

accident, that the accident would cause death within three months, and that the water is an outward and visible means of the accident. They then raised a peculiarly subtle objection on the ground that there was no satisfactory proof that the water was the means of injury. The distinction implied was that between a *causa sine qua non* and a *causa causans*. He might have died in the water, but of some kind of fit caused by stepping into it. Supposing him to have died after undressing and stepping out of the bathing machine, the effect of the water, said one of the learned Barons, might have been to cause his death "by natural reasons—by apoplexy or spasms, or some other way than injury." This is a very difficult line of reasoning for the medical mind to follow. If the sudden impact of cold water artificially applied to the skin—as in a punishment shower-bath ordered for a convict—should induce fatal apoplexy, this would be held to warrant a verdict of manslaughter; and the same phenomena accidentally produced must be held to stand in the same relation of cause and effect. The "essential cause" and the "causative cause" are not capable of being separated in a medical view. In the argument in the Court of Error, the learned Baron's statement was compared to the defence of a poacher—that a gun was fired and a pheasant fell, but that it was killed by fright; and to the defence sometimes put forward in criminal courts, where a man is stabbed, and evidence is called to prove that he had ulcer of the stomach or softening of the brain. The common-sense view triumphed in the Court of Error, the conclusion arrived at being that the man went into the water and was drowned, and that drowning was an injury within the meaning of the policy.

This decision is satisfactory, because it is obvious that had the earlier opinion of the judges prevailed, insurance companies might object, in the face of any claim arising out of injury by sea or land, that the mischief arose not from the injury itself, but from a mysterious internal disease which it had called into action. No man could then possibly be injured with advantage to himself or his family; and no accident, however grave, could produce a corresponding increase in the income of his sympathizing relatives and survivors.

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

### CHLOROFORM FOR PUERPERAL CONVULSIONS DURING LABOUR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Wilson, in his report (*vide* THE LANCET of May 4th, p. 432) of a case as above, remarked, "I am unaware whether it (chloroform) has been administered for this purpose."

The following cases will show that I have employed it with marked benefit:—

CASE 1.—I was called in on the 6th of February, 1854, at ten minutes to four P.M., by Dr. Challacombe, of this city, to a patient of his, a small woman, aged twenty-two, her first pregnancy. She had been seized with convulsions about the midnight previous, when the Doctor was called in. Subsequently labour came on. He had resorted to the usual means for alleviation without the slightest benefit; in fact, he left nothing undone of the usual treatment in such cases. When I first saw her the arms and hands were strongly contracted and of a purple hue, the pupils uplifted, the head thrown backwards, the feet contracted, and the breathing laborious. Finding that everything had been tried, I begged to suggest the inhalation of chloroform, which was at once commenced at five minutes past four. At this time the os uteri was dilated to the size of a crown piece; breech presentation, the leg being easily felt. The extremities speedily relaxed, the breathing became natural, and the os uteri, previously rigid, became dilatable. After some little difficulty I brought down one leg. Dr. Challacombe then resumed the active duties, and by a quarter to five she was delivered of a child, which had been

dead some days. In this case the convulsions ceased at once with the inhalation; but consciousness did not return until the following day. She went on very well.

CASE 2.—I was summoned on March 9th, 1857, a little before three A.M., by Mr. Wm. Braybrooke, surgeon to the Military Train, to a lady in puerperal convulsions, aged twenty-four; first pregnancy. Labour had commenced on the 7th, at ten P.M., and was proceeding slowly, but well, until one this morning, when, Mr. Braybrooke being in attendance, epileptic convulsions commenced very severely. On my arrival I found that Mr. T. E. Clarke had preceded me by a few minutes. Only a very short interval intervened between each convulsion. The os uteri was not larger than a half-crown. I proposed chloroform and dilatation of the os with the fingers until we should be able to apply the forceps, it being a head presentation. The inhalation was commenced at eighteen minutes past three. The convulsions at once ceased. At twenty minutes past four the forceps were applied, and delivery immediately effected. No return of convulsions during the inhalation. At twenty-five minutes past five she had a very severe fit, which was the last. The same evening she was conscious, and progressed as well as if nothing had happened out of the usual course.

CASE 3.—I was summoned to a lady on Oct. 26th, 1860, and was with her at a quarter to two A.M. I found her in an epileptic convulsion. She had previously had two similar fits after one A.M. Upon examination I found labour commencing. It was her twelfth pregnancy. I introduced my finger into the os, and upon it guided Dr. Simpson's uterine sound, with which I ruptured the membranes; this instrument I have found very useful for such purposes. The convulsions returned at intervals of from fifteen to forty minutes. At twenty minutes past five A.M. I began the use of chloroform, and continued it until seven without any return. At twelve minutes past seven a fit occurred; gave the chloroform again, and there was no return. At a quarter past ten I omitted its use; labour progressing slowly. At twenty-five minutes past eleven there was an appearance of strong uterine action, instantly followed by another convulsion; resumed the chloroform, and we saw no more of the convulsions. At five minutes to one P.M., the os being sufficiently dilated and yielding, I determined to deliver. I introduced the forceps, and at five minutes past one removed the child. The patient had been insensible from the commencement of the attack. Either myself or my son, Mr. F. Poole Lansdown, who assisted me, remained with her until half past four, when, there having been no return of the convulsions, we left her for an hour. On my return she was progressing favourably; but at seven o'clock I found her sinking, and she died without another convulsion.

In both of these latter cases great depression had been produced by unavoidable circumstances, which had caused considerable mental anxiety, and which I have no doubt brought on the convulsions.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

Portland-square, Bristol,  
May 11th, 1861.

J. G. LANSDOWN, M.R.C.S.

### INJURIES CAUSED BY LIGHTNING.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR.—Should you consider the following case worthy a space in your journal, it is at your service:—

On the evening of the 23rd inst., Richmond and its vicinity was visited by a heavy thunder storm, and during its violence a woman, aged twenty-five, taking shelter under the boughs of a large elm tree in the park, was struck down by lightning. She was standing with her back to the tree, when its trunk was struck at about 100 feet from the ground, the bark being torn away from the wood in a continuous, but irregular course, to about a level with the poor woman's head. The furrow in the trunk of the tree was about four inches wide and two deep; the rent being deepest at its termination. The electric fluid then left the tree, and apparently, from the scorched condition of the circular network of the cap, passed round the steel wire-work in the front part of her bonnet. The skin of the forehead and face was blistered, and the cuticle over the front and sides of her neck and chest was blackened and charred, her under linen and shawl catching fire. The electric fluid must then have passed down the steel plate in the front part of her stays, as its linen covering was scorched its entire extent. The skin over the inner part and sides of both thighs and knees was burnt and blackened, peeling off with the slightest touch. The right foot was blistered, the sole of the boot being torn away from the cloth. The electric fluid then appeared to pass into the earth, for there was a large hole visible on the spot where the