwifery.

Still, I am perfectly willing to answer any questions put to me in proper manner, and therefore submit to you the following propositions:

I shall answer the questions put by you in writing, being with you at the time, so that any misunderstanding of question or answer may be corrected upon the spot.

I claim, however, that there shall be present, also, a medical gentleman, selected by each of us, to whom any question or answer *may* be referred to judge of its fairness. Neither

of us shall select a physician who may be objected to by the other. Should you accede to this proposition, I leave it to you to make the first selection. With the desire for investigation, and the belief that you will be satisfied with the result,

I am, very respectfully yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. IV.

BOSTON, October 27, 1869.

Dr. C. E. Buckingham.

Dear Sir,—I put those questions in writing, as I did at your request, All I wish is light and satisfaction to my own mind. I am in a state of anxiety to have an explanation, hoping that I may be happier thereafter. I will see you soon, when I hope you will be ready to give me such comfort.

Yours respectfully,

D. BARNARD.

An unsatisfactory interview took place on the same evening attended with great excitement and an invitation for a legal investigation, which was declined.*

No. V.

53 WORCESTER STREET, October 29, 1869.

Darwin Barnard, Esq.

My Dear Sir,—The character of our conversation on Wednesday evening last was such that I should be justified in holding no further communication with you upon its subject; but as I attribute much that you then said to excited feeling, probably, *as I think*, caused by malicious or injudicious suggestions from third persons, I still wish to do all that I properly can, to satisfy you of the truth as to your

*See page 10, line 25, sentence beginning "On the night of the 27th," to end of the letter.

wife's case—that its unfortunate result was due to circumstances entirely beyond medical or human control.

To avoid misapprehension, permit me to recall the circumstances of the case, and to state the issue between us as it now stands.

On the 5th of September last I was called upon to attend your wife in labor, and as you told me, for I was an entire stranger to her and yourself, at the suggestion of her attendant physician, and for the reasons that he was sick, and that her case presented peculiar and unusual features. My treatment of her was based upon my judgment as to all the circumstances of her case; and upon reviewing them I am not only confident that it was correct, but that it would be so judged by all competent and fair-minded physicians. The case terminated fatally: but you then intimated no dissatisfaction with my course, calling upon me to attend upon the child; nor did you do so until the evening of Saturday, the 23d of October, when you called upon me at my office, and began to question me concerning the reasons for my particular treatment of your wife's case, in a manner that appeared to me critical and inquisitorial, and to be dictated by hostile or resentful feeling,—at least intended to put me upon my own justification. I therefore declined to answer the questions *except in writing or in the presence of witnesses*. To this you replied, that you had a right to ask what questions you pleased, and in what manner you pleased; and after some warm expressions you left my office. On Monday the 25th of October you sent to me a series of ten questions, some of them particularly concerning your wife's case and its treatment, and some general in their character. These were prefaced by the statement, that I certainly seemed to entirely misapprehend the object of your call—that you called on me “for the object of satisfying your own mind and bringing peace to your distressed heart.”

In consequence of this statement, I acknowledged the

receipt of your letter, and on the following day, the 26th of October, having examined the questions, and found them such that direct answers, without explanation, would not give you the information you professed to desire, I made you the following proposal, which I thought to be judicious and just to both parties:*

“I shall answer the questions put by you in writing, being with you at the time, so that any misunderstanding of question or answer may be corrected on the spot.

“I claim, however, that there shall be present also a medical gentleman, selected by each of us, to whom any question or answer *may* be referred to judge of its fairness.

“Neither of us shall select a physician who may be objected to by the other. Should you accede to this proposition, I leave it for you to make the first selection.”

The letter, with this proposal, I sent to you on the 27th of October, and I received your acknowledgement of the same.

On the night of the 27th, the same day, you called upon me again, and immediately and positively refused to accede to my proposition. In the course of conversation, you charged me with being the cause of Mrs. Barnard's death, either by neglect or malpractice, and you further uttered vague threats of ill consequences to me. That you did so but confirms the impression made upon me by our conversation of the 25th of October, and fully demonstrates the prudence of my course. But from your silence upon the subject at first, and for so long a time, from the character and tone of the questions you asked, and those you sent to me, I fully believe that your suspicion and resentment, which must be as painful to you as it is unjust to me, are not spontaneous, but have been instilled by some person who is actuated by some most wicked purpose, either towards you or towards myself. I think that you must, upon reflection, perceive that you are not warranted in making such an accu-

* See No. III., page 7.

sation; that I have evinced no desire to withhold from you the fullest information about your wife's case and my treatment; and that if you persist in such an accusation, you leave but one course open for me, and that is to decline any further communication with you upon the subject; and if I am in any way attacked, to defend myself in a suitable manner.

I repeat, that I desire for your sake, fully as much as for my own, to disabuse your mind from the impression you have received. This I can do completely, but only in the manner I have proposed.

I therefore renew the proposal contained in my letter of the 26th inst., that I have quoted; but always upon the condition, that you entirely and explicitly retract the accusation you have made of neglect or malpractice. I shall never condescend to defend myself against that charge before any other than a legal tribunal, and certainly I shall not answer the questions of any unknown inquisitor.

I am, very respectfully, yours,
CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No., VI.

Dr. C. E. Buckingham.

Dear Sir,—Your communication of the 29th of October was duly received. I found therein the proposal made by you previously, and not agreeable to me, repeated with a new condition appended, viz: that I should “entirely and explicitly retract the accusation I had made of malpractice or neglect.”

Doctor, I wish to God that I could comply with your last condition; but as truly as I believe in my God, and as truly as I believe I have a soul to be saved or dammed, I believe what I said to be the truth, and therefore, you must know, that the hand which should attempt to pen the retraction would be palsied in the effort.

And this belief, to a very large extent, is the direct result of your conduct toward me for the last few days.

For a man to bury one, bound to him by the ties the strongest and tenderest in life, is a task sad enough for any soul; but the feeling that the grave, which received these precious remains needed not to have been opened at all—that this wound upon the bosom of our common mother should not have been made—could not fail to bring misery unutterable. This last I *did* hope you could and would spare me; and this hope prompted me to seek you. This assertion I have made upon my honor as a man, from the beginning, and under circumstances too, and in a mood of mind which would not naturally favor falsification. Therefore, when you now, in your last utterance, persist in declaring your belief of a malicious motive on my part, or a malicious enemy behind me, to urge me on, it seems to me, you make yourself guilty of an insult and an outrage upon my feelings, which no gentleman could possibly inflict upon another, with no stronger motive, than a vague suspicion, based upon the knowledge of the fact, that he had enemies, and possibly the latter had fallen in with one of them.

In our first interview, you intimated that our conversation could be productive of no good, for the reason, as you declared, "She is gone and we cannot get her back again." Too true the last declaration! How many times, daily and nightly, it has flashed into my mind like lightning, each time bringing a pang more agonizing than that of the lightning stroke. Equally true the fact, that this remark of yours indicated, beyond all doubt, your entire misconception of the condition of my mind, and what I needed and sought. I did not enter your presence on the 23rd of October under the delusion, that you possessed the power as did Jesus Christ, to raise the dead to life—but I did hope that you could make me feel, that the dead one—to me the sainted dead—had not been bereft of life, save by a fate inexorable and inevitable; that the heart, which had throbbed so

warmly and so joyfully in the anticipation of being a mother, the mother of her child and of mine—now chilled and silent beneath the sod—had not been put to rest by professional negligence or want of professional skill. *This* was the consolation my mind needed. In my circumstances what else could I have possibly sought from you ?

In your last letter, now before me, you declare your wish to do all you properly can to satisfy me of the truth as to Mrs. Barnard's case, and that the unfortunate result was due to circumstances entirely beyond medical or human control—and also your desire to disabuse my mind from the impression it has received ; and you assert your power to do this completely. If these statements are true, why am I now unsatisfied and miserable. I sought you in the right spirit ; and if you tell the truth, I might have been permitted to return home with an awful burden lifted from my heart. This however was not granted me, and the conviction which I have resisted with all my power, because it brought suffering more than death, has settled down upon my mind, that you did not meet my requirements simply for the reason that it was not in your power to do so.

I would not willingly wrong the humblest human being, in act, or word, and therefore, I ask that you will permit me to place certain facts before your mind—to show you how I have been brought to my present opinion, and to vindicate myself from any charge of an evil disposition, or a desire to do you an injury.

As you have already been informed, I placed this case, of such momentous importance to me, and the source of untold anxiety, in your hands, upon the recommendation of one in whom I had perfect trust—and when he said Dr. Buckingham is the right man, I believed it. I do not now doubt the entire honesty with which this was said—and when in so brief a period after you had been called, and my nerves had been strained to their utmost tension, you said to me, “Your wife is as safe as any woman,” and I was the father of a liv-

ing child, I experienced the happiest moments of my life; and the thought flashed through me, truly Dr. Buckingham is the right man, and I can never repay him for the service rendered me to-day. Thus happy I remained for a brief time. Then your patient complained of cold—then of pain in the back, shortly afterwards, “Doctor, I am flowing,” were her words. The mention of blood brought terror to me—you were sitting in the corner of the room, writing. You did not go to her. I was uneasy, and asked a bystander, “Did the Doctor hear her?” “Yes,” was the reply “the Doctor turned his head.” But you did not go to the bedside. I felt I wished you would do so—but I believed you knew whether it was needful.

Soon afterwards the words, “I am flowing dreadfully” arrested your attention, and brought you to the patient. The large wash-basin of clotted blood immediately removed by you, confirmed her declaration, and proved that internal hæmorrhage had been going on while you were away—The basin, which was very soon filled again, said the bleeding does not stop—We were uneasy. I scrutinized your face to see what it said. It did not indicate any alarm, and I felt—The Doctor knows—and this will soon be checked—But the drugs administered did not serve—The vital current continued to flow away—a potion was placed to her lips, but not swallowed. You said: “It is too late.” Then my wife was a corpse. My child was motherless—I was broken-hearted. Then came days of duty toward the dead mother and her child, which sickened and died—Both were borne to a distant town for burial—and I lingered among their relatives, and near her grave—Finally, I came to the city for a few days, to perform duties very mournful but necessary—and consequent upon my sad misfortune. These done, I returned to the home of Mrs. Barnard’s maidenhood, to find my greatest consolation in being with those who loved her best, and near the sacred spot where she slept the sleep of death.

Now note, if you please, Doctor, I am thus minute in my

relation, because you are very particular to mention in your letter the great length of time, between the death and my call upon you on the evening of the 23d of October—and intimate that this fact confirms the opinion you had formed, relative to malicious or injudicious suggestions.

Now, I do not think there has been any malignity in this case. While I tarried at my wife's home, a relative of hers said to me, "What did the physician do? My wife was once in a similar condition, and ice was used internally and externally. I thought she would die! In fact she seemed to me to be nearly dead at one time, but they saved her by the cold applications—Did your physician use ice?"

There was a suggestion, but certainly there was no malignity—for he did not know even the names of the physicians employed. While sitting by the side of Mrs. Barnard's sister one day,—the one you met in the sick-chamber—she said to me, "You don't think do you, that if the doctor had remained by Katie's side, and had not left her so soon, he could have prevented this hæmorrhage which killed her?" I made a reply which should extinguish any such thought if possible, for I could not bear to have her entertain it, in consequence of the pang it would bring, and she was already prostrated by the shock she had sustained. There was a suggestion, but certainly there was no malignity—It had its influence upon my mind, though the suggestion was never repeated.

Ultimately I returned to the city—Friends all about naturally made inquiries—One in whom they were interested had suddenly and sadly gone into another world; and the event made its impression. It might be expected, the questions, How did this happen? What was done to save her? would be asked, and they were asked. Every one of this circle had a physician, *their* physician above all others—in their estimation, from whom they sought information, and learned the many expedients resorted to for saving life in such an emergency. So it was asked, was this means used? was that?

was another? To all I was compelled to say—no. What was done? Certain drugs were used—very hot gruel was administered. I could give but very little information further than this. Now, these interrogations were made, not from any malignity, but from sincere interest and sympathy. At the same time, they could not fail to inform me of many means used by professional men of good repute, in such cases, not resorted to in this. Hence arose the awful question, has the light of my life gone out? has she so dear to me, suffered this dreadful death from negligence or want of professional knowledge? must I endure this lifelong torture, because I have had an incompetent or faithless man thrust upon me by circumstances beyond my control? This thought, once in my mind, grew momentarily more intense, burning deeper each instant, and more torturing. Sleep had flown from my pillow. The nights were eternities of hell: the days were but little better. Still I endured this for quite a period, and no word of it passed my lips. At last I must speak to somebody, and to some one fitted to form a correct judgment. My own medical adviser I could not have, in consequence of sickness and absence from the city. I sought you, and you too were away—I *must* have some one, and some one competent to give a reliable opinion, and I did. I got the opinion of many physicians; but they only augmented my torture—for *all* expressed surprise that nothing more had been done for the salvation of *the* life which was of consequence to me; and informed me what they should have done in a similar case. From what you have said to me, I know you would like the names of the physicians, that you might pronounce a judgment upon their eminence and their fitness. I will only say this; they were those whom Harvard University has not only honored with degrees, but among them there was one, whom this same University has honored with an appointment as Professor equal in distinction to that with which she has honored you. I state this fact, because in one of your letters to me, you asserted the presumption

that you should know what it was proper and best to do in any case of labor—that this was the special field of medical science and skill which you had cultivated for many years—and that you had been judged fitted to instruct in this department. I may add that I can show the written opinion of one who holds a place in a Medical School of New York City, equal in honor to any held by a Harvard Professor—that the Physician, who should leave the bed-side of any woman so soon as you did that of my wife, when so circumstanced, should justly be held responsible for her life.

Now, Doctor, is it within the range of human possibilities, that my mind should not be influenced by these opinions—coming from such sources, and that a dreadful doubt should not be lodged therein?

Still all consolation was not gone; there was something left to hang a hope on. It was this, when Dr. Buckingham returns, he will explain,—he can tell me something which I did not perceive, or something which I could not comprehend; and therefore could not report—which will make all these opinions worthless, because based upon imperfect data. Hence the eagerness with which I sought you; perhaps the very intensity of my feelings gave a color to my manners which caused you to misunderstand me. I cannot say as to this. I *can* say, I came from you more miserable than when I went to you, feeling that all my horrible suspicions were confirmed facts, for you had no explanation to give me save one, viz. : that you gave the hot gruel as a stimulus, and of course the best one in your judgment for the occasion. You said, Mrs. Barnard died from the shock, but the shock was overpast when you assured me, “She was safe as any woman.” I asked what happened after this assurance of safety which brought the fatal result—Your reply was “bleeding.” I said would it have been possible had you been by her side, that you could have prevented dilatation, and the consequent hæmorrhage? “Oh; the womb was contracted, it was contracted when I went to

her," said you. Why then did she bleed? was my question; but it dilated at times, was your response—Then came anger on your part, and the exclamation, "Who has been posting you up in this case?" Now, sir, here were contradictions—She died from shock—she died from bleeding—There was uterine contraction; but when pressed upon that point, and not before, the confession was made, That there was dilatation at times. Then came your anger—"A confirmation strong as proof of holy writ," that you could not answer reasonable questions and you declined to answer them then and there. Then ensued considerable conversation, which ended in this proposal from you—"Ask your questions in writing, and I will answer them in writing." This was on the evening of the 23d of October, and on the 25th your request was granted, and my questions in writing as you desired, were in your hands. But to this moment they have not been answered; and you have not fulfilled your promise—that you would "answer them in writing." Upon reflection, you discovered a reason why you should not make good your word, pledged at that time, and you wrote me, saying you were not willing to do so, only on the condition of the presence of two Medical men—Now any fair-minded unprejudiced person would perceive, that it could not fail to be extremely disagreeable to meet physicians, who should form, as it were, a coroner's jury, to hold an inquest over the remains of my dead wife. So I called upon you in the evening and told you how I felt, and that we needed no such formality; and all I desired was, that you should sit down with me as a friend, possessed of professional knowledge, and give me what information you could. You hesitated, but at last did say you would answer my questions, if I would pledge myself not to show the answers to any of your professional brothers without your knowledge.

Now if truthful replies to any interrogations relating to a case managed with skill and up to the science of the day, could do harm to the attending physician by being made

known to experts in his own calling, what would this fact prove?

I was now convinced of a painful truth, and declared it to you,—that in this instance, you were guilty of your patient's death; either in consequence of neglect or malpractice. When information had been sought for, to which I was justly entitled; you cannot deny this:—you dodged, and dodged, and dodged till the damning conviction that you had brought death into this world, and to my home, at last settled down into my soul in sure foundations; and I told you so. Now, in your last letter, you make what I presume is meant to be your final dodge:—that you can make no communication to me save upon the condition of a retraction on my part, which it would be impossible to make, till I become the victim of complete mental darkness or mortal obliquity. Rather than this, let me sleep by the side of her whom you should have saved to me.

Respectfully yours,

D. BARNARD.

BOSTON, Nov. 3, 1869.

No. VII.

To D. Barnard, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter of Nov. 3d. The account of our interviews and conversations, that it contains, I cannot admit to be correct. It was no desire to withhold information, but it was the feeling that an imperfect and mistaken account of the case had been given to some one, who either ignorantly or maliciously prompted your questions, which made me decline answering them, except in the presence of those who might be presumed to be qualified to form an opinion.

To answer them to you alone, with your suspicions excited by non-professional and ignorant friends, or by professional friends to whom the peculiar circumstances were unknown, would be absurd. Neither you nor any other non-medical

man would be capable of judging as to the propriety of my treatment of Mrs. Barnard's case, and from the fullest answers to any questions you could frame, you would be no wiser than before. In proposing, therefore, to have some professional friend of yours present in whose judgment you have confidence, my purpose was to satisfy you through him.

In your letter, you quote the opinion of some professor or professors of Harvard University.* I should have no objection to your selecting any medical man answering that description.

With the most perfect confidence that my course was correct, and would be so decided by a proper investigation by those competent to understand, I renew the proposition contained in my letter of the 25th of October, but with the condition contained in my letter of the 29th, "that you entirely and explicitly retract the accusation you have made of neglect or malpractice."

Believing this to be the only just course which can be followed,

I am, very respectfully yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

BOSTON, Nov. 4, 1869.

No. VIII.

Charles E. Buckingham, M. D.

DEAR SIR,—Yours of the 4th inst. is received and read. As I have before declared, I have only sought the information which could afford consolation to a man in my circumstances. I have received none from you, and now, in this your last communication, you affirm that the fullest answer to any questions propounded by me, could make me no wiser than before. And if I am made no wiser, of course I can be made no happier. Therefore I must accept your confes-

*See page 17 line 13.

sion that it is not in your power by enlightening my mind relative to Mrs. Barnard's death to give that poor comfort to my heart which the belief that this death was inevitable would afford, and remain in misery.

My loss, from what I fully believe to have been from neglect first, and incompetency afterwards, not even you will deny is beyond all power of expression.

My only consolation now can be in *saving others from a similar fate.*

Respectfully,

D. BARNARD.

BOSTON, Nov. 6th, 1869.

About the middle of December last, I was able, through certain patients, who had spoken to me upon the subject, to find evidence, that through one of them, at least, Mr. Barnard was endeavoring to carry out his threat, as above. Upon following the trail back, I at last traced the scandal back to the gentleman addressed in the next letter, as follows:—

No. IX.

53 WORCESTER STREET, Dec. 22d, 1869.

A. Rosmond Walker, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—If you have no objection to answering the following questions you will oblige me very much by doing so:

1st. On what day, and at what place did Mr. Darwin Barnard give you the history of his wife's last sickness?

2d. Who was present at the time besides yourself?

3d. Did he give the name of any physician, who had in any way commented upon the treatment of the case as in any way improper, and if so whose name did he mention?

If you are able and willing to answer these questions you may confer a favor upon

Yours truly,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

X.

BOSTON, MASS., Dec. 23, 1869.

Dr. C. E. Buckingham.

DEAR SIR,—Your favor of 22d is at hand. I have no objection to answering the questions.

The first time Mr. Barnard spoke of the matter was in my office and I was alone ; he has since done so while my brother and father were present—He gave the names of no particular physicians—spoke of them generally.

A. R. WALKER.

No. XI.

53 WORCESTER STREET, December 24, 1869.

A. R. Walker, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your prompt reply. Will you please state, as nearly as you can remember, what Mr. Barnard said concerning his wife's case and my treatment of it? and will you compare your remembrance of the conversation with that of your father and brother, and see if their recollection agrees with yours? I have no desire to make trouble for any one, but simply to justify myself.

I am very truly yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. XII.

C. E. Buckingham, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—Your favor of the 24th came duly to hand. I was prevented from an earlier reply by the holiday and Sabbath. Time nor *space* will not permit telling all he said at various times ; but to be brief, I should say that the facts as *he states* them are substantially the same as in a letter he says he sent you, a copy of which he read me. It will be useless to compare with my father and brother, as he has always

stated the circumstances at each interview. I wish to state my position ere I close. Mr. B., previous to his marriage, boarded at the same house, and has at times called at my office. Of course his story struck me with astonishment, and I naturally spoke of it to my mother.

Very respectfully yours,

A. R. WALKER.

BOSTON, MASS., December 27, 1869.

Upon reading a portion of letter No. VI. to Mr. Walker, he recognized it immediately as one which Mr. Barnard had read to him.

I therefore next wrote to Dr. D. Humphreys Storer, evidently the person alluded to on page 17, line 13; and following. The following are the letters and replies :

No. XIII.

53 WORCESTER ST., Boston, Jan. 5, 1870.

D. H. Storer, M. D.

MY DEAR SIR,—Late in the last summer, a case of placenta prævia came into my hands, which resulted fatally. Something more than a month later, the husband, Mr. Darwin Barnard, called upon me to obtain information concerning the cause of death, which I was willing to give him, as far as possible. His questions, however, took on so much of the style of an examination in court, that I asked his authority for his statements and questions, and declined answering except in writing, and under particular rules. A long correspondence ensued, in the course of which it came out, that some person, ignorant of the particular circumstances of the case, had filled his mind with ideas of what should have been the treatment. He has of late been trying to carry out his threat to injure me, by talking the case over with non-professional men and reading to them one of his letters to me,

dated Nov. 3d, which contains the following: "From what you have said to me, I know that you would like the names of the physicians, that you might pronounce a judgment upon their eminence and their fitness—I will only say this: they were those whom Harvard University has not only honored with degrees, but there was one among them, whom this same University has honored with an appointment as Professor, equal in distinction to that with which she has honored you—I state this fact because, in one of your letters to me, you asserted the presumption that you should know what was proper and best to do in any case of labor—that this was the special field of medical science and skill which you had cultivated for many years—and that you had been judged fitted to instruct in this department."

I regret exceedingly to trouble you with the affair, but the allusion is so pointed a statement, that he is backed by one of my predecessors, that it seems proper that I should communicate it to you and ask if you have had any communication with him on the subject. If so, I should desire to lay his letters before you in order to know if he correctly represents what you have said to him.

Yours, &c.,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. XIV.

DEAR SIR,—Sometime since a gentleman called upon me and wished to know how I treated Uterine Hæmorrhage—in as few words as possible I told him—; during the interview, it was evident that some particular case was in his mind—upon enquiry, he told me the history of his wife, and wished my opinion upon the case. I told him at once, it was impossible for me to give an opinion—that any conscientious physician endeavored to do his duty—that he could have but one wish, and that, to relieve his patient—that each case required its appropriate treatment—and that you did undoubt-

edly *what you thought proper*—. I advised him, earnestly to banish from his mind the feeling that anything had been left undone—that he was increasing his unhappiness by constantly dwelling upon the subject—and that it was his duty to endeavor to forget whatever had appeared to him neglectful or unkind.

I regretted exceedingly that I should have been called upon, and evaded in every possible way any remark or expression which could be distorted into an unprofessional or ungentlemanly bearing.

I particularly requested of the individual referred to, that he would never intimate to any one that I had expressed an opinion, because I had most religiously avoided giving one.

Yours,

D. H. STORER.

January 6th, '70.

No. XV.

D. H. Storer, M. D.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your answer (bearing date Jan. 6th), to my letter of Jan. 5th, was received Jan. 8th. Thanking you for your early reply, I now ask at what time it will be convenient for you to have “his letters laid before you in order to know, if he correctly represents what you have said to him.”

Very resp'y yrs.,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

53 WORCESTER ST.

Jan. 10th, '70.

No. XVI.

MY DEAR SIR,—This, and to-morrow evening, I am en-

gaged. On *Wednesday evening*, any time after 7 1-4 o'clock I shall be pleased to see you at my office.

Respectfully yrs.,

D. H. STORER.

Jan. 10th, '70.

No. XVII.

BOSTON, January 12th, '70.

D. H. Storer, M. D.

DEAR SIR,—It will not be possible for me to lay those letters before you this evening. They are to be seen at the office of Mr. Chauncey Smith, Pemberton Sq., who has been obliged to go to New York, and will not return till Monday next.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

A few days later, Jan. 18th, the entire correspondence was read to Dr. Storer, and upon the 19th, I addressed him again as follows:—

No. XVIII.

January 19th, 1870.

D. H. Storer, M. D.

MY DEAR SIR,—Will you oblige me by putting in writing your opinion of the treatment of Mrs. Barnard's case, so far as you know what it was, or was not? and whether from his description, you could possibly judge whether the case was properly treated or not?

An answer to these questions may do something to stop any further legal action of mine towards him.

I am, very respectfully yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. XIX.

MY DEAR SIR,—In the case of Mrs. Barnard, to which you

refer, so far as I *know from the account of her husband*, I could not judge of the appropriateness of the treatment—I could form no opinion and of course could express none.

From *your account* of the case, I should judge you had endeavored faithfully to discharge your duty.

Yours truly,

D. HUMPHREYS STORER.

Jan. 20th, '70.

No. XVIII and No. XIX were enclosed in the following letter, No. XX, to Mr. Barnard, whose answer, and the remainder of the correspondence, are left without comment.

No. XX.

BOSTON, January 28th, '70.

MY DEAR SIR,—Should you see fit to read a part or the whole of our correspondence to any more patients of mine, will you oblige me by reading also the enclosed copies as an appendix.

Respectfully yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

D. Barnard, Esq.

No. XXI.

BOSTON, February 2nd, 1870.

Dr. C. E. Buckingham.

DEAR SIR,—Yours of Jan. 28th, enclosing copies of several letters, has been received.

In one of them your correspondent says, “From *your account* of the case, I should judge you had endeavored faithfully to discharge your duty.”

Will you please inform me what “*your account* of the case” was?

Respectfully yours,

D. BARNARD.

No. XXII.

BOSTON, Jan. 22nd, 1870.

D. H. Storer, M. D.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your note of Jan. 20th, in reply to mine of the 19th, was received, and I thank you for it.

The case has been repeatedly reported, as I understand, by Mr. Barnard, and the opinions of other physicians concerning the treatment of the case have been largely quoted, but without my being able to obtain their names. It has been suggested, that the entire correspondence should be printed for distribution in the profession, as a means of finding out who has been consulted, and if others have been quoted falsely as well as yourself.

Should you desire to make any change in your notes before printing? I ask this, because you speak in your last note of *Your (my) account of the case,*” and I believe I have given you no account of the treatment.

I am very respectfully yours,

CHARLES E. BUCKINGHAM.

No. XXIII.

DEAR SIR,—I am not a little surprised that you should say “you had given me no account of the treatment.” If you had not done so, how could I say “*I thought you had discharged your duty?*” You must excuse me from hearing any more upon this subject.

Respectfully,

D. H. STORER.

BOSTON, Jan. 24th, '70.

A P P E N D I X.

As Dr. Charles E. Buckingham has seen fit to publish the foregoing correspondence with certain prefatory remarks, I deem it a right as well as a duty to myself and to the community in which this pamphlet shall be circulated and read, to present this brief summary of *facts*, relative to the sickness and sad death of my wife and the treatment and care of her attending Physician.

Dr. Buckingham, a stranger to my family, on account of the sickness and consequent unavoidable absence of my regular physician, at his special recommendation, was previously engaged, and called to attend my wife, on Sunday, Sept. 5th, 1869, in what he well knew to be her first confinement.

Shortly after his arrival, he used the words, "she has a good pulse, and so far as I can judge, everything seems to be in her favor."

The child, which was forcibly delivered, was born at fifteen minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon.

Dr. Buckingham left the bed-side of the patient, without putting on swathe or compresses, and went to the further end of the room, which is a very long parlor, at twenty minutes past three o'clock, and sat by the window writing, what he afterwards told me was notes of the case. He remained in that position by the window at least half an hour.

The other doctor referred to, sat in another part of the room during this time, on a sofa, reading a paper, and was not near the patient or giving her *any* attention, for the reason I suppose, that he was not taking charge of the case,

having been called by Dr. Buckingham to assist in administering ether.

While Dr. Buckingham sat by the window writing, after the birth of the child, he assured me, my wife was "*as safe as any woman.*"

Shortly after this assurance, she complained of being cold. One of the ladies present said, "Shall I place another covering on the bed?" to which Dr. Buckingham replied, "Nobody will catch cold here!"

Subsequent to this, she said, "*I am flowing now!*" to which Dr. Buckingham paid no attention, further than to raise his head and look toward the patient, and then turn back to his writing. I said in my anxiety, "Why! Did the Doctor hear her?" "Yes he turned his head and looked at her," was the reply. In about three or four minutes more, she called again, "*O! I am flowing dreadfully!*"

At this point, Dr. Buckingham very moderately put up his writing, came to the bedside and called for a basin. A common wash bowl was brought and filled twice with clotted blood, and the hæmorrhage was not checked, but continued till she died—a large number of napkins and other cloths being used to receive the blood.

No *cold* applications were made. Ice was not called for, though there was an abundance of it in the house.

I did not see him introduce his arm into the uterus or know of his doing so, although I was present and near him all the time.

I did not see him compress the uterus even after his return to the bedside.

He did not at any time, express or indicate any alarm or anxiety to me, and after my wife had breathed her last, left the house without speaking to me.

A few minutes before her death, Mrs. Barnard, in a faint tone, remarked that the voice of the child, who was crying at the time, sounded hoarse. Dr. Buckingham, after asking her what she had said—causing her to repeat the remark, an-

swered, "*It is half horse and half alligator.*" The young mother who had borne an anxiety common to all in her situation, lest her offspring might not be perfect, died without seeing her child, and nearly the last words which came to her ear, fell from the lips of the physician who was attending her, your child is half horse and half alligator.

Dr. Buckingham, as I am informed and believe, has not called upon or seen from that day till this, the physician at whose recommendation, he knew I placed the case in his hands.

The wife of my regular physician was present and witnessed the whole scene.

I have heretofore written *privately*, as will appear by my letters, and even though our correspondence has been made *public* by Dr. Buckingham, I should not now take my pen, except for the assertion made in the preface, that "there was no time when one or the other (of the two physicians present) was not compressing the uterus," which statement is absolutely and entirely untrue.

In proof whereof I submit the appended affidavits.

I abstain from all comment.

D. BARNARD.

I, Betsey H. Prescott, of Boston, hereby certify on oath that I was present during the sickness and death of Mrs. D. Barnard, which took place on Sunday afternoon, September 5th, 1869.

I saw Dr. Buckingham go to the farther end of the long parlor and take his seat by the window, and commence writing, about half an hour after the birth of the child, which occurred at about a quarter before three o'clock.

He remained by the window certainly half an hour.

While Dr. Buckingham was by the window, Dr. Swan

was occupying the sofa away from the bed, and was engaged in reading a paper. All this time no physician was near Mrs. Barnard, or performing *any* service for her.

Some time after Dr. Buckingham took his seat by the window Mrs. Barnard exclaimed, "I am cold." Presently I heard her say, "I am flowing now."

Mr. Barnard looked very anxious, and asked "Did he hear her?" Mrs. Perkins said, "Yes, he looked up," but he did not go to her.

In three or four minutes after the first call, I heard her say "Oh! I am flowing dreadfully!" After this, Dr. Buckingham slowly put away his writing, went to the bedside and called for a basin, and waited till a wash-bowl was brought.

The bowl was filled twice with clotted blood.

A great number of napkins and other cloths, such as could be reached quickly, were handed to Dr. Buckingham, one after another, and were soon saturated with blood.

The hemorrhage lasted till she died. There was a large supply of ice in the refrigerator, but it was not called for. Hot gruel was ordered, and given, a short time before her death.

I have read the pamphlet published by Dr. Buckingham, and also Mr. Barnard's Appendix, and believe Mr. Barnard's account of the case to be *strictly true*.

Dr. Buckingham's statement in the Prefatory to the published correspondence, that "there was no time when one or the other [of the physicians] was not compressing the uterus," I *know* to be positively false.

BETSEY H. PRESCOTT.

SUFFOLK SS. }
April 18th, 1870. }

Subscribed and sworn to before me,

D. F. CRANE, *Justice of the Peace.*

I, Sophronia M. Perkins, of Boston, hereby certify on oath, that I was in the room when the sickness and death of Mrs. D. Barnard occurred, on the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 5th, 1869.

I was present previous to the birth of the child, and conversed with Mrs. Barnard while Dr. Buckingham was waiting for ether to be brought. She seemed cheerful and full of courage. This was after she understood that force would be used in the delivery of the child.

I heard Dr. Buckingham say before the child was born, "She has a good pulse, and so far as I can judge, everything seems to be in her favor."

The child was born at fifteen minutes before three o'clock.

Dr. Buckingham went to the distant end of the room at twenty minutes past three o'clock, where he sat by the window writing for more than half an hour. During Dr. Buckingham's stay by the window Dr. Swan sat upon the sofa, remote from the bedside, perusing a paper, and *neither* physician during all that time, was giving any heed or assistance to Mrs. Barnard.

I heard Dr. Buckingham say to Mr. Barnard, while by the window, after the birth of the child, "*She is as safe as any woman.*"

While he was away she complained of cold; I said, "Shall I put more clothing on the bed?" Dr. Buckingham replied, "*Nobody will catch cold here!*" A little later she exclaimed, "I am flowing now." Mr. Barnard said, "Did the Doctor hear her?" I said, "Yes, he looked up." Instead of going to the bed, he remained where he was and continued to write.

It was at least three minutes before she called again, crying, "Oh! I am flowing dreadfully!"

The Doctor then deliberately put aside his writing, walked to the bed-side and called for a basin. An ordinary wash-bowl was procured and filled twice with clotted blood. After this, such cloths and garments as could be readily seized, in-

cluding a night-dress and a skirt, were saturated with blood ; and then, thirty-six napkins were handed to Dr. Buckingham, and used by him to take up the blood which still flowed. The hæmorrhage continued till her death.

Drugs were given occasionally and hot gruel by Dr. Buckingham's order, was given to her a short time before her death.

No cold applications were resorted to. Ice was not called for.

I was by the bedside almost constantly after Dr. Buckingham's return to it, till Mrs. Barnard expired. I did not see him compress the uterus, or attempt to introduce his arm at all. He certainly did not do so with any frequency or for any length of time.

No swathe or compresses were used. To her remark, "The child's voice sounds hoarse," I heard Dr. Buckingham reply, "*It is half horse and half alligator.*" I have read the correspondence which has been published by Dr. Buckingham, and the Appendix by Mr. Barnard, and believe Mr. Barnard's account of the case to be *true in every particular.*

I have read with surprise and amazement Dr. Buckingham's statement in regard to the constant attendance upon Mrs. Barnard.

His declaration in the Preface to his pamphlet, that "there was no time when one or the other (of the physicians present) was not compressing the uterus." I can say from positive knowledge, is wholly and absolutely untrue.

SOPHRONIA M. PERKINS.

SUFFOLK SS. }
April 18th, 1870. }

Subscribed and sworn to before me,

D. F. CRANE, *Justice of the Peace.*

I, Thankful H. Sears, of East Dennis, hereby certify on oath, that I am sister of Mrs. D. Barnard, and that I was present during her confinement and death, which occurred on Sunday, Sept. 5th, 1869. I remember distinctly, about thirty minutes after the birth of the child, Dr. Buckingham left her bedside, seated himself by the window, a distance of several feet from the bed, and commenced writing.

At the same time, the other physician sat upon the sofa, several feet from the bed, reading a newspaper. Neither of whom for at least *thirty minutes* came near her bedside.

I heard Mrs. Barnard say, "I am flowing now!" Neither physician heeded that. Three or four minutes afterward, she exclaimed, "Oh! I am flowing dreadfully!" Then Dr. Buckingham put away his writing, came to the bedside, and ordered a basin which was immediately filled with clotted blood, but the hæmorrhage was not checked. Certain drugs were given, but *no ice* was used. No cold applications of any kind.

When Mrs. Barnard said, "I am flowing now," Dr. Buckingham must have heard her, for he looked directly toward her, but *did not* leave his seat by the window.

The statement, that "there was no time when one or the other was not compressing the uterus," I solemnly state to be untrue. I *know* it is false, for I *saw* my sister, lying *alone* on the bed, *unattended* by any one, for many minutes, after Dr. Buckingham left her, subsequent to the birth of the child.

THANKFUL H. SEARS.

BARNSTABLE ss. }
April 11th, 1870. }

Then personally appeared Thankful H. Sears, and made oath that the above affidavit by her made and subscribed, is true to the best of her knowledge and belief.

Before me,

OBED BROOKS, *Justice of the Peace.*

The following letter was received from Mr. A. R. Walker :

BOSTON, April 8th, 1870.

D. Barnard, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—A friend of mine has just brought to my notice the published correspondence in regard to the treatment of your wife, which very much to my surprise, includes some letters which passed between Dr. Buckingham and myself.

In imputing to you, malicious or improper motives, I think Dr. Buckingham does you great injustice. In all my conversation with you, I have felt that your inconsolable grief only exceeded your earnest, but almost hopeless desire to feel that everything had been done kindly and faithfully for your wife by the physician who attended her.

Very truly yours,

A. ROSMOND WALKER.

April 13th I wrote Dr. D. Humphreys Storer and received reply as follows :

BOSTON, April 13th, 1870.

Dr. D. Humphreys Storer.

DEAR SIR,—Have you any objection to telling me what led you to say in your communication of January 20th addressed to Dr. Charles E. Buckingham, that in his treatment of my wife, you “thought he had discharged his duty.”

Yours very respectfully,

D. BARNARD.

Mr. D. Barnard,

DEAR SIR,—I certainly have no objection to answering your very natural question.

I expressed to Dr. Buckingham the opinion that I thought he had done his duty for two reasons.

First, his distinct statement to me that in order to guard against hæmorrhage, ergot was administered, and the uterus kept contracted by compression, constantly applied by Dr. Swan.

And secondly that she died from the shock, and not from hæmorrhage.

Had profuse hæmorrhage been present, other remedies familiar to the merest tyro in the profession would have been imperatively demanded.

Respectfully yours,

D. HUMPHREYS STORER.

BOSTON, April 13th, 1870.



