



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
NOTES - (2020-21)

BIRTH- by A J Cronin

Class: XI

Sub: ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

'Birth' by A.J. Cronin is an excerpt from 'The Citadel' about Dr. Andrew Manson who has just graduated out of medical college and commenced his practice under the supervision of Dr. Edward Page as an assistant in Blaenelly. It is also an account of how a fresh medical practitioner skillfully handles a child delivery case and brings a still born child back to life.

CHARACTERS

Dr. Andrew Manson: A newly graduated medical practitioner working in a small mining town, Andrew has taken up a job as an assistant to Dr. Edward Page. On the call of Joe Morgan, a miner, Andrew manages to help in a difficult birth and saves the baby's life due to his practical knowledge and efforts.

Joe Morgan: A well-built miner in his forties, Joe Morgan works as a driller in a mine. He is the husband of Susan Morgan who is to deliver a baby after twenty years of marriage. Joe asks Dr. Andrew Manson to help in his wife's delivery and reposes full faith in the doctor.

Susan Morgan's Mother: She is a tall, grey-haired woman of nearly seventy who is concerned about her daughter's happiness. She is anxious about the child.

The Midwife: She is an experienced nurse who is there to assist in child birth. She is pessimistic about the child's survival when it is found not breathing, but still dutifully assists Dr. Andrew Manson in his work.

EXPLANATION

Joe Morgan was Waiting for Dr. Andrew

Dr. Andrew had recently graduated from medical college. He was practicing as an assistant to Dr. Edward Page in a small Welsh mining town named Blaenelly. One night he was returning home around midnight after a disappointing evening with his girlfriend, Christine when he found Joe Morgan waiting for him outside the doctor's home. Joe had been there for more than an hour. He informed that the doctor was needed at their home as his wife was expecting to deliver a baby after almost twenty years of their marriage. Dr. Andrew asked him to wait for a few minutes. He went inside, got his medical bag and set out for Joe Morgan's house.

The Case Demanded All Attention of Dr. Andrew

Joe Morgan stopped outside the house and requested Dr. Andrew to go inside alone. Through a narrow staircase the doctor reached a small, clean but scantily furnished room. He found two women beside the patient, Susan Morgan's mother, a tall, grey-haired woman of nearly seventy, and an elderly midwife. Susan's mother offered him a cup of tea. So, Dr. Andrew sensed that she

didn't want him to leave, as there would be some waiting period. Dr. Andrew was tired but still decided to stay. An hour later, Dr. Andrew went to check the patient and came down. The restless footsteps of Joe Morgan could be heard as he paced in the street outside.

Dr. Andrew's Mind Wandered

Dr. Andrew's mind started wavering in stray thoughts. He started thinking about Branwell who was foolishly devoted to a woman who deceived him. Then he thought about Edward Page who was married to ill-natured Blodwen. He also thought of Denny who was living apart from his wife, unhappily. Andrew thought that all marriages were a dismal failure. He was so deep in his thoughts that the voice of the old lady (Susan Morgan's mother) surprised him. She informed him that her daughter didn't want him to give her chloroform if it would harm the baby. Dr. Andrew replied that it would do no harm. Just then he heard the midwife's voice. It was half-past three and Andrew perceived that it was time for him to start working on the delivery.

The Horrifying Dilemma

After a harsh struggle for an hour, the child was born. It was a perfectly formed boy but a still born. A shiver of horror passed over Dr. Andrew. He had promised the family so much. He wanted to resuscitate the child, but the mother herself was in a very desperate state and required his immediate attention. He gave the child to the midwife and turned his attention to Susan Morgan, the mother, who was lying unconscious. Her pulse was slow and her strength was reducing.

After a few minutes of continuous efforts, he stabilized her by giving her an injection. Then he asked for the child. The midwife had placed the child under the bed, presuming him to be dead. Dr. Andrew pulled the child out. His head was hanging loosely and the limbs seemed boneless. He concluded that the child was suffering from asphyxia pallida, a case of suffocation due to lack of oxygen and excess of carbon dioxide in blood.

Dr. Andrew's Efforts to Save the Child

Dr. Andrew recalled a case he had once seen in the Samaritan (a medical journal) and the treatment that was given. He asked the midwife to quickly get hot water and cold water in two bowls. He started plunging the child once into the icy water and then into the steaming bath alternately. Fifteen minutes passed and nothing happened. Dr. Andrew was getting frustrated. He could see the unbelieving faces of the midwife and the old lady but he continued his efforts.

The Miracle

Dr. Andrew started rubbing the child's chest with a rough towel and thumped his little chest, trying to get breath into that limp body. Then, as if by miracle, the child's chest gave a short heave. Dr. Andrew felt weak and nervous at the site of life springing under his hands. He redoubled his efforts and the child was now breathing. Its limbs showed movement, head became erect, skin started turning pink and suddenly the child cried. Andrew heaved a sigh of relief and handed the child over to the midwife who had tears of happiness in her eyes.

Dr. Andrew is Relieved

After so much frantic effort and success, Dr. Andrew felt weak and speechless. The old woman, Susan's mother, was still standing against the wall, praying. Andrew went downstairs and said that he would fetch his bag later on. He found Joe Morgan still waiting with an anxious, eager face. Dr. Andrew gave him the cheerful news that both the mother and the baby were all right.

Andrew was really happy and felt that he had done something real at last. He had achieved a feat in medical history which would certainly brighten his future.