
Chapter – 7

Birth

The story Birth is an excerpt from The Citadel. It relates how a medical fresher handles a child delivery case in a mysterious way and brings back life in a seemingly dead born child. In doing so he applies his medical text book knowledge as well as intuition. He finds that text book knowledge alone is not sufficient to handle such cases. The story expresses the anxiety and excitement of the doctor, Andrew Manson and his team.

In the beginning of the story, it is narrated how Andrew Manson who had recently passed out from a medical school, was returning home after a disappointing evening with his girl friend, Christine. It was midnight and when he reached near his house he was requested by Joe Morgan to attend to his wife immediately. She was expecting her first child. Andrew agreed to go despite late night.

At the patient's house, Andrew saw that the lady was being attended to by a midwife. Mrs. Morgan was very serious. Andrew examined the patient and could understand that it would take some time for the delivery to take place. He took a break. In this period Andrew's mind started wavering in stray thoughts. He started thinking about Branwell who was foolishly devoted to a woman who deceived him meanly. Then he thought of Edward page who was married to the ill-natured Blodwen, and was now living unhappily, apart from his wife. Andrew thought all marriages were a dismal failure. In the meantime Andrew had to go back to attend to the patient.

The subsequent section narrates how after an hour long harsh struggle a child was born towards the dawn. But the child was still born. When Andrew gazed at the lifeless form, he shivered with horror. Then he looked at the mother. She required immediate attention. Andrew was to decide to whom to attend: the child or the mother.

Andrew gave the child to the nurse and turned his attention to the mother who was unconscious. Gradually, her heart strengthened and Andrew could now leave her to attend to the baby. Andrew asked about the child. The midwife was thoroughly frightened. Taking it as a still child, she had dumped it beneath the bed amongst soaked newspaper. Andrew pulled out the child. The child was perfectly formed. Andrew could understand that it was a case of suffocation due to lack of oxygen and excess of carbon-dioxide in the blood. Andrew started giving the necessary treatment. He did not lose heart. The midwife again and again told him that it was a still born child. But Andrew did not heed. He continued with his treatment.

Towards the end of the story, a miracle happened he rubbed the child with a towel crushed and relaxed the little chest with both his hands. Thus, he tried to infuse breath into that limp body. The little chest gave a short, convoluted heave. The child started turning around. It was no longer still born.

At last Andrew heaved a sigh of relief. He handed the child to the nurse. He told the entire story to Joe standing outside and walked down the street with some miners with a sense of deep satisfaction that he could achieve something great.