

Birth

By

A. J. Cronin



About the Author

- ▶ A.J. Cronin was a doctor by profession.
- ▶ Authored many best sellers
- ▶ Acute observation
- ▶ Wonderful narrative style



Summary of the Story

- ▶ An impressive story of a doctor's successful efforts to resuscitate the precious life of a new-born baby. Baby was declared still-born by the experienced mid-wife. His determination and humane approach brought back the life of the baby from the jaws of death. It gave him joy and satisfaction. It relieved and gave immense joy to the Morgan family as the middle aged parents were blessed with a baby two decades after the marriage.



▶ Andrew Manson had just completed his study of medicine. He began his medical practice as an assistant to Dr. Edward Page in a small town of Blaenelly. He loved a girl Christine but his experience was disappointing. It was nearly midnight when he reached Bryngower. He found Joe Morgan waiting for him. Joe had been married for nearly twenty years. And now his wife was expecting her first child.



▶ Joe had been waiting there for an hour. The labor pains had begun before time. Andrew went into the house for his bag. Together they set out for Number 12, Blaina Terrace. The Doctor had never imagined that night would influence his whole future in that town.



- ▶ Joe drew up short. He refused to enter the door. Inside a narrow stair led up to a small bedroom, lit only by an oil lamp. Besides the patient, there was two other women-the tall woman of nearly seventy was Joe's mother-in-law. The other stout and elderly woman was a midwife. Joe's mother offered to make a cup of tea for the doctor. She was wise in experience. She realized that the delivery might take some time. She was afraid that the doctor would leave the case, saying that he would return later. Andrew assured her that he won't run away. He drank the tea down in the kitchen. He was tense. He knew that the case would demand all his attention. He made up his mind to remain there until everything was over.
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- ▶ Andrew went upstairs an hour later, noted the progress made and came down to the kitchen once more. Only the wall clock was making a dull soft sound. Joe Morgan was pacing in the street outside. He was thinking of cases where marriages were dismal failures. He stretched out his legs thoughtfully. The old lady wanted to know if giving chloroform to the expectant mother could be harmful. Andrew assured her that the anesthetic won't do any harm.



It was half-past three when Andrew heard the nurse call. He went up to the bedroom. He saw that he might now begin his work. An hour passed. After a long, harsh struggle the child was born, but lifeless. Andrew was horrified to see the still child. His face chilled suddenly. There were two options before him- to save the child or the mother who too was in a critical state. Blindly he gave the child to the nurse and turned his attention to Susan Morgan. She lay collapsed, almost pulseless. He gave an injection and worked feverishly until her heart strengthened.

"Where's the child ?". he asked the midwife, She had placed the child under the bed. In a flash, he knelt down and pulled body was white. The umbilical cord had been cut badly. The limbs seemed boneless. Andrew's mind raced back to a case he once had seen and the treatment used there. He asked for hot water and cold water, and basins too. He laid the child on a blanket and began the method of respiration. Like some juggler. he first put the child into the icy cold water and then into the steaming hot water. Fifteen minutes passed. He was all sweat and panting. Andrew was feeling a sense of defeat and hopelessness. The midwife was watching him in dismay and astonishment. The old woman stood there



The floor was in a mess, his own hands were wet and slippery. he almost dropped the child like a white fish. The midwife observed that the child was stillborn. But Andrew did not heed her. He still made another attempt to revive the child. He rubbed it with a rough towel, pressed and released its chest with both hands. And then, as by a miracle, he felt a short movement him almost faint. He redoubled his efforts. The child was gasping now. A bubble of mucus came from one tiny nostril. The limbs were no longer boneless. The white skin slowly turned pink. And finally, the child cried.

Andrew handed the child to midwife. He felt weak and dazed. The old was praying without sound. The mother was slowly getting out of the effect of anesthetic. Andrew pulled on his jacket and went downstairs. Outside Joe stood on the pavement with a tense face. 'Both all right', Andrew told him. It was already on the five clock. A few miners of the first night shift were already on the streets. Andrew kept thinking blindly that he had after all done something real at last.

