

BOSTON MEDICAL LIBRARY

PURCHASED FROM THE INCOME OF THE

OLIVER F. WADSWORTH FUND





*J. P. Clarke*  
*a present from the Author*  
*Geo. Morant*  
HINTS TO HUSBANDS: ✓

A Revelation

OF

THE MAN-MIDWIFE'S MYSTERIES.

BY

*c*  
GEORGE MORANT,

LATE GRENADIER GUARDS.

“ Sit you down,  
And let me wring your heart, for so I shall,  
If it be made of penetrable stuff;  
If damned custom have not brazed it so,  
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.”

Third Edition,

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.,

4, STATIONERS' HALL COURT.

1857.

18483 Ad. 50



TO THE  
HUSBANDS & FATHERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM,

AND TO THOSE HONOURABLE MEN OF THE

Medical Profession,

WHO REPROBATE AND CONDEMN

THE UNNATURAL CUSTOM OF MAN-MIDWIFERY,

AS AN OUTRAGE ON THE MODESTY OF WOMEN,

AND DEROGATORY TO THEIR OWN VOCATION;

AND TO ALL WHO HAVE

HEARTS TO FEEL AND COURAGE TO COPE WITH

This enormous Wrong,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
Open Knowledge Commons and Harvard Medical School

<http://www.archive.org/details/hintstohusbandsr00mora>



## PREFACE.

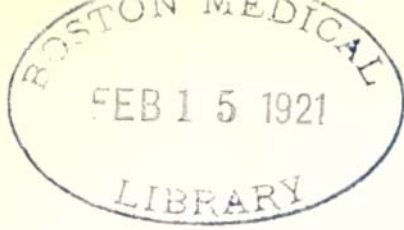
---

THE two-fold object which we desire to attain in the following pages, and to which we earnestly entreat the attention of our readers, is the exposure and amendment of a vast social evil, which we have reason to believe has, to most reflecting men, become well nigh intolerable. It will be obvious that to bring this evil, with effect, to the bar of public opinion, we must probe it to the very core, and fearlessly unveil and drag into the light its indecent mysteries. In so doing we shall doubtless incur the censures of those easy-going people who agree with the poet that—

“Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise;”

who, like the bird of the desert, by hiding their heads deem their bodies out of danger; who, dead to all the generous sympathies which elevate man above the brute, would reduce the minds of others to their own dull and dreary level of stolid inanity; of those prudent persons

who, closing their eyes to the lightning flash and their ears to the vollied thunder, sneak through the world by any side-path sooner than encounter a difficulty foot to foot and hand to hand; and, without pretending to any extraordinary knowledge of the human heart, we fear, of the majority of those women who have already sacrificed their modesty at the altar of custom; and, above all, of that class whose presumptuous charlatanism we desire to lay bare. But for all this we care not one jot, provided the mists of imposture be dispelled, and our countrywomen rescued from the disgrace and degradation of an odious system, which, originating in a dissolute age, has since been promoted and encouraged by self-interested empirics, and sanctioned by indifference, credulity, and error.



HINTS TO HUSBANDS,  
&c. &c.

—  
CHAPTER I.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

THE practice of *man*-midwifery is one among the noxious weeds which the rank luxuriance of civilization has produced, and since its introduction it has thriven with unrestrained vitality and ever-increasing strength, until at length it spreads its Upas shadow far and wide over our land, and treacherously, mysteriously, and silently distils the poison of its presence deep into the sanctuaries of domestic life. Reader, we will make plain to you the nature and polluting influence of this redundant growth of luxury and vice; and then, with God's help, may you, and tens of thousands of your fellow-men, swear by all things holy, just, and good, that the hallowed purity of home shall never more be blighted by its deadly shade.

We are accustomed to speak of ourselves as of a highly moral people; and of our manners, habits, and customs as superior to those of other

nations; and of our capital as the most civilized city in the world;

“But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,  
 When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware  
 or his word?  
 When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex  
 like swine,  
 When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;  
 When chalk, and alum, and plaster are sold to the poor for  
 bread,  
 And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life.  
 And sleep must lie down armed, for the villanous centre-bits  
 Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights.  
 While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps as he  
 sits,  
 To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimsoned lights.”

Oh, but, say you, these are not flaws in the crystal, but mere specks upon the mirror, which a little careful polishing may remove with ease. See the propriety, order, and decency of our households; our noble sense of justice, right, and honour; our strict observance of religious duties; the chaste and modest demeanour of our women; and beholding these things, who shall say that we are not a moral people?

To the unreflecting and casual observer, mere outward semblance would appear to justify and confirm this character of our society. Nevertheless there is, beneath the surface of this seeming health, a loathsome canker, eating into the

very vitals of home life!\* and we ourselves are sapping the very foundations of morality, and insulting and outraging the most precious feelings of those whom we should love best and cherish most upon earth, by subjecting them to a usage which first robs them of their birth-right, modesty, and then deadens, and finally destroys, all perception of their loss; while "moral England," under the delusion of a falsely termed necessity, endures, and even fosters a pollution, which France, to her honour, now repudiates and abhors!

Believing it to be a fact that ninety-nine men in every hundred are ignorant of the extent of the outrages to which their wives submit, when "attended" by a *man*-midwife in their "confinements," we shall, in this essay, endeavour to clear up the mystery which envelopes the proceedings of this class of practitioners, showing by extracts from their own treatises what their "process" is; and having afterwards placed before our readers the opinions and arguments of able and scientific men against such an utter

\* "In the midst of our apparent material prosperity, let some curious or courageous hand lift up but a corner of that embroidered pall, which the superficial refinement of our privileged and prosperous classes has thrown over society, and how we recoil from the revelation of what lies seething and festering beneath!"  
*Mrs. Jameson's "Communion of Labour,"* pag. 20.

subversion of propriety, we shall, with confidence in the result, leave the question to be decided by the strong voice of public opinion whether this pernicious custom, indecent and degrading as all will admit it to be, shall longer disgrace our country.

The spirit of evil, though not, as in Eden,

“Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,  
Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy,”

yet, under another shape, was still at his old work at the time when,\* instead of the ordinary midwife, whose presence would have given rise to scandal, a surgeon† was summoned to attend

\* Anno 1663. Vide Roussel, *Systeme Moral et Physique de la Femme*, ed. 1855, p. 224, and Astruc, *Maladies des Femmes*, t. vii.

† This surgeon was most probably a person named Chison, of whom Count Bussi Rabutin relates the following anecdote:—“Meanwhile Madame de Crequi went to seek Madame on the day which she had appointed for their party to St. Cloud. She there met Chison, who had come to see one of Madame’s girls who was ill; he is La Valiere’s medical man, and is facetious and witty; after he had learned the complaint of the young lady, Cheer up, said he to her, I have remedies for all, even for lovers’ hearts. Ho! G— G—! replied Madame, teach me them directly, for ten or a dozen that I have, whom I should like to cure, provided it costs me only a few garden herbs. Ha, Madame, replied he, it costs me much less than herbs, it costs me nothing but words. In fine, Chison, who sacrificed everything for the entertainment of Madame, related to her how the king

the delivery of Mademoiselle de la Valiere, mistress of Louis XIV., for so powerful was the effect of fashion in these dissolute times, that, soon after the first examples had been given by persons whose rank and condition enabled them to brave public opinion, the Parisian ladies of fashion, throwing aside the veil of modesty, which had from the earliest ages, and in all countries, enjoined female attendance, followed the precedent of this abandoned woman, and the practice

had sent to him to inquire, and that he had demanded, with extreme emotion, whether Mademoiselle de la Valiere could really survive, and if her leanness was not a bad symptom. And what was your answer? replied Madame. What, said he, can your highness be in doubt? I assure you that I promised him, with as much boldness, the prolongation of her years, as if I had a letter from Heaven. I spoke as a philosopher of life, and death, and destinies; it needed nothing (when I saw the joy of the king) but to have promised him an immortality for the girl. True, G—, cried Madame; what secret charms has the creature to inspire so great a passion? I assure you, replied Chison, that it is not her body which supplies them.—*Hist. Am. des Gaules. Amours de la Valiere*, page 430.

The “witty and facetious” Chison spoke with a certainty which experience alone could give; he had doubtless attended La Valiere in her “confinement.” Do such conversations ever occur now? There is nothing new under the sun; what has been will be, and the laureate, not without reason, sings in Maud:—

“Yonder a vile physician blabbing  
The case of his patient.”

of *man*-midwifery soon became general in the French capital.

The historian well and truly describes the state of society in those evil days, and how the manners of the age became, year by year, more lost to virtue, dignity, and honour, until at length all the better feelings of human nature, even religion itself, became a by-word and a mockery amidst the chaos of the Revolution. "The ante-chambers of Versailles were daily besieged by crowds of titled, yet needy supplicants, who eagerly sought employment, favour, or distinction from the king's ministers or his mistresses, and mandates issued from them were obeyed without a murmur from Calais to the Pyrenees. What, then, was it which, in a country so profusely endowed with the riches of nature, and inhabited by a race of men so brave, so active, and so enterprising, has led to a convulsion attended with the unspeakable horrors of the French Revolution? The answer is to be found in the previous state of the country, and the general perversion of the national mind; in the oppressions to which the people were subjected, the vices by which the nobles alienated them; the corruptions by which morals were contaminated; the errors with which religion was disfigured; the extent to which infi-



delity had spread.”\* “Corruption, in its worst form, had long tainted the manners of the court as well as the nobility, and poisoned the sources of influence. The favour of royal mistresses, or the intrigues of the court, openly disposed of the highest appointments, both in the army, the church, and the civil service. Since the reign of the Roman emperors, profligacy had never been conducted in so open and undisguised a manner as under Louis XV. and the Regent Orleans. From the secret memoirs of the period, which have now been published, it is manifest that the licentious novels, which at that time disgraced French literature, conveyed a faithful picture of the manners of the age.”†

“It is difficult to treat of this subject (times of Louis XV.) without disclosing particulars at which purity may blush, or on which licentiousness may gloat; but general observations make little impression on the mind even of the most reflecting reader, if not attended with a detail of facts which proves that it is well founded; and one authentic example of the manner of the court and aristocratic circles in Paris, anterior to the Revolution, will produce a stronger conviction than whole chapters of assertion. All that we read in ancient historians, veiled

\* Alison's History, page 111, vol. i.

† Ibid. page 180, vol. i.

in the decent obscurity of a learned language, of the orgies of the ancient Babylon, was equalled, if not exceeded, by the nocturnal revels of the Regent Orleans, the Cardinal Dubois, and his other licentious associates.\* Such is a faithful picture of the manners and vices of the age and country in which the custom of man-midwifery took its rise. Here and there a bright star shone out, the brighter for the blackness of that hideous night: men of the highest order of mind did all that great eloquence and vigorous thought could do to stay the strong and turbid current of pollution which threatened to overwhelm the human race, and amongst these great spirits of the past, the physician Roussel, in a work remarkable for the delicacy of its sentiments, the force of its satire, and the strength and power of its language, endeavoured to turn the attention of his countrymen to the indecency of the practice which was first adopted in the harlot De la Valiere's chamber.† In some measure he succeeded; but who can wonder if, in that vicious age, his eloquence had passed unheeded, and the delicacy of his sentiments had been scoffed at and derided by the charlatans of the day, in a city where adultery was the fashion, and marriage but a cloak for vice. The causes which

\* Alison's History, page 217, vol. i.

† Astruc, des Maladies des Femmes.

then prevented the writings and counsels of these eminent men from taking full effect upon the public mind, no longer exist; and, accordingly, in that very Paris, where, in former times, amidst such scenes of vice and profligacy as the historian describes, the immodest practice originated, has since sprung up an agitation against it, which is increasing day by day. Colleges, both metropolitan and provincial, have long been established for the instruction of *females* in the obstetric "art," and many of those women, who have been educated in them, possessed such talents and intelligence that the treatises written by them have become the acknowledged text books of the French medical world.

Madame Boivin\* in the dedication of her "Mémorial de l'Art des Accouchements," 4me ed., says:—"Moved and affected by the painful cries which mothers, victims of barbarity and ignorance, caused to be heard from far, the Government hastened to reply to them by establishing a practical School of Midwifery within the Lying-in Hospital: from all parts were summoned, *not men but women*, to come and assist at the lectures of the most eminent professors

\* Ex-Maitresse Sage-Femme, Surveillante-en-chef de l'Hospice de la Maternité et de la Maison Royale de Santé et de l'Administration Generale des Hôpitaux et Hospices Civils de Paris; Docteur en Médecine de l'Université de Marbourg, &c. &c. &c.

of surgery and medicine. . . . . Already a great number have, from this fertile source of instruction, derived the knowledge and the qualities necessary for the exercise of an art so important in its results to the population of the kingdom and the happiness of families." In the preface to the above treatise, 4me ed., p. 10, we read the following allusion to the practice on this side the channel; "Thus you will find in this edition some novel remarks . . . . on certain cases of difficult labour, and on the operative process practised in these cases, so brutally treated by practitioners beyond sea, and in a manner so simple and so happily different by us, especially at the School of Midwifery in Paris."

And what are we about in "moral England," all this time? Where are our colleges of instruction, to which we have summoned "*not men but women*"—our *Hospices de la Maternité*,\* wherein

\* Since this was written we have ascertained that a Charity, called the "Royal Maternity Charity," has existed for a century in London. "It was instituted, 1757, for the gratuitous delivery of poor *married* women at their *own habitations*. The patients are attended in their lying-in by skilful and well-taught midwives, (of whom there are now thirty-five), under the watchful superintendence of appointed physicians, by one of whom the midwives are first carefully instructed at the charge, and expressly for the service of this charity; and, being located in various parts of the metropolis, and not restricted, in the exercise of their profession, to the patients of the Charity solely, though such patients are, at all times and without exception, to have the preference, their

and whereby we may preserve the modesty of our women? Where is the voice to cry shame upon the custom which introduces men into the sacred precincts of the marriage chamber to perform offices which are, by nature, the duty of women alone?\* Shall it be said that two thousand years ago the Romans possessed a higher sense of moral feeling than we do now? Roussel says, "The principal reason which, among the ancients, forbade the belief that the duty of aiding delivery could be proper to any but women—excepting

services are available to any other persons, who, either from choice or necessity, may be desirous of employing a midwife instead of a medical man; and as these occasions are not rare, some of the midwives having from fifteen to twenty *private* patients per month, it is not among the least of the advantages incident to the establishment of the ROYAL MATERNITY CHARITY that it is the means of keeping up a class of respectable, intelligent midwives for such emergencies."—*Prospectus of the Royal Maternity Charity, office 17, Little Knight Rider-street, Doctors' Commons, London.*

\* "It must be acknowledged that, although the function of midwife belongs to the healing art, it was never intended to be exercised by men."—*Roussel*, page 217.

"It is incompatible with the general infirmities of human nature to expect that the medical profession, exercised as it is for the daily means of maintenance, can be filled with men of science, with philosophers, or even with honourable gentlemen, while the greatest number are remunerated according to the quantity of drugs they craftily sell at random, as pretended antidotes, and others follow the business of mere nurses, with all the pomp and state of academic learning."—"*On Health*," by Sir Anthony Carlisle, F.R.S., late President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and Surgeon of the Westminster Hospital. 1841.

in cases of very rare occurrence, where every consideration might necessarily yield to a pressing danger—was the grand interest of manners. This was an object to which ancient Governments had always special regard. They knew morality to be the foundation of all legislation, and that good laws would be made in vain unless good morals insured their execution. The cruelty of Archagathus' surgical operations drove the doctors from Rome. She banished also from her bosom the Greek philosophers and orators who were accused of having introduced and cultivated the taste for the arts and vices of Greece. She would surely not have permitted, for any length of time, the existence of an art, which, practised by men, would, under the specious pretence of utility, threaten the sanctuary of marriage, and which, striking a blow at the chief safeguard of families, would next attack the mainsprings of the state; an art which, with power to alarm the modesty of women, would soon leave them without a blush,\* and cause them to lose

\* "Others, many others, less industrious, have been amusing and facetious. It is not long since I stood by the bed of a lady, who, between every pain, was making merry in talking with the nurse; and, the moment after the head and no more was born, commenced giving me an amusing account of one of my patients, a relative of hers, whose ailments, she assured me, arose from inattention to my rules of diet." (!!)—*Robertson, Physiology, &c.*, page 459.

Oh, Roussel, how prophetic were your words!

even the recollection of that severe virtue which had merited the respect and veneration of the Romans, and which of old had been the principle of the grandest revolutions. Cato, always careful to protect the hearts of the citizens from corruption, would never have permitted their wives, when presenting children to the republic, to tarnish the boon by a forgetfulness of the first of all decencies.\*

“The Greeks,” says Dr. Stevens, “invariably employed women; Phanarete, the mother of that distinguished man, Socrates, was a midwife. Hippocrates makes mention of them; and Plato speaks somewhat extensively of midwives, and explains their duties.” “We have reason to believe,” says Dr. Denman, “that the obstetric art was altogether in the hands of women, *the natural delicacy of females having reluctant recourse to the professional aid of the other sex.*”

Hecquet says, “The Greeks, moreover, had their female physicians, as we perceive by the words *ακεστρίδες* and *εατρίναι*, which have been preserved to us.”

“Such was the chasteness of the times, that lithotomy on the female subject was practised by one of their own sex. At Athens the positive enactments of the land were inefficient to

\* Roussel, p. 222.

overcome their scrupulous modesty. It is said the Athenian doctors procured a legal enactment transferring the practice of midwifery to themselves; but at the very attempt the women rose *en masse*, and declared *they would die rather than submit to such an outrage* upon common decency.

. . . . The Romans\* also employed women only. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, speaks of midwives,† explains their duties, and mentions some of great reputation. According to Roman law, midwives were recognized as a distinct class in society, and enjoyed certain rights and immunities in common with the medical profession.‡

We have shown, on the testimony of medical writers, that the practice of *man*-midwifery was introduced in France, or rather in Paris, for it was never generally adopted in the provinces,§ so early as the end of the seventeenth century; but more than a hundred years elapsed before

\* Female physicians were still known at Rome in the time of the Emperors, according to this verse of Martial,

“Protinus accedunt medici medicæque recedunt.”

—*Hecquet*.

† Olympias, Sotira, Salpe, Laïs, all cited by Pliny, and many others of whom distinguished authors make mention.—*Hecquet*.

‡ *Stevens' Man-Midwifery Exposed*.

§ *Hecquet* says: “The provinces at a little distance from Paris still find this custom very revolting.”—*De l'Indecence aux Hommes d'accoucher les Femmes*, page 8.



the unnatural and debasing custom became fashionable in England: and we find that late in the eighteenth century it was considered so objectionable, that few persons, excepting in those rare cases where danger was imminent, ever permitted "a medical man" to usurp the duties of the midwife: and it is only within the last fifty years that *man*-midwifery has prevailed in these kingdoms. Indeed Dr. Ramsbotham, in 1845, in the preface to his work on obstetric medicine and surgery, alludes to the difficulty which it would appear had not even then been entirely got rid of, in overcoming the very natural aversion of women to the regulations of midwifery practice as laid down in the many swollen and prurient treatises on the "pretended art."

Nothing appears more extraordinary, or more opposed to all our preconceived notions of propriety, than that this *man* should bustle into the marriage chamber, our holy of holies, with so much privileged assurance, and that the world should look upon the affair with such perfect indifference. But we suppose that his presence is a necessary evil, and the whole proceeding quite a matter of course, in which "sensible people" see no harm whatever; *honi soit qui mal y pense*. Some such train of ideas may have been suggested by the arrival of Dr. A. B. or C., M.D. and accoucheur, whom you, perhaps, still young

in the world's ways, have summoned, you know not why, but that you had been told, it may be by your wife's mother, that it was absolutely necessary to engage a fashionable "ladies' doctor" to "attend" your first born's introduction into the world; in fact, you began to have grave doubts whether it would be possible for the child to arrive without the doctor; (you may have since ascertained, much to the chagrin of A. B. or C., M.D. and accoucheur, that such an event is not altogether beyond the circle of probabilities.) You have also hired a "month nurse," *recommended by the doctor* as an experienced and skilful woman, in every way fitted for her office. The critical moment approaches; in a state of nervous excitement and anxiety you are advised to retire to the drawing-room, which, like a fool, you do. From time to time you are assured that all is going on as well as possible, and at length you are gratified by the intelligence that you are a father. You are, of course, utterly ignorant of all that has been done, what the nurse's share of duty may have been, and what the doctor's, although you have perchance a sort of vague and undefined suspicion that you were wrong in leaving all that you held dearest in the hands of a stranger, and that stranger a *man*, at a moment when she, the loved one, required your presence to comfort, console, and strengthen

her in the hour of trial. Nor would your ignorance be enlightened, unless, as we did after years of credulity and miserable evasion, you catechise the doctor. Then will break upon you, in all their horrible reality, the indignities to which you have subjected her for whom you would have given life itself, the purest of the pure, the idol of your love, the very essence of your being, your heart of hearts! Then, indeed, will you repent, when it is all too late, your folly in trusting to the candour of Dr. A. B. or C., M.D., and the actual crime which you have committed in not acquainting yourself, *while there was yet time to prevent it*, with the "process" by which the *man-midwife* pretends to improve upon the all-powerful machinery of nature, and the infinite wisdom of nature's God.

In the bitterness of your thoughts you may, perhaps, venture to question the doctor's mode of proceeding, upon the supposition that the nurse, having been recommended by him as a skilful and competent person, should alone have *actively*\* interfered, when you may be truculently told that he was not there "only to stand by and make reports;" or that "an accoucheur is not necessarily an old woman;" that "there are no

\* "In labours strictly natural, terminating after a few hours of moderate suffering, scientific midwifery is passive; its interference extending only to the division of the funis."—*Roberton*.

feelings;”\* that “the first thing he always does, when he comes to the bed-side, is to make *an examination per vaginam!*” with other observations equally harrowing to the sensibilities of a husband.

What shock so terrible to a man who, rejoicing in the delightful sentiment of a wife’s purity, discovers that all he held dearest and most sacred, all which he would shield from profanation with the last drop of his life’s blood, has been invaded by the presence, and *violated by the actual contact* of the *man-midwife*? The doctor may be a sober, discreet, oily man, of staid appearance, and a very pattern of propriety; or he may be a vulgar, low-bred person, in his leisure consorting with those of a similar bent; or

“Yonder a vile physician, blabbing  
The case of his patient . . . ;”

or he may a tippling, jovial fellow, who at some roystering party is always called on for “a good song,” sure to have as its theme wine, love, and woman,—for accoucheurs are mortals like other men; or he may be some tyro in “the art,” just

\* Lives there a man who would believe that the strongest passion which nature has implanted in the human heart is altogether dead in the *man-midwife*, that he is in fact emasculated by his profession, although “not necessarily an old woman?” It is far otherwise, and many of these gentry have the organ of philoprogenitiveness strongly developed.

let loose from his course of walking the hospitals, strong in syphilitic cases, and with all the recollections of a young surgeon's life fresh upon him: nevertheless, whatever he be, *the very inmost secrets of your wife's person* are known to him,\* the veil of modesty has been rudely torn aside, and the sanctity of marriage exists but in the name.

— “Such an act,  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;  
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows  
As false as dicer's oaths: oh, such a deed,  
As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;  
Yea this solidity and compound mass,  
With tristful visage as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act.”

\* By “*le toucher indiscret*,” as the French term this hateful indecency.

## CHAPTER II.

“ O shame ! where is thy blush ? ”

It now becomes our most painful but necessary task to explain what that “ process ” is to which we have alluded, by giving some extracts from one of the principal works on midwifery, and in the very words of the treatise, to prove the gross outrages to which women are obliged to submit when “ attended ” by these male practitioners. Nothing but a sense of the enormity of this monster evil would induce us to contaminate our pages by the introduction of such garbage ; but we are well aware that “ general observations make little impression on the mind even of the most reflecting reader, if not attended with a detail of facts which proves that it is well founded ; and one authentic example will produce a stronger conviction than whole chapters of assertion.”

EXTRACTS FROM DR. RAMSBOTHAM'S OBSTETRIC  
MEDICINE AND SURGERY.

“ *Duties of the Medical Attendant under Natural Labour.* ”

“ From the knowledge which the foregoing pages will afford of the beneficence displayed by

nature throughout the processes of utero-gestation and labour, and of the admirable contrivances adopted by her to overcome difficulties and avert dangers, it will be evident that, in a very large proportion of cases, the duties of the obstetrician must be few and simple. Generally, indeed, no *active* assistance is necessary, until after the birth of the child; all that is required of the attendant being, that he should remain an observant, though unofficial spectator of the process, ready to exert himself with promptitude and energy on the first accession of any alarming symptoms, but equally or more ready to allow the changes necessary for the completion of nature's object to proceed, uninterrupted by any meddlesome interference; for no maxim in obstetric science is of more universal application than that unnecessary 'assistance,' rendered with a view of expediting the termination of the case, or shortening the sufferings of the patient, is not only useless, but in the highest degree injurious, and directly calculated to defeat its own end.

"Let it not be supposed this declaration includes the admission, that a partial acquaintance with the obstetric branch of medicine is sufficient for the safe practice of the profession; for although, in thirty-nine cases out of forty, little is required to be done beyond protecting the extended structures from injury, separating the

child, and extracting the placenta from the vagina after its total exclusion from the uterine cavity; still, in the fortieth danger may occur, only to be arrested by the promptest, the most decisive, and most judiciously directed help.

“Much knowledge\* is necessary to discriminate the kind of cases in which assistance is proper, and determine the time at which that assistance ought to be employed, as well as the mode of its application. It is this which distinguishes the scientific from the ignorant obstetrician; it is this important knowledge on which the life, the future health and comfort of many a parturient woman must depend; which, nevertheless, has been held in such low estimation by some members of the profession, as to be thought unworthy of cultivation by the scientific and

\* We are informed that in the Dublin Lying-in Hospital neither nurses in training as midwives, nor male students, are permitted to operate in any case of difficulty. We are not aware if this remark applies to the London hospitals and similar institutions in other parts of the kingdom, but we have little doubt that in this respect the practice is the same in all. It is not easy to understand how, under these circumstances, either nurses or students can acquire much, or indeed any, knowledge for discrimination. It is most painful to reflect that any experience which these persons may ever possess, must of necessity be gained after they are let loose upon the world, at the sacrifice, it may be, of life, or at least of moral and physical suffering, and injury to those patients who are the unfortunate objects of their first essays.



literary mind; unfit to be possessed by men of respectable station in society; and the adaptation of which knowledge to practice has been characterized, in an official document under the seal of the highest of our medical corporate associations, as 'an art foreign to the habits of gentlemen of enlarged academical education.'\* In the same communication it is asserted, 'that the most successful practice of midwifery requires no such laborious preliminary study as is necessary for the practice of medicine, else discreet matrons, and plain uneducated men in the country, who frequently arrive at great notoriety in this calling, would not acquire that credit which they often attain.' . . . . nor, perhaps, are we generally expected to regulate the number of individuals to be present, though we may be called upon occasionally to exercise our authority in this respect. The only persons whom I would willingly admit are the nurse and some female married friend, the mother, or other near relation, or an intimate acquaintance, to act as *confidante* to the sufferer, into whose sympathizing ear she may whisper all her apprehensions and distresses, and from whom she may receive those numberless comforts and sustaining con-

\* Letter from the Royal College of Physicians to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, dated May 2nd, 1827, in reply to a memorial from the Obstetric Society.

solutions of which she stands so eminently in need. Unmarried females are neither the most fit companions for the patient, nor the most useful assistants to the practitioner.\*

“On being ushered into her chamber, we may engage her in some general conversation, which will give us an opportunity of observing the frequency, duration, strength, and character of the pains; and our conduct must be framed according. Should they be of trifling importance, we may content ourselves with giving some ordinary directions and retire from the apartment. But if they are returning with frequency and activity, we must not allow much time to elapse before we require to make an examination PER VAGINAM.† An objection may be raised by

\* No; because “unmarried females” have not themselves endured these outrages, and still retain a modesty which is born in every woman, and, therefore, might possibly re-animate in the patient feelings which, howsoever natural, beautiful, and holy, would mar “the doctor’s process.”

† “Generally, indeed, no *active* assistance is necessary until after the birth of the child,” &c. *See ante, Ramsbotham ipse.* “And another reason is, that such patients have been spared the ill effects arising from vaginal examinations,” &c.—*Treatise on Midwifery.* Hardy and M’Clintock. Page 9.

“We here feel ourselves obliged to inform women that those persons whom they employ in this kind of examination deceive them by affecting a knowledge which they do not possess. All information derived from ‘touch’ is very uncertain.”—*Roussel Systeme Moral et Physique de la Femme. Chap. sur la Grossesse.*

the patient to the necessary examination being then instituted, under the idea that *no assistance* can be rendered her so early in the labour. As I would regard the feelings of a parturient woman in a degree only secondary to her safety, I would by no means insist on putting her to this inconvenience, unless I thought it quite indispensable. But as much valuable information may be gained by this first examination, and as it is highly desirable to obtain that information during the progress of the first stage, it is right firmly, but gently, to urge its propriety. It is seldom, indeed, that she will not accede to the recommendation of her medical attendant, provided he possesses her confidence, and conveys his request with becoming delicacy.\*

“Much knowledge must be acquired during the first vaginal examination. It is, first, whether the woman be pregnant;† secondly, if she be in labour; thirdly, whether the membranes have ruptured, or are still entire; fourthly, how the child is presenting; fifthly, how far the

\* Has the doctor first informed the husband of the necessity for this *vaginal examination*? Has he, before entering the patient's chamber, or at least before he dared to make such “a request” to her, gained the husband's confidence by candidly and honestly explaining the indelicate nature of the usages which his “art” permits him to adopt?

† See Roussel, *ante*.

labour is advanced; and, sixthly, the state of the os uteri, vagina, and perineum, in regard to their distensibility. . . . She should be also covered by a light counterpane, or a blanket and a sheet. In this position (lying on her left side, with the nates brought to the edge of the bed) *the vaginal examination* is to be conducted in the following manner:—The attendant, sitting rather behind her, and having anointed the two first fingers of his *right* hand, with some unctuous substance, mostly in readiness, is to place them on the labia externa; then gently separating these organs, he must introduce the first finger into the vagina,\* in the direction of its entrance, which is backwards and upwards: or he may take the perineum as his guide, and insinuate his finger within the genital fissure posteriorly, close to the fourchette. Having introduced it as high as he conveniently can, he must pronate his wrist, so that the junction of the first and second finger shall fit in under the symphysis pubis. In this way he will be able usually to reach the os uteri without difficulty. Should that organ, however, be situated so high that he cannot perfectly command it, rather than remain in igno-

\* There is a maxim prevalent with accoucheurs, and the hellish aphorism is treated as a jest among them, that a woman will usually desire to patronise, upon all subsequent occasions, the man-midwife who has once introduced his finger *per vaginam*.

rance of its condition, and of the presentation of the child, he may introduce the first two fingers of his left hand, and as these may be passed higher within the pelvis, they will give a greater facility for inquiry.

“ These examinations are commonly made during the urgency of pain; and this has given rise to the phrase of ‘ trying a pain.’ It is, however, desirable, on many accounts, that we should not introduce our finger up to the os uteri at the time when the uterus is acting strongly, because then the membranes are protruded into the vagina, and if we press against them at that moment, we may, probably, rupture the cyst, and lose its influence in the after progress of the labour. Besides, it is impossible, under such protrusion, to ascertain the presenting part of the foetus with precision, because of the quantity of water which is then interposed between our finger and its person.

“ Nevertheless, as it is expected that we should examine while the uterus is in action—and, indeed, as in many cases the patient would not allow us to pass our finger at all, were it not for the belief that we can ‘ assist’ her—and that only in the time of pain, it is necessary that we should request her to inform us when there is a return, and take that opportunity of introducing our finger within the external parts. Having gained

this advantage, we must allow it to remain inactive in the vagina while the pain continues; and upon its cessation, which we have seldom any difficulty in ascertaining, we may direct it up to the os uteri.

*“Frequent examinations should not be made during the first stage of labour.*

“We can do no good by such a practice after we have once gained the information we require. We cannot facilitate the descent of the child; we cannot dilate the parts; but we may do a great deal of injury, for we denude the vagina of that soft relaxing mucus which is designed by nature to protect it; and we, moreover, run the risk of destroying the integrity of the membranous cyst. We may, therefore, predispose the parts to inflammation, and retard the dilatation of the os uteri itself. As, however, it is a common idea among women that, under each examination, material assistance is rendered,\* we shall frequently be urged, during the first stage, especially if the labour be rather slower than usual, to remain in close attendance on the patient's person; and these solicitations are generally advanced with a

\* A foul delusion, promoted and encouraged by the doctor, and the midwife, at his instigation, well knowing, that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, nothing else would induce a woman to submit to so gross an indecency.

degree of fervency, that it appears the extreme of cruelty not to accede to.

“Should this be the case, the finger may be introduced from time to time, with the greatest care and gentleness; more to pacify the patient's mind, and assure her she is not neglected, than with any other view beyond that, and also watching the progress of dilatation. The more rigid the parts are, the more do they require the softening influence of the natural secretion, and the more careful must we be to preserve it. . . . In about an hour . . . we may see her again, and we may then, if we think it right, make another examination, to ascertain that the labour is proceeding satisfactorily.

*Duties during the Second Stage.*

“The second stage of labour having commenced, we are summoned to the patient's room, if we have been absent, and told that ‘the waters have broken.’ She is most likely found reclining on the bed, and, probably, the pains are more urgent than they were before; or, perhaps, they are somewhat suspended. We now require to make another examination, because it is possible that the head may have fully entered the cavity, and may be soon expelled. Finding it low in the pelvis, finding the os uteri almost entirely dilated, the membranes broken, and the pains

strong and coming on frequently, it is right not to leave the room; but unless the perineum is somewhat on the stretch, we need not yet take our post exactly by the bed-side. But as soon as the head has come to press upon the external parts—particularly when it has made its turn, and is beginning to extend the structures at the outlet of the pelvis, it becomes our duty to take our seat by the bed-side, and never to move from our position till the child has passed. This we do to protect the perineum, in order to prevent laceration.\*

“*For the purpose of supporting the perineum* we sit rather behind the patient, and apply the

\* “It has been said that women delivered under circumstances where they had no assistance, generally escape laceration; now this is not universally true; but supposing that it were, it admits of this easy explanation: namely, that inasmuch as these females are almost always involuntarily subjected to the deprivation we have mentioned, they naturally use their utmost endeavours to retard the birth of the child when they feel the head in the vagina, in the hope of aid reaching them before the critical moment of delivery; and another reason is, that such patients have been spared the ill effects arising from vaginal examinations, &c.”—*Extract from Treatise on Midwifery, by Drs. Hardy and M<sup>r</sup> Clintock, page 9.*

Let the reader compare these observations with those of Dr. Ramsbotham—“look on this picture and on that,”—and then he will be astonished, not at the difference of opinion between the men-midwives, but at the fact that women do so frequently escape the terrible consequences of all this interference with the laws of nature.



palm of the left hand—guarded, for the sake of delicacy, cleanliness, and convenience, with a soft napkin—steadily and firmly against the perineal tumour. I have already mentioned that the thighs must be drawn up towards the abdomen, and the legs bent a little back upon the thighs, and the whole person lying on the left side; and the patient is usually placed so that her feet may rest against the bed-post.\*

“We render the shoulders also another fixed point, so as to steady the upper part of the body, by tying a long napkin, or a round towel, to the same bed-post, and desiring her to hold it in her hand. We tell her, when the pain comes on to press with her feet against the bed-post, and pull gently at the towel, cautioning her against straining violently. The consequence is she so fixes her person as to render it almost impossible for her to jump away suddenly, or to recede to any distance from us. Independently of this little manœuvring, when the head is in

\* As if nature would not of herself direct the position most likely to facilitate delivery.

“Who ever found the eagle dead upon her eyrie, or the she-wolf in her lair?” and would the doctor have us believe that while giving to man dominion over every living thing, thus recognizing his physical as well as mental superiority, and greatly multiplying the conception of woman, God had forgotten to instruct her in a faculty which he gave in perfection to all the lower animals?

any degree extending the vulva the nurse must be required to raise the right knee to some distance from the other, by which means the thighs are separated, and an increased facility given to the exit of the head through the external parts, as well as some control exerted over the patient's movements . . . . . After having examined the uterus through the parietes of the abdomen, we must make an internal examination, more perfectly to assure ourselves in what way the placenta is disposed of. Twisting the funis umbilicalis around the first two fingers of the left hand, and bringing it to its bearing, we pass the first finger of the right hand, previously anointed, into the vagina, as in a common examination. If the placenta be entirely *in utero*, which, as just remarked, is most commonly the case immediately after the child's expulsion, we shall either not be able to touch it at all, or if it be within reach, we shall only detect a very small portion of it; we may just feel it offering itself at the os uteri; but we cannot surround its volume, nor can we probably discover the insertion of the funis.

“*Removal of the Placenta.*—There is no part of natural labour which requires so much judgment as the conduct of the third stage; for the slightest mismanagement of the placenta may be productive of most serious mischief, by convert-

ing a perfectly natural into a most dangerous and complicated case. As long, then, as the placenta remains *in utero*, so long we must wait, within a certain limit—provided there be no flooding—for those contractions which are to expel it from the uterus into the vaginal cavity, &c.; while we are thus watching, we shall most likely be informed of the return of uterine action, by the woman complaining of two or three comparatively trifling pains affecting the back and loins. As it is probable that under these pains the placenta may have somewhat descended, another examination may then be made *per vaginam* to satisfy ourselves on this point, &c.

“ The removal of the placenta from the vagina is easily effected. Twisting the funis umbilicalis two or three times around the first and second finger of the right hand, we draw it down in a line tending towards the coccyx, and receive it in the left, placed under the perineum; or we may introduce the two first fingers and the thumb of the left into the vagina, embrace the mass between them, squeeze it as we would a sponge, and slowly extract it. . . . .

“ Having perfectly satisfied ourselves on this point, we may a second time take away the napkins soiled with the accumulated discharges, and envelope the lower part of the patient's person in others that are warm and dry. Three will be

sufficient: one must be partially slid under the left hip; another may be placed over and around the right hip; and the third carried between the thighs, directly on the vulva, &c. . . .

“Some practitioners adapt the bandage themselves, and apply it immediately after the placenta has been removed. I think it preferable, in common cases, to leave this duty to the nurse; and that it should not be put on until the body linen of the patient is shifted; because, in the first place, it appears to me more desirable that perfect quietness should be preserved until the first changes in the uterus consequent upon labour are effected, that no disturbance may interrupt their progress; and, in the second, I cannot help thinking that there is something highly indelicate in its being applied by a man—much more so, indeed, than any of the duties we are ordinarily called upon to perform under natural labour. It is of most service when next the skin. It must be sufficiently broad to reach from the pubes almost to the ensiform cartilage; and it cannot be properly adapted unless the abdomen be quite uncovered. In addition, I would remark that the nurse must know very little of her duties, if she cannot draw a properly contrived bandage round the person, and give it the due degree of tightness without incurring danger.”

The reader of the preceding extracts will have

observed that they begin with a panegyric on the extraordinary powers of nature in adapting means to an end; which, nevertheless, the author forthwith proceeds to qualify, as if he had admitted too much, in giving nature credit for the due execution of her own work, and her capability for enforcing her own laws, by enlarging on the profound and scientific knowledge required in the man-midwife, the opinion expressed by the Royal College of Physicians to the contrary notwithstanding; and in effect impiously detracting the infinite power and wisdom of God, "who created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply."

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

After descanting on the inutility, and even positively detrimental effects of *active* interference in natural labour, he warms with his subject, and, in the course of the three stages by which he limits and defines the operations of nature in introducing man into the world, enjoins, in language horribly disgusting from its technical obscenity, an amount of grossly indecent interference, only to be measured by the credulity and endurance of his miserable patient. If the maxim of non-interference which he inculcates

holds good, he deceives and wrongs his patient to a most shameful extent, by permitting and encouraging the delusion that by these vaginal examinations he can render her "assistance," or mitigate the sufferings which nature has ordained; and we assert, without fear of contradiction, that the man who should dare to practise upon the weakness of women in such a manner, and at a moment when they are least able to resist his solicitations, deserves the severest condemnation. In all this foul tissue of verbiage descriptive of the practice in natural labour there is nothing which a *female* attendant of the most ordinary intelligence could not accomplish with the greatest ease, and yet the nurse, who is generally a well instructed midwife, is scarcely mentioned at all, and her duties appear to be confined to a trivial and unimportant after-operation, which the conscientious and sensitive doctor deems an act of far greater indelicacy than those eight times repeated *examinations per vaginam*, and other contact with the patient's person, so sedulously prescribed, and which, in truth, appear to constitute the whole "art," so far as the treatment of natural labour is concerned. One more extract will more than suffice to show the nature of this abuse, which we fear is, from its daily increasing power and influence upon the female mind, becoming more and more difficult of cure;

but which, when considered in all its hideous bearings, should arouse even the most callous and indifferent to a sense of its criminality, and cause the hearts of all who reverence modesty in woman to swell with righteous indignation at the insults which a vile custom has mercilessly heaped upon the sex:—

“ She now, at length, submitted to an examination *per vaginam*, which I made from behind, as she stood erect by the bed. The finger failed at first to reach the os and cervix uteri, until, on pressing upwards, as far as possible, I found the uterus lying transversely, the os higher than the body, pointing to the right side, and the body of the uterus lodged in the left side of the pelvis, near the groin, where it seemed to be firmly fixed. I now made her kneel on the bed, with the head low, so as to elevate the nates, and cautiously tried through the rectum, as well as *per vaginam*, to raise the uterus from its position into the median line, but without success. An attempt on the following day was with no better result. . . . After the interval of a month, I made another examination *per vaginam*, also of the nipples, and found no change in either. After the interval of another month I found the nipples and areolæ precisely as at first; but, to my great satisfaction, the uterus had nearly righted itself in position, and the body of it was

rounded and plainly enlarged. The lady also hinted a suspicion that she had quickened." . . .

"In this instance my suspicion of pregnancy (which at first was very slight) rested on the interruption of menstruation alone. The health improved from the time of quickening, and the pregnancy went on. I may add that I have no doubt the latero-version of the womb occurred at the period of the miscarriage; . . . and that its righting itself, at length, was the consequence of its increasing bulk."\*

Such is the practice of man-midwifery! We observe that, in this revolting case, the disgrace, the shame, the infamy of the poor patient was endured in vain, and that after all the tentatives, and "manipulations," and experiments, so perseveringly repeated by the accoucheur, without any beneficial result whatsoever, nature alone was the true physician.

We will conclude this chapter of horrors in the strong and earnest language of the late Sir Anthony Carlisle, with the conviction that his burning words will go right home to the hearts of those who may not hitherto have given a thought to this fearful violation of the rights of nature.

"The woman who sacrifices her modesty to

\*Roberton. Physiology, &c., page 425.



fashion, her person to indignity, and her husband's honour to the sneers and contempt of her male midwife, is below contempt. She is a disgrace to her sex!

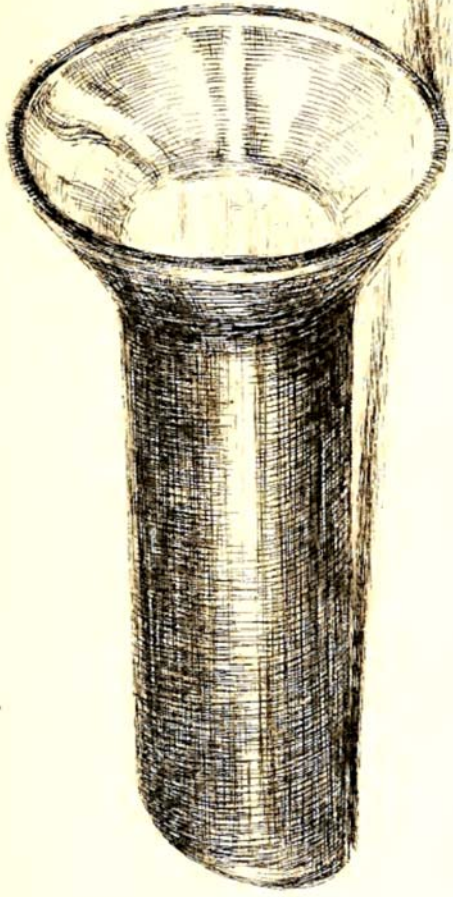
“It is my firm opinion that the practice of man-midwifery compromises the character and morality of our country. It is demoralizing to society, an insult to virtuous women, and a foolscap to men. If not checked and abolished, the pretensions to female modesty, and a respect for the decorums of society, will eventually be altogether excluded from the female character.”

### CHAPTER III.

“Such devils would pull angels out of heaven,  
Provided they could reach them; 'tis their pride;  
And that's the odds 'twixt soul and body-plague!  
The veriest slave who drops in Cairo's street,  
Cries, 'Stand off from me,' to the passengers;  
While these blotched souls are eager to infect,  
And blow their bad breath in a sister's face,  
As if they'got some ease by it.”

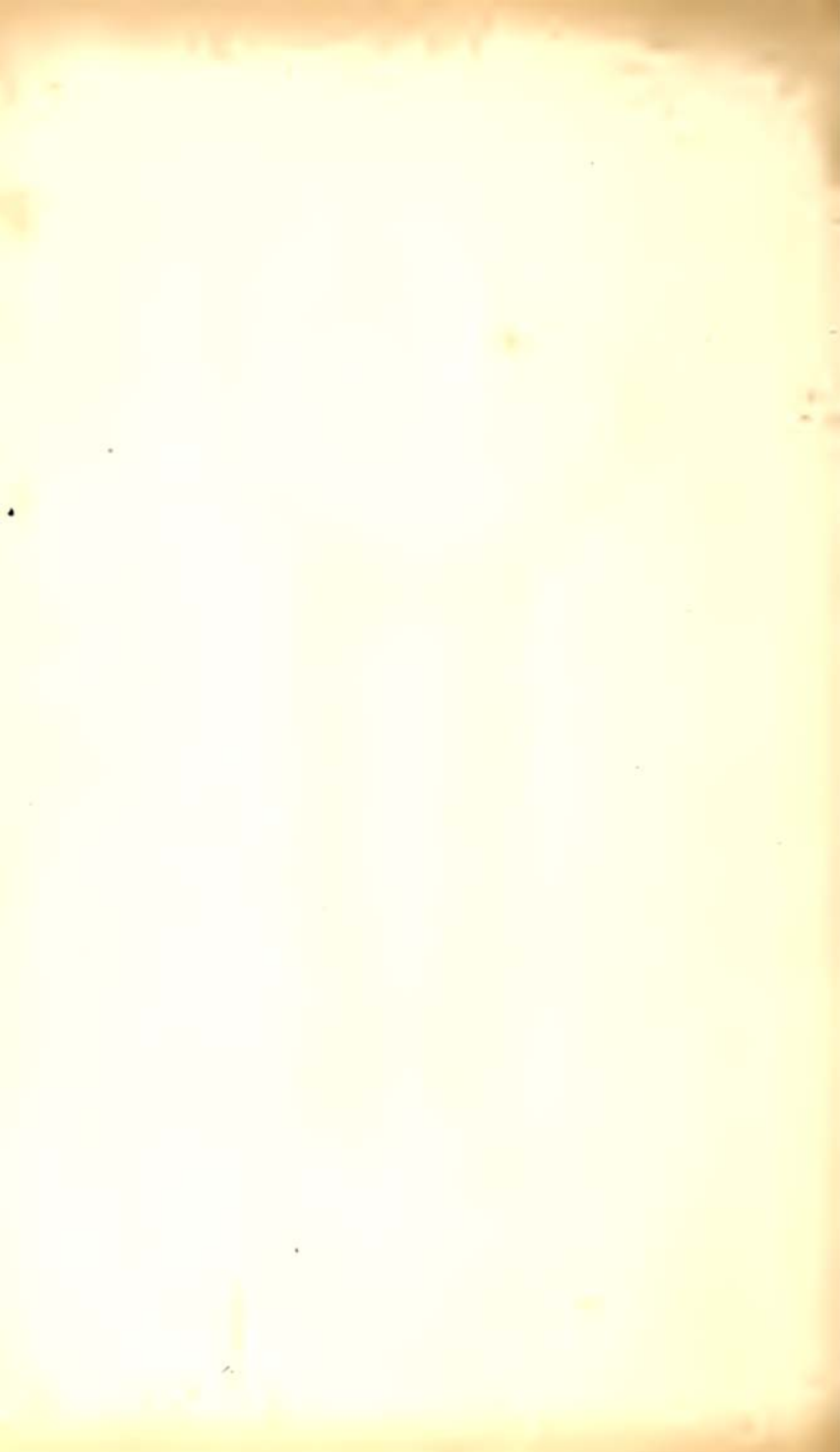
IF the reader views with disgust and horror the above rules of ordinary practice in *man*-midwifery—and what man is base enough (save an accoucheur) not so to regard them?—these feelings will be intensified a thousand-fold by the contemplation of the latest invention\* of “obstetric art.” We allude to the *SPECULUM*. The adoption of this instrument, as we are informed, is now becoming general; and its employment plunges its wretched victim, woman, down into the lowest deep of infamy and degradation. We will not pollute our pages by describing its method of action; suffice it to say, that, to the

\* An instrument called the *speculum matricis* was, however, in use at the beginning of the last century, and is mentioned in the *Bibliotheca Anatomica*, 1712.



*C. Morant, Inc. &*

*THE SPECULUM*



sense of *touch*, common to all midwifery practice, is added, in its application, that of *sight*; exposure the most complete of all which modesty, even in the most abject of races, invariably conceals.

In confirmation of our own view of this most villanous invention, we will convict its advocates by the testimony of distinguished members of their own profession. The denunciations of the speculum, by these morally-courageous men, addressed, for the most part, solely to their fellow-practitioners, shall now go forth to be read and pondered on by every reflecting Englishman who may chance to open these pages.

“ We have already exposed, with our utmost vigour, the improper practice which Drs. Ashwell and Lee so strongly condemned. All we said on that occasion we repeat now. . . . To employ it (the speculum), as it is rumoured certain persons in London have employed it, to attract notice, and place themselves prominently before the public—to use it merely as a means of personal advancement—in fact, *to gain practice*—is a crime against the laws of morality, and treason against professional honour.

“ The erroneous and one-sided opinions, which the advocates for the indiscriminate use of the speculum hold, prove how little they have presented to themselves the true facts of the case.

Dr. Locock, who made the startling assertion that delicacy ought not to be considered in matters of disease, and was both for and against the speculum, said, that he looked into the vagina as he would into the throat. True enough, so far as *he* simply is concerned. He would look into the vagina as an ordinary matter of business, and think *only* of what, in the course of business, it might be necessary to do there. But would the *woman* regard it in this philosophical light? Is it the same to *her* whether her tongue is pressed down with a spatula, or her vagina distended with a speculum? Is *her* moral state to be left out of account altogether, and are we to treat the most sensitive organ in her frame as if it was so much inert matter, whose great use was to be cauterized?

“ We do not hesitate to say, that no man, who regards properly his science and himself, can ever use this instrument without feeling that he is *driven* to it; that other means have failed, and that it has become necessary to adopt additional modes of investigation and of cure. And if it appear from the inquiries which will, doubtless, now be made—that the necessities for its employment have been knowingly exaggerated by its advocates, no condemnation can be too severe for so great a breach of scientific honour.”—*Medical Times*, 8th June, 1850.

“ Dr. Marshall Hall describes in the *Lancet* a new form of hysteria, connected with and caused by the abuse of the speculum. In his preliminary remarks, alluding to the manner in which the charge of indecency was received by one of the speakers at the late meeting of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, on the ground of the non-necessity of the exposure of the person, he says, ‘ But if there be no exposure of the person, is there, at first, no wounding of the feeling, and is there afterwards no deterioration and blunting of those feelings by the repeated daily or weekly use of the speculum vaginae in the virgin, and in the very young, even amongst the married?’ He declares that there is such deterioration, and that the female who has been subjected to such treatment is not the same person, in delicacy and purity, she was before. Dr. Marshall Hall's declaration on this point is fully confirmed by the results of experience. The consequences of the abuse of this practice are, indeed, lamentable. Dr. Hall says he has known cases of the most revolting attachment on the part of the patients to the practice and the practitioner. The current of the ideas becomes hypochondriacally directed to the organs of generation. The very mind is poisoned. A new and lamentable form of hysteria is induced. The patients become reserved, and moody, and perverse, and

speaking unintelligibly in broken sentences; the peace and happiness of the family are broken up; subjects are discussed on the domestic hearth which ought never to be mentioned except in the sick room—words which wound are spoken, and thoughts which are derogatory are expressed by others, perhaps by the male, members of the family. Dr. Hall mentions cases in which the speculum has been repeatedly employed, and had induced this sad, wretched state, and yet no uterine disease existed. He believes the cases in which the young, and especially the unmarried, are afflicted, so as really to justify the use of the speculum, to be rare, and the cases in which the injection of a solution of nitrate of silver, by the patient herself, may not take the place of the application of this valuable remedy in substance by the hand of the practitioner, to be rare indeed. We heartily thank Dr. Marshall Hall for this additional blow at 'the pollution.' It is greatly to his credit."—*Medical Times*, 15th June, 1850.

"I have no doubt that I was one of a considerable number, who, at the last meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society (a meeting which will long be memorable in its annals), wished to express their sentiments on the subject of the use of the speculum vaginae, without having what they deemed a perfect opportunity. I

FEB 15 1921



regret that the discussion was not adjourned to another evening.

“I think the profession deeply indebted to Dr. Robert Lee for bringing this question forward for discussion. It is not one of mere medical or surgical treatment, but of medical and public ethics; and I confess myself astonished at the light manner in which a vaginal examination was spoken of by one of the gentlemen present at the Society. I think the challenge of Dr. Bennet should have been accepted at once, and that a committee should have been, and should now be, appointed to test the existence, or the non-existence, of the thousand and one ‘ulcers,’ or ‘abrasions,’ of which so much has been said of late.

“The gentleman to whom I have alluded above, huffed the idea of indecency in making a vaginal examination. There need be no exposure of the person of the patient. Surgeons make no scruple about an examination of the rectum (as if the two examinations could, morally speaking, be compared). But, if there be no exposure of the person, and if the examination of the rectum be frequently made, is there, at first, no wounding of the feelings? and is there afterwards no deterioration and blunting of those feelings by the repeated daily or weekly use of the speculum vaginae in the virgin, and

in the very young, even amongst the married? I loudly proclaim that there is such deterioration, and that the female who has been subjected to such treatment is not the same person, in delicacy and purity, that she was before.

“I have known cases of the most revolting attachment, on the part of such patients, to the practice and to the practitioner. I have known them to speak of the ‘womb’ and of the ‘uterine organs’ with a familiarity which was formerly unknown, and which, I trust, will, ere long, be obsolete. The current of the ideas becomes hypochondriacally directed to these organs. The very mind is poisoned. A new and lamentable form of *hysteria*—I had almost said of *furor uterinus*—is induced, with this aggravation, that the subject of distress is either concealed by the greatest effort, or explained at the expense of virgin or female modesty.

“There is a case of ‘poisoned mind’ in the male sex, induced by the quack doings of the day, relative to the existence of impotency, which all of us must have treated and deplored. A similar case of ‘mental poisoning’ is now being induced in the other sex, by the frequent, constant, and undue reference, on the part of the profession, to the condition of the ‘uterine organs.’” . . . . .

“One poor, miserable patient comes to me

weekly, thus afflicted. She has been treated by the speculum and the caustic for months, as an out-patient at University College Hospital. I sent her to Dr. Robert Lee twice. Twice that gentleman examined, and declared that there was *no* uterine or vaginal disease. Meanwhile the miserable patient's mind is absorbed by this ideal malady, and the peace of her husband's home is destroyed.

“ I sent another patient to Dr. Robert Lee a few days ago (whom I had never seen) under similar circumstances, but moving in a different rank of life. The same opinion was given, the miserable patient suffering dire disappointment!

“ I recently attended a poor curate's wife, who had come to London for medical aid, at, as I suppose, great inconvenience. During my short attendance, this patient was constantly urged by a friend, a titled lady (the aristocracy always take the lead in quackery), to send for her physician, who is a strong abettor of the speculum. The course which followed may be imagined, and need not be described. A case of more complicated misery for a husband cannot well be conceived. A sickly wife, afflicted with uterine hypochondriasis, set upon by a titled advocate of the uterine quackery, with straitened resources.

“ The advocates of the speculum speak of

cases which had resisted the efficacy of the usual general and local treatment, and which yielded to the use of the speculum and the caustic. I have seen cases in which, the speculum and caustic having been employed—and unduly employed, as I believe—the patient remained more miserably afflicted in mind and body than ever, and this the effect of that treatment. Whether the former supposition be as well founded as the latter, I will not presume to determine; but I believe the cases in which the young, and especially the unmarried, are afflicted, so as really to justify the use of the speculum, to be rare, and the cases in which the injection of a solution of nitrate of silver, by her own hands, may not take the place of the application of this valuable remedy in substance, by the hand of the practitioner, to be rare indeed.

“I will not advert even to the epithets which have been applied to the frequent use of the speculum by our French neighbours, who are so skilled in these matters; but I will ask, WHAT FATHER AMONGST US, AFTER THE DETAILS WHICH I HAVE GIVEN, WOULD ALLOW HIS VIRGIN DAUGHTER TO BE SUBJECTED TO THIS ‘POLLUTION’? Let us, then, maintain the spotless dignity of our profession, with its well-deserved character for purity of morals, and throw aside this injurious practice with indignant scorn, remembering

that it is not mere exposure of the person, but the dulling of the edge of the virgin modesty, and the degradation of the pure minds of the daughters of England, which are to be avoided."

*Dr Marshall Hall in the 'Lancet.'*

Dr. Dickson, an eminent medical reformer, and accomplished surgeon and physician, formerly on the staff, and now, and for many years past, in extensive practice in London, says:—

"But of all the medical quackeries that have sprung up in these times, none can compare with the infamous *speculum* treatment of certain members of the faculty, who confine their practice principally to females. No matter what may be the woman's real complaint—a cough, pain of the side, or anything else—she is at once assured that it proceeds from 'disease of the womb.' A pretended examination must, forsooth, be gone through, which, in every case, is made to confirm the dishonest assurance given in the first instance. The patient is forthwith victimized, week after week, and month after month, with a host of operations, for a disease which, in the beginning, at least, never existed at all, but which is very soon brought on artificially by the horrible appliances of men, who ride in their carriages, by this daily and hourly outrage to the constitutions and the decency of

our women."—*The Forbidden Book*, vol. ii. page 195.

Again, in the same work, appears the following letter, under the head of "Obstetric Quackery in Edinburgh:"—"SIR,—The members of the Town Council of Edinburgh are the patrons of the University. Most of them are known to be conscientious men, and keenly alive to all that can affect the honour and the usefulness of the institution over which they preside. It appears extraordinary that they should have remained so long unacquainted with the leprosy which has infected some of the professors; or that they should not have summarily driven these persons from the chairs they were polluting, when the fact was discovered. . . . . It is to him (Dr. Simpson) that we chiefly owe the infinitely more dangerous and disgusting quackery in midwifery, which rages like a pestilence in London, and in every town and village throughout the empire, and in some of our most distant colonies. On the present occasion, it may be sufficient to enumerate the proceedings to which I allude: To Dr. Simpson we owe the invention of the dangerous weapon called the uterine-sound or poker—pessaries which have justly been designated infernal and impaling uterine machines, to cure retroversions which

never existed; instruments for pumping the uterus, to excite menstruation; and the proposal to rub its inner surface with lunar caustic, for the same purpose. To him we owe the hysterotome, for slitting open the os uteri, to cure sterility; and to his efforts, more than any other individual, we are indebted for the profligate use of the speculum which has prevailed, and the practice of destroying the os and cervix uteri with caustic potash. To Dr. Simpson we owe the attempt to revive the brutal practice of turning in cases of distortion of the pelvis; of attempting to substitute the Cæsarian operation for the induction of premature labour; to him we owe the attempt to subvert the established practice in placental presentation, by extraordinary statistic tables; and, lastly, we owe to the genius of the Professor of Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh, the baby-sucker! Are these specimens of what the *Edinburgh Monthly Journal* for this month calls 'the simple treatment taught and practised in Edinburgh, and which, if adopted in London, would reduce many practitioners from comfort to starvation?' We may well excuse the members of the Town Council if they are not so dexterous in *harliquinade* as the University Professor.—I am, Sir, your obedient Servant, ISAAC IRONS, M.D. Sept., 1851."

We now proceed to quote the words of "a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons," which appear in a pamphlet entitled, "The Speculum: its Moral Tendencies." We believe the author to be very well known, both as a writer in the medical periodicals, and as a skilful and accomplished surgeon. He says—"Were fame and fortune, however, the only results, were the public simply gulled, there would be nothing in its consequences to take this imposition out of the ordinary category. But, unfortunately, this is not the case. The practices of these men leave results of a far more serious and lasting character, not to be sought for amongst material things, but in the lowered and loosened state to which it is rapidly bringing the morality of the country.

"This is a strong assertion, but not stronger than the facts that support it. The profession is well aware of the baleful tendency of the proceedings of these men, whilst they deplore their inability to prevent or to expose them. Scarcely a member of it whom you meet but has a tale to tell of their practices, which, if made public, would bring the mighty from their seats; but there is too much indecency involved in the disclosure to allow of its publicity. Thus are they doubly hedged; *their diploma checks suspicion, whilst the nature of their performances secures them secrecy.*



“To believe in the necessity for this constant and general use of the speculum, is to admit a sad deterioration in nature itself. Either this, or that anterior generations were great sufferers without being aware of it. Perhaps, like the Spartan boy they endured in silence, rather than betray a want of courage, or, what was more laudable, a want of delicacy.

“But I do not believe in this. I believe the workmanship of the Creator to be as perfect now as of yore, and that the modern and multitudinous disorders attributed to the uterine system are wicked inventions put forth to sanction unnecessary interference. Why, if we are to believe these men, there is scarcely a patient who applies to them that is not suffering from one or the other of these numerous affections. The womb, with them, is so invariably out of order or out of position, that disease and dislocation are more constant than its normal conditions. Young or old, married or single, whatever their age, whatever their condition, the same opinion, the same treatment, varied only in the selection of the instrument. No matter what the complaint, or what the ailment, the *fons et origo mali* is declared to be the uterus. . . . .

“Nor are these practices confined to the high priests in these temples of immorality; faith in their professions now pervades a large

portion of female society; like the flame in a stubble field the mania has spread, the convert quickly becomes the proselyte, and the consequence is, that some men, in the general practice of our profession, are induced to shape their treatment less by the nature of the complaints, than the suggestions of their patients. . . . .

“The result of this can be easily imagined; unskilfulness is associated with fraud. The Speculum is brought into play, and startling are the revelations made by its glittering wall. Alarmed or amused, no matter which, the patient is secured, and remains long enough under treatment to familiarize her with indecency, and to enable the practical hand of the neophyte to attain the *tour de maitre*, both in handling the instrument and the fee. . . . .

“Then again, these uterine complaints, contrary to the laws that govern local affections, are made to assume an almost epidemic character, for it is by no means uncommon to hear that several members of the same household are under treatment, as they call it, at the same time. . . .

“But besides those whom I have mentioned as abusing the Speculum, there are others, who, more honest, yet not less dangerous, are, unconsciously perhaps, contributing their share to this work of demoralization; I mean that portion of the profession who, unable to form opinions for

themselves, are ready at all times *jurare in verba magistri*, adopting any practice, provided the example be set in high places. . . . .  
 with these men one would like to deal charitably; but the best of motives must not be allowed to compensate the consequences of dangerous acts; **THEY MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO JEOPARDISE THE MODESTY OF THE SEX, SO LONG THE PRIDE AND THE PROPERTY OF ENGLAND.**

“That an instrument, capable in its application of such wide-spreading mischief, should possess some compensating good, some power whereby diseases, hitherto obscure and intractable, should be compelled to render up the morbid secrets on which they rest, and to take their place amongst curable disorders, was to have been expected, and had this been so, the case would stand far differently. . . . .

“But unfortunately this is not the case; the diseases here alluded to, though obnoxious to its application, instead of being benefited are materially aggravated by its use; take, for instance, the scirrhus affections, in these cases its use is not only inefficacious, but positively injurious—it only adds torture to torment. . . .

“Driven, then, from the field of real disease, these advocates of the *Speculum* are obliged to invest with a false character ailments that the profession has hitherto regarded as too trifling to

admit of any save the simplest treatment. . . . The Speculum has been greatly extolled as the means of conveying appliances immediately to the parts affected. But it must not be forgotten that the effects of local remedies in constitutional affections are short-lived in the extreme, or that those can hardly be called remedies, that are notoriously so slow in their operation, as to leave it doubtful whether they have not, after all, been robbing time of the merit of the recovery.

“That the profession is silent on these abuses is, in my opinion, to be deplored. Such silence may arise from the fear that the denunciation of them would tend to lower it in the estimation of the public, more than the continuance of the abuses themselves. Yielding to none in the desire to uphold the dignity of my order, I must say that I share in no such apprehensions. The public in return for the confidence they repose in us, have a right to such protection, and if they find that it has been withheld, that, in a mistaken solicitude for our own interests, we have neglected theirs, they will bind us all up in one common withe together, and the diploma, though it may still us the position of gentlemen.”\*

indicate the man of science, will cease to insure

\* The Speculum; its moral Tendencies. By a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. London: Bosworth & Harrison.

The last extract which we shall give appears in the *Lancet*, a periodical whose very title is behind the age, indicative of professional bigotry, a record of antiquated fallacy and prejudice. The tide must surely be on the turn, or the exposure of these speculumizing villainies would never have been permitted to grace its columns:—

“On the use of the speculum in the diagnosis and treatment of uterine diseases, by Dr. Robert Lee, the author referred to the tabular statement of 220 cases of real and imaginary disease of the uterus, published in the 38th volume of the *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, and presented in a similar tabular form the details (of) eighty additional cases, which had since come under his observation. Of the 300 patients forty-seven were unmarried, one had barely completed her eighteenth year, several were under twenty, and the majority under thirty years of age, and were suffering from hysteria, leucorrhœa, dysmenorrhœa, or some nervous affection of the uterus, without inflammation, ulceration, or any structural disease or displacement of the organ. In Case 256 the patient had been told that the womb was prolapsed and much ulcerated, and an instrument had been introduced for six weeks, with an aggravation of all the symptoms. The hymen was found so perfect on examination that it was impossible to reach the os uteri with-

out using an unjustifiable degree of violence. On the ground of morality, and on every other ground, he could see no defence for the employment of the speculum in these forty-seven cases. Of the 300 patients seventy were barren, and the sterility was not removed, nor the other symptoms relieved in a single instance. **SEVERAL OF THESE INDIVIDUALS SPOKE WITH HORROR AND SHAME OF THE TREATMENT TO WHICH THEY HAD BEEN SUBMITTED.** A considerable number of the cases were suffering from cancerous disease, in all of which the symptoms seemed to have been aggravated by the treatment. In Case 236 the character of the disease was unmistakable, but after an examination with the speculum a favourable prognosis had been given, and the actual cautery employed for months, and hopes of recovery held out to the last. The author expressed his conviction that neither in the living nor in the dead body had he ever seen a case of simple ulceration from chronic inflammation of the os or cervix uteri; and to apply the term to states of the os uteri in which the mucous membrane or, as it is termed by some, the basement membrane, is not destroyed by ulceration, was an abuse of terms calculated only to deceive and mislead the members of the medical profession, from whom the truth has been carefully concealed. The speculum ema-

nates from the syphilitic wards of the hospitals at Paris, and *it would have been better for the women of England had its use been confined to those institutions.*—The *Lancet*, July 25, 1857.

Such is the language of earnest, honourable men, who have dared to dispel, by the light of true philosophy, the fog of “scientific” rascaldom—that empiric haze so desolating, so destructive to the inwrapped and blinded public. Few will deny that there are, in the foregoing extracts, sentiments which do honour to their authors, and revelations for which society should feel the deepest gratitude.

Were we to relate the numbers of weak and deluded creatures who, upon the slightest pretext, submit to this accursed rite, it would appear incredible. We know that one fashionable pretender to peculiar skill in the diagnostics of uterine affections, has boasted of five such examinations in one family in a single day! and that another has spoken of the exposure of *fifty* women to his professional gaze in the same space of time. These are facts—horrible, but undeniable, facts! “O shame! where is thy blush?” O woman! where is thy vaunted modesty, in a country tainted by such unspeakable and hideous mysteries, permitted—nay, tacitly encouraged—as they are, under the hypocritical guise of scientific discovery, and the pretended mitigation

of human ills? Is it possible that in this age, and in this our land, men should be found so utterly insensate, so beggared of all feeling, so lost to all the chivalry of manhood, that, with this libidinous iniquity made patent, they would not arise, and, in one mighty and overwhelming surge of execration, crush its perpetrators, and abolish this obscene invasion of marital rights. No! perish the thought! The azure blood, which throbbed and pulsated in the British heart in those far off days of the second Richard, when the indecent outrages of the poll-tax gatherers lashed the people into fury at their daughters' wrongs, still runs in the veins of Englishmen; and we will not believe that the halo of purity, which made the homes of "merrie England" the watchword of our sires, can have departed for ever from those of their descendants.



## CHAPTER IV.

“The chariest maid is prodigal enough,  
If she unmask her beauty to the moon ;  
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes ;  
The canker galls the infants of the spring,  
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed ;  
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth,  
Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
Be wary, then, best safety lies in fear.”

WE have already, in the foregoing pages, quoted the words of Roussel, a celebrated French physician of the last century, whose delicate and sensitive mind revolted at the indecency of the practice which had then but lately been adopted in his country ; and before we proceed to quote more largely from the same author, we think it proper that our readers should be made acquainted with the character of the man who so lovingly exerted his great talents to release his countrywomen from the gross thralldom of designing charlatans and empirical impostors.

Dr. Cerise, in the account of Roussel prefixed to the edition of the Physical and Moral System of Women, published in Paris, 1855, says :  
“ Among the celebrated physicians that France

has produced, a great number have distinguished themselves not only by their erudition, but still more by the elegance of their language, by the elevation of their sentiments, by the profundity of their conceptions; their names belong to letters and philosophy, as much as to medicine. Roussel is a member of that glorious family of Petits, Bordeus, Vicq-d'Azyrs, Cabanis, Aliberts, which, at the present day, is honourably represented by two writers, Pariset and Reveillé-Parise. Through them medicine is not only a useful, but it is also an agreeable science.

“ Let us hope, that so illustrious a family will not become extinct, and that descendants worthy of it will faithfully keep alive the sacred fire, perpetually threatened by the freezing breath of scientific materialism.

“ Roussel was born at Ax, in the department of Ariège, in 1742. His education, commenced in that town, was finished at Toulouse. His taste for medical study manifested itself early. He betook himself to Montpellier, where he profited by the scientific lectures of Lamure, Venel, and Barthez. These medical studies completed, he was desirous of further instruction, and came to Paris. He closely allied himself with Bordeu. This physician, according to the expression of Alibert, was too illustrious to be happy; the friendship of Roussel consoled his vexations; but

Bordeu soon died, and Roussel had the melancholy commission to pronounce his funeral elogy. We are assured that love was the genius of Roussel. He was still very young," says his biographer, "when this sentiment was awakened in his soul; it was then that his inspired imagination began to meditate on the tastes, the manners, the passions, and the habits of women, and that he made a constant study of their physical constitution, and of the moral attributes which they derived from it. He soon arranged the fruits which he had collected, and composed a body of science interesting as its subject.

"Thus was written *the Physical and Moral System of Woman*. This treatise, which agreed in its development with a title so imposing, has remained superior to all those which have been written upon woman, without excepting the remarkable work of M. Virey, which failed, perhaps, in eclipsing that of Roussel, solely from its severer method and more scientific manner of treatment. He soon undertook another treatise, intended to serve as a pendant to the former. This new treatise, entitled the *Physical and Moral System of Man*, was not completed, which, judging from what he had published, is much to be regretted. He caused to be inserted in the journals of the day, *An Essay on Sensibility; An Account of Madame Helvetius*; a short disserta-

tion, entitled, *Historic Doubts on Sappho*; some remarks ' *On the Sympathies*.' He had commenced a lengthened work on Stahl, the celebrated head of the medical college, called *Animist*, but this work remained unpublished; he reviewed the work of Madame de Staël, upon the Affinities of Literature with Social Institutions; he applied himself to combat the doctrine of the indefinite perfectibility of the human spirit, developed by Condorcet, in one of his most remarkable writings. The problem was then proposed in terms such as could not afford any satisfactory conclusion—as yet the science of history did not exist. He wrote upon the right of making a will, which he regarded as inviolable and imprescriptible; he addressed public exhortations to political electors, to remind them of their duties and of their rights; he admired the institutions of Lycurgus, and published a dissertation on the government of Sparta. It is thus that the empire of circumstances under which France at present exists dominates over all minds. Roussel, yet meditating with a tender partiality upon the physical and moral constitution of woman, could not resist descending into the arena of political discussion. Thanks to the moderation of his character, his voice, in the midst of revolutionary storms, was hardly understood, and his existence was not disturbed.

“ Roussel loved retirement and unaffected manners. Traits of a charming simplicity are related of him. Alibert congratulating him one day on the marriage of one of his brothers, suggested that he should follow his example and marry. ‘I assure you,’ replied the irresolute bachelor, ‘that this idea often occurs to me, but one must go before the priest, before the magistrate—there is no end to the affair.’ There are persons for whom pleasing and indefinite fantasies have a charm which they love to prolong; they seem to dread a real happiness which might deprive imagination of its most smiling visions. Roussel was one of these persons. He was smitten with a violent passion for a young and beautiful person whom he had restored to health. Happy, doubtless, in secretly bearing a cherished image in his heart, he refrained from giving utterance to his thoughts. One day it was announced that this person was going to be married. ‘Ah,’ cried he, ‘*I am so grieved; I could not have believed it;*’ and he shed abundant tears of regret. He was often sorrowful; in one of these fits of melancholy, he ran at midnight to a physician of his acquaintance—‘My head turns,’ said he; ‘I feel myself very ill. I am come to you to implore your attention.’ Imbert reassured him, and calmed his alarmed imagina-

tion. The two friends engaged in conversation, and Roussel forgot his malady.

“Roussel was good; benevolence, a quality so precious to a physician, was in him lovely and expansive. When he suffered, study was an asylum for his grief, a refuge for his afflicted spirit. He found in the joys of the mind a defence against the sorrows of the heart. His internal agitations dissipated themselves thus without gall and without bitterness. His excellence was proof even against evil days. He lived poor, but the affectionate and delicate hospitality of a respectable family never allowed him to perceive it. He could, thanks to the care of M. Falaize, neglect, quite at his ease, both his affairs and his fortune, exercise his profession with the confident and noble freedom so agreeable to elevated minds; meditate without interruption upon Plato, Plutarch, and Rabelais, and withdraw himself, without peril, from those petty torments which impose themselves under the name of social proprieties. A perfect courtesy with him was marvellously allied to good nature a little rough, and which was not without a dash of mischief. Roussel no more sought honours than fortune. He refused the offer of an honourable employment, made to him by the Great Frederic. He failed, however, to

be called to the legislative body. He wanted only two votes. Powerful friends had designed him for the Tribuneship. He declined that honour, urging the weakness of his voice, and his timidity. Roussel was timid through excess of modesty.

“Roussel was endowed with a delicate constitution. He had been suffering more than usual for many days, when he quitted Paris to retire into the country, to M. Falaize, near Chateaudun. Enfeebled by prolonged sufferings, he soon yielded to the attack of a fever which raged epidemically in the neighbourhood. He sank under it the second complementary day of the year X. (1802), aged about sixty years. Roussel had possessed devoted friends; those who survived him remained faithful to his memory. Alibert recorded his life with touching eloquence. He did more; he collected his principal writings, of which some were disseminated in the journals, and published an edition of his works.”

This account of Roussel, brief as it is, will suffice to inform our readers that he was no ordinary man, and that, from his learning, and long experience as a physician, his opinions and reflections upon “the pretended art” of man-midwifery are entitled to the greatest respect. Those who would ridicule his sentiments, and

treat his arguments as false and visionary, and his ideas as antiquated and unsuited to the taste and advancement of the present day, are those who, from mean and despicable motives of self-interest, would confirm the vicious system which Roussel has denounced, and, while destroying woman's modesty, would erect their own fortune on its ruins.

Towards the end of the preface to the *Physical and Moral System of Woman*, will be found the following sentences, which we would commend to the serious consideration of every man whose sense of decency has not been altogether obliterated, and whose mind still retains any of those finer feelings, which God, when he made man in his own image, implanted in the human breast. "It is not the same, perhaps, with the abuses introduced by that art, almost unknown among the ancients, which, under the pretence of assisting nature in producing man, itself sometimes prevents his seeing the light, in attempting to do that which she unaided could more effectually perform; which enervates in woman, by effeminacy and the needless lengthening out of precautions, the instinct, which alone puts them in a condition to do without it. In fine, which, by a usage, as indecently as unreasonably repeated in men's attendance upon women, enfeebles, and at length annihilates the sentiment which most



adorns the sex. I have made some reflections upon this pretended art in the chapter which treats of natural labour." Again, in the chapter on pregnancy, Roussel speaks trumpet-tongued, not only against the indelicacy, but of the absolute inutility of those digital examinations *per vaginam* now in vogue, and so dogmatically prescribed in the text books of midwifery.

"As the instant when a woman conceives does not manifest itself in her by any well characterized expression, and the consequences of this act remain for some time concealed by a thick veil, that spirit of unrest which ordains that man, dissatisfied with the present which he may enjoy, should ever press on towards that future, which he perhaps shall never see, induces him to seek with eagerness the as yet hidden signs of pregnancy, and to question nature long before she deigns to speak. Men might, in this respect, spare themselves the torments of needless impatience, since it can neither accelerate nor retard its object. It would be much more in order to wait patiently until the natural signs themselves announce pregnancy, than that the tentatives by which it is pretended they are anticipated should annoy women weak enough to submit to them, without throwing any more light on the motive which suggests a recourse to them.

"These tentatives are the work of a shameless

charlatanism, which solicits them, and which disports itself with chastity and decency, to establish its empire upon the ruins of a virtue to which the sex owes its own most solid foundations.

“ We here feel ourselves compelled to inform women, that those whom they employ at this kind of trials deceive them, in affecting a knowledge which they do not possess. All information derived from *the touch* is very uncertain. The concurrence of external and obvious signs can alone be reckoned on; such as the increased size of the abdomen, the swelling of the bosom, preceded by qualms, nausea, and suppression of the menses. But the most decisive of all, by the actual avowal of all men-midwives, the sole indubitable proof consists in the movements of the infant, which make themselves felt towards the fourth month of pregnancy. Thus women can inform themselves better than any one whether they are with child, and the men-midwives, who are forced themselves to acknowledge this, ought to erase from their treatises on midwifery the nonsensical rules which they give upon *the touch*.\* To give an idea of the solidity and wisdom of these rules, I need cite but one, taken from a work of one of the most celebrated men-midwives. ‘ When one is called on,’ says he,

\* Vide Ramsbotham, *anté*.

‘ to examine a girl by *the touch* for some suspicion of pregnancy,\* one ought at first to introduce the finger with caution, for fear of deflowering her, if she was not so.’ Is not this the very climax of absurdity to be willing, upon the simple suspicion of an evil which, perhaps, is imaginary, to produce a real injury, to expose one’s self, for the sake of knowing whether a girl had committed a fault, to the rendering more easy to her all those which she might commit in future, by destroying the prime bulwark which in her opposes itself to vice; in fine, to deflower a girl in order to discover whether she had lost her virginity?† And unhappily

\* “ It was to the midwives that they applied, in the first ages of the Church, to be assured of that fidelity which Christian virgins had vowed to their state of chastity. But, if the Fathers found fault from the time when Christian females were thus exposed to the judgment of their own sex; if they discovered in this practice something shameful and infamous, of what criminality would they not have taxed the attempt of men at the present day, who, in like cases, are not ashamed to deprive the midwives of this employment.”—*Hecquet, De l’Indecence aux Hommes d’accoucher les Femmes*, page 7.

† O ye adepts in chloroform, take heed to your ways, and O ye fools, who submit to be made *dead-drunk* under its influence, beware lest a worse thing happen unto you!

“ It would be absurd to suppose that the cases of sudden death from chloroform constitute the full measure of the mortality. How few even of these are generally known or reported. Hardly any in private practice; and now, even in hospitals, they are concealed. It is well known to the frequenters of the London hos-

again for the rule, the means which it points out are insufficient to attain the desired information. It is from time alone that this revelation may be expected. Three or four months of patience will enlighten you more than can this dangerous practice, the disgraceful essays of which are worse than the doubts that they would dissipate. Although the inconveniences of this practice are not so considerable for women as for girls, we would never do them the injustice to suppose, that it would not be painful for them to consent to an examination which ought to humiliate them in their own eyes, and which must sometimes render them contemptible in the eyes of others: they should free themselves from this torturing ceremony, though there was no other reason for it than its inutility for the object which induces them to submit to it.\* Again, in the chapter on natural labour, Roussel says:—

“Final causes, which some philosophers would banish as a barren principle (which is perhaps true in natural philosophy), are in medicine the foundation of the most solid truths, which the

pitals, that, in the same week in which the recent death from chloroform at St. Thomas's occurred, another took place in another hospital, but which did not become the subject of judicial inquiry. Humanity, and the character of the profession, demand that the whole subject should be investigated anew.”—*Medical Times and Gazette.*

\* Roussel, page 177, de la Grossesse.

ancients, and above all, Hippocrates, have transmitted to us. They have perhaps supposed that it was too trite and too commonplace to think that the Creator, who presided at the formation of our bodies, had made the mouth to eat, the eyes to see, and the ears to hear. We know not if it required much effort and subtle reasoning to divest them of the first ideas of common sense, but it seems to us, that they who reject altogether final causes discard perhaps as much truth as those who have most misused them, for it must be owned, that certain writers have made a strange use of them. Not to travel out of the subject which occupies us, we may quote M. Astruc,\* who alleges that the coverings of the fœtus, in engaging themselves at the same time with it in the orifice of the womb, serve to line that passage, and to defend it against the bruising of the fœtus, and *the fingers of the midwife*. To suppose that nature, in arranging the objects which should assist delivery, had contemplated the awkwardness of male and female midwives, is to impute to her a foresight which unhappily would be only too necessary, but that she had little for the errors that we are able to commit. She has done all for the best in our favour, so much the worse for us if we mar her

\* *Maladies des Femmes*, t. v., p. 375.

work. *It must be*, said the same author, *that its face (of the fœtus) was turned from the side of the os sacrum, to prevent its nose from being crushed by the bones of the pubes, and that it might not be suffocated by the waters of the amnios.* A child that had been living nine months in water to be suffocated, when passing out of it, by a few drops! O Astruc! have you well considered this?

“Without, then, ascribing to nature frivolous fears, or confining her to details which she disdains, we may reasonably believe that after having allotted to different organs destined to aid in generation, the modifications most suitable to the conception of the child, and its preservation during pregnancy, she would afford those also which should, with the least inconvenience, effect its exit from the maternal bosom.”\*

After describing the process of nature in parturition, Roussel goes on to say:—“O Rubens! I leave to your pencil the care of expressing that touching state in which the last impressions of abated pain still tinge the serenity of purest joy; where the melancholy, caused by sufferings now terminating, is not yet effaced by the most delightful sentiments which can animate the soul; where the dread of losing life, natural enough in suffering, gives place to the delicious pleasure of

\* Roussel, de l'Accouchement Naturel, page 208.

having presented it to a new being. But wherefore must it be, that this state is the price of a train of inconveniences, and a gradation of suffering often insupportable; and why are we here compelled to envy the kinds of animals amongst which pregnancy is without embarrassment, and delivery almost without a pang, or at least exempt from the sad or fatal consequences which so often follow it in the human species? It would, nevertheless, be wrong to tax nature with injustice.\* We yet find races in whom her primitive

\* "It is a common notion, that the brute enjoys great advantages, compared with woman, in the act of parturition, from the position and configuration of its pelvis. Is not this groundless? In the first place it is said that the oblique axis of the brim, in woman, is less favourable to the descent of the foetal head than the axis of the brim in the brute, which is parallel with the spine. But the physiologist knows, that ordinarily in woman, just before the commencement of the labour pains, the uterus slowly, and without pain, descends by a mechanism, which Sir C. Bell has so beautifully described in his memoir on the muscularity of that organ; and that thus a small segment of the foetal head becomes engaged in the brim, and in the position most favourable for passing, before the uterine pains commence. The truth is, the obliquity of the axis of the brim is, in general, *no disadvantage or impediment whatever*. In the second place, it is urged, that the great size of the human foetal head occasions incomparably more difficulty than the sharp-pointed, small head of the brute foetus. For this there is equally no foundation. The size and figure of the human brim are as well fitted to give passage to the large head of the child, as the brim of the brute pelvis to allow the entrance of the comparatively smaller head of the foetal brute, &c., &c. Still looking at the figure of the human

impress has never been effaced by the abuses of a refined society, and amongst whom women enjoy nearly the same privileges as the females of animals.

“The women of the Ostiaks, it is said,\* never have any uneasiness about the time of their delivery, and take none of those precautions which European effeminacy renders almost indispensable. They are delivered wherever they may happen to be without any inconvenience; they, or the persons who assist them, plunge the new-born infant into water or snow, and the mother returns immediately to her ordinary occupations, or continues her march, if on a journey.† As these people dwell in the vicinity

fœtus, and comparing it with that of the fetal brute, some may be inclined to imagine, notwithstanding what has been said, that the brute will pass with far greater facility than the child; such was my own opinion till I subjected the point to the test of experiment. We are not to think, but to try, as John Hunter advises,” &c.—*Robertson, Physiology, &c.*, p. 247.

\* *L'Histoire General des Voyages.*

† “During pregnancy the squaw continues her usual avocations, and, even in its most advanced state, she neither bears a lighter burthen on her back, nor walks a shorter distance in a day, than she otherwise would. If on a march she feels the pains of parturition, she retires to the bushes, throws her burthen from her back, and, without any aid, brings the infant into the world. After washing in water, if at hand, or in melted snow, both herself and the infant, she immediately replaces the burthen upon her back (weighing, perhaps, between sixty and one hundred pounds), secures her child upon the top of it, protected from the



of the Samöides,\* between the fifty-ninth and sixtieth degree of north latitude, they do not fail to attribute this vigorous constitution to the severity of the climate.

“Meanwhile, in the same history, we read that the wives of the dwellers in the island of Amboina, towards the third degree of south latitude, are in the same category; and the author or compiler of that history, in reporting the fact, discovers the cause of it in the heat of the climate, which renders women’s members supple and capable of accommodating themselves with ease to the labours of parturition. One may perceive from this how versatile are the explanations obtained from *cold* and *heat*, and how, in the jargon of mechanics, causes altogether opposite can serve with more vraisemblance than actual truth for proof of the same effect. We repeat again, the effect of manners and custom is not often enough considered. In all climates

cold by an envelope of bison robe, and thus hurries on to overtake her companions.”—*James’ Narrative of Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains.*

\* “The Samöides are a tawny, squat, miserable race of pagan savages, subjects of the Russian empire. They are found along the Frozen Sea, on the European side of the Jugorian Mountains, east of these on the River Oby, and elsewhere on the vast shores of Siberia. According to Tooke, they are mature at a very early age,” &c.—*Robertson*, quoting *Tooke’s Russian Empire*, vol. ii. p. 286.

nature has given both to man and brute the faculties necessary for fulfilling the functions of life with ease. The former has very often perverted their use, believing that luxuriousness, precautions, and an abundance of all things could supply their place.

“ Without seeking for examples beyond those to which we shall refer, we might disabuse ourselves of so dangerous an error, if we would compare, without prejudice, even in our own climate, the women in the rural districts with those resident in towns. The former, having their attention continually diverted by their necessary occupations, often find themselves in the middle of their pregnancy almost without perceiving it, and this is already a great deal gained. This novel state, without changing anything in the course of their health, or in their way of living, obliges only some preparations more necessary for the infant than for themselves. Arrived at the end of the ninth month (as they are never in a hurry to lie in) they do not aggravate the troubles which accompany this function by the anxieties of vexatious expectation. Nature sometimes surprises them in the midst of the rustic employments in which they are occupied during their pregnancy, and which only prepare them the better to support those of labour. Finding in them healthy

organs and a calm mind, she operates without obstruction, and, in consequence, delivers them with less suffering and more celerity.\* The consequences of labour, which are, to the majority of women in towns, in part a real malady, and partly a kind of etiquette and convention, which subjects them, during a fixed period, to the regimen of sick persons, when they have ceased to be so, are almost nothing to women in the country. Nature, having neither caprice nor excess to combat in them, only occupies herself for their re-establishment; and as they yield nothing to custom or opinion, they enjoy as much as possible the favours of nature. They have not time to crawl methodically, during many weeks, from their bed to a sofa; they have almost always that courage which increases their powers, and which necessity sometimes gives even to women resident in towns. Among these even it is by no means rare to see the wives of poor workmen, who walk to a midwife at the moment of parturition, and who return the next

\* "The truth is, that when the pregnant will submit to prepare themselves for what is before them, will be temperate in their eating, regular in their hours for sleep, and for exercise daily in the open air, a considerable proportion may secure benign labours. It is the sedentary and luxurious who oftenest suffer severely in parturition," &c. &c.—*Robertson's Notes on Pregnancy*, p. 460.

day free and exempt from accidents, which the woman of higher rank does not always escape, in the midst of the studied precautions which are taken on her account; their condition in life does not permit them to be inconvenienced for more than three or four days. It seems that nature gives us powers in proportion to the necessity that we have to make use of them. We have known a young girl who found the means to conceal from her parents the humiliating signs of her weakness, and the operation which relieved her from it. As her pregnancy was not legitimate, she had not the right to be an invalid.\*

“As for most women in towns, and above all those of the upper classes, instead of courage capable of annihilating the sentiment of evil, all concurs to nourish a pusillanimity in them, which renders it more vivid. The eager curiosity with which they endeavour to find out whether they are pregnant, the new regimen to which they submit themselves when they are declared to be so, the preparations, the anxieties, the alarms, real or feigned, which reign around them, the number of persons who besiege them, the inaction to which they are condemned, should give them a frightful idea of their state, and would

\* Robertson has a remark to the same effect.

seem to deprive them of the ability to make use of their proper powers, and so to render them of no effect. The feebleness and inertia of their minds, passing to their organs, cannot but dispose them to a stormy pregnancy, and prepare them for a painful and sometimes fatal labour. The instinct which watches for the preservation of our lives, which knows so well how to manage its resources in the most serious evils, must weaken and lose itself amidst the throng of succours with which the patients are sometimes overwhelmed. What could it have to do when so many are acting for it?

“Delivery is an animal function which, in all likelihood, nature had no desire to render a disease. This function exercises itself almost without pain and without danger in the brute. In all places where the means of assisting it have never been reduced to art, women have ordinarily labours less severe and more fortunate than in those localities which swarm with accoucheurs and midwives. Whence comes this distinction, if it is not from the difference of manners and methods of treatment in the one and the other, or from the abuse which, in the latter places, is made of a pretended science?

“If the delicacy which results from a luxurious and inactive life renders the movements of the womb more painful, we should attribute the

irregularity which renders them sometimes fatal to the mother and the child, to a disordered sensibility, which is excited by attempts almost always ill-directed, and almost always executed by mischance. It is in this disturbance that the infant assumes those disadvantageous positions of which the accoucheurs and midwives unquestionably exaggerate the danger, to put a higher value on their 'manipulations;'\* but which, in effect, render the delivery longer and more laborious: disturbance maintained and augmented by the embarrassment which the presence of a number of persons, some dear, others odious, some unknown, who in general fill the chamber of a woman in labour, must naturally produce, BY THE TORMENTS OF A MODESTY TOO LITTLE REGARDED, by an air of importance too much affected, which the assistants, and others who are to operate, throw over the affair in which they are engaged. All these objects must excite a variety of sentiments in the woman, which, by distracting her mind, necessarily disturb the organic action of the parts which should perform the delivery. Happy is it, if too presumptuous accoucheurs and midwives do not, by their precocious tentatives, solicit in her a nature which

\* "The beasts ca't manipulated."—*Shepherd on the Phrenologists, Noctes Ambrosianæ*, vol. ii. p. 21.

is not yet prepared to engage itself, precipitate its movements, and consequently abort the fruit which they ought to await, weary the parts already too much irritated, and rendered too sensible by the orgasm and tension which they have suffered, and hurry both mother and child into inevitable ruin.

“ Women who have the good fortune not to be annoyed by numerous attendants, and in whom nothing discomposes nature, are seldom subject to those catastrophes which, very far from bringing discredit on the operator, who is often the cause of them, only make him appear the more necessary. Nature, when she works alone, knows so well how to combine and graduate her action that she does that only which she ought to do. Ah! why should she not with ease accomplish an operation for which she has foreseen, and well prepared everything? Why should she not succeed in extracting with facility from the centre of the womb, from an active, flexible, and very vigorous organ, a body which is familiar to it, and which, from its form and consistence, cannot much injure the parts which it touches? Why should she be embarrassed in bringing to light an infant whose situation is so near the outlet through which it is to issue, she whom we have sometimes seen conducting, without accident, pointed or sharp-

edged bodies through the windings of the urinary ducts, and the tortuous folds of the long passage of the intestines? There are, besides, operations which she loves to execute in silence and in secret. This delicate instinct manifests itself even in some species of animals, which never fulfil certain functions in presence of witnesses, and fly from the gaze of man to perform them. Delivery, from its nature, and from all the circumstances which characterize this function, is one of those which, in the human species, requires most especially to be covered with a veil. It cannot be doubted that they would assist her in a way the most efficacious, if the number of persons in attendance on a woman in labour was limited to two or three of her most intimate friends, who, by a gay and lively manner, should divert her from her sufferings, or by their confident appearance pacify her apprehensions; and to a midwife, whose presence of mind, patience, reserve, and protection should be a guarantee for her tranquillity. It is not to be doubted, I say, that a woman would be by those means more effectually succoured than by the tumultuous assistance of a number of persons, sorrowful, aghast, impatient, whose multiplied and often mis-directed attentions magnify in her imagination the evil which she must endure, and the danger which she fears, and above all



by the awful appearance of a man ever ready to operate, always armed with suspicious instruments, and to be dreaded from his sex.

“It must be owned that although the midwife’s function belongs to the healing art, it was not intended to be exercised by men.\* The character of this function, the small amount of knowledge which it requires, the entire and absolute confidence which persons of the same sex must naturally have in each other, in fine, everything demands for it the agency of women; this employment seems their proper existence; they possess all the advantages necessary to fulfil it with success. We know with what address and with what dexterity their hands, small and supple, glide and insinuate themselves everywhere without annoyance, capable of penetrating to the very source of the evil without augmenting it, and conveying the remedy to the part diseased, without awakening, by the act, pangs which had been allayed.

“It is these precious talents, as well as that

\* “The calling of ‘accoucheur’ does not appertain to men. It is with them nothing but a usurpation, or a rash experiment, founded upon the timidity of women, who believe that, by this unworthy submission, they insure their lives; and upon the credulity of husbands, who, by this dangerous condescension, imagine that they more surely preserve their wives.”—*Hecquet, De l’Indecence aux Hommes d’accoucher les Femmes*, page 9.

delicate attention capable of divining the wants which there is not strength to express, and that enlightened sensibility which knows how to regard the very caprices of the complaint, which gave rise to the proverb, honourable to the sex, that wheresoever there is a suffering being, his sighs summon woman to console him.\*

“They will tell us that long and serious studies, to wit, physics, mechanics, and even mathematics, are necessary to insure skill in the art of midwifery. Eh! where is it that they have not introduced, especially of late, physics and mathematics? All that which is material; all that which is within the jurisdiction of the senses, belongs, without doubt, to physics and to mechanics: one could not move a step, one could not lift a straw, without its being done by the laws of physics; but every one performs these mechanical operations, as the Bourgeois gentleman did prose, that is to say, without suspecting it. There are natural mechanics with which not only all men, but even all animals are acquainted without having studied them. All perform actions, without having been trained to them, wherein sparkle the most subtle mechanics; all know of themselves, and without previous

\* “Ubi non est mulier, ibi ingemiscit æger.”

Where woman is not, there the sick man groans.

practice, how to assume the most convenient postures which their different wants demand. Those who compose treatises on midwifery describe at great length the position which a woman ought to take during labour, and that which is proper for the accoucheur. The legs of this latter, say they, ought to describe an angle of *forty-five degrees*. An operator, to give lustre to his art, may well appeal to that of mechanics and geometry; but he ought not to say that it is above the capacity of women. The sole difference which exists, perhaps, between them is, that a woman, in abandoning herself to her natural dexterity, in liberating herself from the constraint of a fixed position, and in effecting the movements which circumstances require, rather than those which the rule demands, will go about the work better than the man-midwife gravely moored (*affourché*) at his *angle of forty-five degrees*.

“The art of midwifery, stripped of regulations, useless or of little moment, and of the frivolous finery wherein it has been arrayed, reduces itself to a very small number of simple principles,\* easy to attain, and most suitable

\* “At the time when this work was published, there had appeared a catechism, in which M. Dufot, a physician, who was the author of it, proposed to himself to instruct the midwives in the country, and he set forth in a manner clear, exact, and per-

to the capacity of women. They soon learn what are those faulty positions which the infant may take in the womb: what are those which they may rectify; and those which, not being remediable, leave nothing to the address of the operator but the wise resolution to diminish, as much as possible, their inconveniences.

spicuous, the principles of the art of midwifery. It would be desirable that these ideas, which are sufficient for their purpose, should be disseminated; they would prepare the public to do without the help of men in an office where their agency seems necessarily to compromise morals. This object, to which some men only gave the attention which it deserved, is doubtless the one which has urged some intendants to occupy themselves in the instruction of midwives. We learn from the *Gazette de France*, of 25th September, 1776, that the dame Ducoudrai, commissioned and pensioned by his Majesty, had, by the care of M. Fontette, chief magistrate (intendant) of Caen, organized more than a hundred and fifty midwives in two public courts which she had held. That example, without doubt, will not be lost on the provinces; whatever the price of knowledge may be, it is in such close contiguity to the temptation to abuse it, that I dare hardly put up any prayers for my country. In all the County of Foix, where I was born, deliveries are intrusted to women of the lower order, who never have the least idea of anatomy, and with whom the whole art is reduced to some practical and traditionary customs. But they display zeal, patience, and uprightness, while the others apply themselves to nothing but the glitter of a scientific phantom, and the former cannot but succeed the best. I remember to have seen but one woman perish, in my little town, from the consequences of labour. It is true that, contrary to custom, she had been delivered by a man. The event was so distressing, that they had every cause to believe that nature reprobated such a fatal innovation."

“ Again, it must be considered, that those principles are not to be applied, excepting in cases wherein nature, insufficient in herself, demands the assistance of another’s hand; for, by the avowal of accoucheurs themselves, natural labour, which is and ought to be the most common, can conduct itself without the intervention of art. We may then conclude, with certainty, that accoucheurs who ‘manipulate,’ who instrumentalize us much as they can, most frequently do it without necessity, and from this cause are prejudicial to the success of the operation. We may also, in that way, reduce to their just value the exaggerated details which they give of pretended obstacles which they have had to overcome, of the address and dexterity which was necessary to surmount them; details which seem intended to show that the delivery had been their work, or that, at least, much of it was theirs, and very little nature’s own.\*

\* Here let us illustrate the truth of Roussel’s observations, by a statement of facts which have occurred in our own day:—The *Portafoglio Maltese* (October, 1856), in describing the frightful effects of a late earthquake in Candia, gives the following:—“ In one case a woman was discovered alive under the fallen ruins. She had been miraculously preserved by a beam falling in such a manner as to leave a small space, where she remained eight days without food before being discovered. During this time she gave birth to a child, which was also alive. Another woman was being delivered when the earthquake commenced; the husband and three women who were attending her fled. On

“Either, in the time of the Greeks, women were delivered with greater ease than now, or they judged better than us of the true degree of influence that the midwife or the accoucheur possesses in this function. By the appellation which they gave to their midwives, it appears that they limited them to the duty of cutting the umbilical cord; they called them *ομφαλοτομοι*, umbilical cord-cutters. The females of animals perform this operation with their teeth; and as the umbilical cord can in their case do without a ligature, there are authors who doubt whether it is as essential in man as many persons pretend. There are observations for and against it. This is not the place to discuss this question; but we believe that they may much deceive themselves if they look upon the umbilical cord as a simple continuation of the vessels of the child or of the mother, and not as a fragment of affinity which only serves, for a certain time, as a point of communication established between the mother and the infant, that nature retains so long as she requires it, but which she leaves to decay, and fall away, when it is no longer useful to her. After

the husband returning after the panic was over, on removing the ruins of his house, he found his wife with her child in her arms alive in a corner of one of the rooms, which had only partly fallen in. During the awful moment she had been safely delivered.”

the delivery she contracts, compresses, and closes up the part of the infant to which it adheres; and by intercepting the blood and the life which gives it subsistence, she soon causes it to wither and dry up, without any prejudice to the child.

“ Although the easiness of the art of midwifery might have been, among the ancients, a motive for intrusting it to women, they also doubtless had a regard for natural propriety, which suggested that the infant, on coming into the world, should be received into the hands of a midwife, to pass into those of a nurse, and from the hands of the nurse into those of a governess, who should prepare him to receive from men a masculine education. A repository so weak and so delicate would perhaps have found, in the rough and unbending kindness of the latter, aid less adapted to its state; it required a gentle and yielding support, knowing how to be pliant as itself, the better to defend it. In fine, the care of infancy is the destination of women; it is a task which nature has assigned them. It is woman who must bear the infant during nine months in her womb; *it is woman who ought to facilitate the means of its exit*; it is woman who should furnish the first nourishment which it requires; in fine, it is woman who should keep watch over the first developments of its organs

and of its mind, and prepare it for the lessons which should elevate it to the condition of man. But the principal reason which, among the ancients, forbade the belief that the duty of aiding delivery could be proper to any but women, excepting in cases of very rare occurrence, where every consideration might necessarily yield to a pressing danger, was the grand interest of manners.\* This was an object to which ancient

\* "While such are the prominent vices and defects of the poor, vices and defects of a different kind, but no less offensive to morality, are found among the rich. Sensuality and excess, selfishness, evil speaking, want of charity and kindness abound. All these are obstacles to moral and philosophical progress. Upon what can we rely to counteract them? Upon the force of civilization? Twice have its powers been tried and found wanting. In the days of Augustus Cæsar, when order had been established and prosperity revived, when Virgil and Horace flourished at Rome, and the vast provinces of the Roman Empire were blest with peace and tranquillity, everything seemed to promise a long duration of happiness. But the Christian Apostle and the Pagan Satirist alike prove all was hollow and delusive. Vice increased, knowledge decayed, power vanished, and soon everything portended the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Again, in the eighteenth century of our era, civilization had reached a very high point. That century, enlightened above all its predecessors, which enjoyed the literature of the age of Louis XIV. in France, and of Queen Anne in England, when Racine, Moliere, Boileau, La Fontaine, Dryden, Pope, Addison, and Swift were read and admired; when Newton's philosophy was established; when La Voisier, and Black, and Cavendish had advanced chemistry to a science, and Watt had, by his improvement of the steam engine,



governments had always special regard.\* They knew morality to be the foundation of all legislation, and that good laws would be made in vain, unless good morals insured their execution. The cruelty of Archagathus' surgical operations drove the medical men from Rome. She banished also from her bosom the Greek philosophers and orators, who were accused of having introduced and cultivated the taste for the arts and vices of Greece. She would surely not have permitted,

rivalled the invention of the printing press, seemed, in its course, tending to the happiness of nations. But before that century ended, revolutions tearing up the foundations of society, wars desolating all the nations of Europe, bore sad testimony to the mistake that had been made. What was that mistake? The nature of man is so prone to evil that a strong restraint is required to keep down his bad passions, and subdue his vicious inclinations. He requires, likewise, some special incentive to good. The legislators of antiquity sought that restraint upon evil, and that incentive to good, in powerful institutions guarded by sanctity of manners. It was thus that Sparta and Rome were led to virtue. But these institutions perished when manners no longer supported them."—*Lord John Russell*. Lecture delivered at Exeter Hall, on the Obstacles which have retarded Moral and Political Progress, November, 1855.

\* "I know that our philosophy, always abounding in singular maxims, pretends, contrary to the experience of all ages, that luxury forms the glory of states; but after having forgotten the necessity of sumptuary laws, will she yet dare to deny that good manners are essential to the duration of empires, and that luxury is diametrically opposed to good manners?"—*Rousseau Discours*, p. 67.

for any length of time, the existence of *an art which, practised by men, would, under the specious pretence of utility, threaten the sanctuary of marriage*, and which, striking a blow at the chief safeguard of families, would next attack the mainsprings of the state; an art which, *with power to alarm the modesty of women, would soon leave them without a blush*, and cause them to lose even the recollection of that severe virtue which had merited the respect and veneration of the Romans, and which of old had been the principle of the grandest revolutions. Cato, always careful to protect the hearts of the citizens from corruption, would never have permitted their wives, when presenting children to the republic, to tarnish the favour by a forgetfulness of the first of all decencies. All nations were sufficiently agreed, up to the middle of the last century, never to admit the agency of men in delivery. M. Astruc\* alleges that it was not

\* "It was (says M. Astruc) at the first delivery of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and for the safer keeping of the secret. It was feared that the presence of a midwife in the palace, where suspicion reigned already, would furnish fresh food for the malign curiosity of the courtiers; to impose on them they made use of a surgeon whose practice attached him to the court. For the rest, it cannot be denied that there have been, in every age, men who studied or taught the art of midwifery. We have treatises on midwifery of very ancient date, written by physi-

until 1663 that they began at court to make use of a man-midwife, and this was, say they, on one of those occasions when honour in danger takes counsel but from the perplexity which misleads it, and violates one part of its rules to save the other. Who would believe it? It was shame which compelled recourse, for the first time, to men. A king, who knew the force of example on the throne, and who wished to conceal his weaknesses, and to be tender of the delicacy of her who shared them, believed that he could not place in better hands an interest so dear. It is thus that Jupiter sometimes confided to the inferior gods, rather than to the goddesses, his embarrassments, and the care of concealing from the eyes of Juno the fruits of his infidelities. Whatever it might be, *unquestionably it was not in a tranquil moment that a woman could, for the first time, make up her mind to abandon herself to the mercy of a man to deliver her.* The first examples having been given by those persons whose rank and condition carried opinion with them, the usage of men-midwives is since extended and

cians. Surgeons, while exercising themselves in other surgical operations, did not neglect that of midwifery. But the habitual and daily custom of delivery was never established as it is at present; they interfered only in difficult cases, where it was believed that an experienced operator was required."

spread with that rapidity which is common to all inventions of luxury, although even physicians\* are themselves forced to expose its inconveniences."†

\* There is a work of M. Hecquet, entitled *De l'Indecence qu'il y a aux Hommes d'accoucher les Femmes*.

† "There are, nevertheless, women, even now, whom it would be impossible to induce to be delivered by men. We speak not of those localities where this employment is confided to women, but in towns, where men-midwives are more in vogue. There is, it is said, a great Queen in Europe who has an accoucheur of whom she never makes use. Women deliver her, and the *man-midwife* is in the ante-chamber, as a witness of the tribute yet paid to a custom which had been renounced."

We fear that, in these "days of advance," even Majesty itself has succumbed to the prevailing fashion.

## CHAPTER V.

“ ——— Mine honour's such a ring :  
My chastity's the jewel of our house,  
Bequeathed down from many ancestors ;  
Which were the greatest obloquy i' the world  
In me to lose.”

MRS. JAMESON, in her admirable essay, “The Communion of Labour,” most truly observes—“That some departments of medicine are peculiarly suited to women, is beginning to strike the public mind.” Again, in her “Sisters of Charity,” she quotes the following words of the late Dr. Gooch:—“Many will think that it is impossible to impart a useful knowledge of medicine to women who are ignorant of anatomy, physiology, and pathology. A profound knowledge, of course, would not, but a very useful degree of it might—a degree which, combined with kindness and assiduity, would be far superior to that which the country poor receive at present. I have known matrons and sisters of hospitals with more practical tact in the detection and treatment of disease than half the young surgeons

by whom the country poor are commonly attended.”\*

“Perhaps,” says the author of “Women and Work,” “there is no profession which so calls for women as that of medicine. Much suffering would be saved to young women if they had doctors of their own sex, who, with friendly counsel and open speaking, would often prevent many forms of severe disease by attending to first symptoms.”

Elizabeth Blackwell,† one of those noble women who, braving the servile conventionalisms of the world, with right and reason, morality

\* “Sisters of Charity,” page 75.

† “While Miss Nightingale is showing the world the great good to be achieved by ladies devoting themselves to the sick and suffering in hospitals, there is a lady in Paris who has actually worked her way to the title of M.D. The lady in question is Dr. Emily Blackwell, daughter of the late Mr. Samuel Blackwell, of Bristol, and has, it appears, a sister practising in New York, as a regular physician, armed with the authority of a diploma. Dr. Elizabeth, like Dr. Emily, completed her medical studies in Paris. To the latter lady the Paris hospitals have been freely opened, and Dr. Emily Blackwell has followed the clinical lectures of Jobert de Lamballe, Huguier, Casenove, Guersaint, and Blanche; and on the Register of the great hospital of the Hotel Dieu may be seen the first woman’s name ever entered, as a medical student, on its books. The intense earnestness with which the lady doctor labours to make herself perfect mistress of those branches of the art which chiefly concern women and children, has not only overcome prejudice, but made her a favourite with her able instructors, who have been brought to say, that

and religion on their side, have triumphed over prejudice and bigotry, by firmly establishing themselves as female physicians\*—in “an appeal on behalf of the medical education of women,” after referring to the establishment and opening of medical schools for women in Philadelphia, Boston, and other towns of the United States, in the nine years since “the first woman was admitted as a regular student to a medical college, and graduated with the usual honours,” says :—“In all these places public opinion has expressed itself heartily in favour of the action of the colleges. The majority of the female graduates have entered upon the practice of their profession, and many of them have

there can be no more objection to the presence of ladies in hospitals, practising as physicians, than to nurses. Baron Sentin, one of the Physicians in Ordinary to the King of the Belgians, has invited Dr. Emily Blackwell to visit the great women's hospital at Brussels.”—*Daily News*.

\* A respected correspondent has communicated to us the following extract from a recent paper :—“There are not far from twenty of them, and several of them are in excellent business. They confine themselves generally to midwifery, and the diseases of their own sex. Their success in the former branch tends to establish them firmly in families. The number will probably be gradually on the increase, since they are beginning to be employed in the neighbouring cities of Charlestown, Cambridge, Roxbury, and adjacent towns, much more than formerly.”

Among these female physicians the Misses Emily and Elizabeth Blackwell, natives of Bristol, are justly celebrated. See an interesting sketch of the life of Miss Emily Blackwell in the *Englishwoman's Review*, June, 1857.

already formed a large and highly respectable practice. The intense prejudice which at first met the idea of a female doctor, is rapidly melting away. If further evidence were needed of the vitality of the new idea, and its adaptation to a real want in the community, it might be found in the character of the practice which has come to those physicians now most firmly established. Intelligent, thoughtful women, of calm good sense, who appreciate the wide bearing of this reform, and foresee its important practical influence, have been the first to employ the new class of physicians in their families, and encourage them with their cordial approbation."

Dr. Dickson says, in "The Destructive Art of Healing:"—"One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of medical truth in England, is the employment of surgeon-apothecaries as midwives—almost entirely monopolizing the practice of medicine by the influence which they have gained over the minds of our women; these people will countenance no physician who does not prescribe large quantities of useless, and too frequently deleterious medicine.

"The ladies of this country should take a lesson from the American ladies, who not only prefer midwives of their own sex, but actually employ female physicians. Female modesty and morality alike require that the diseases of women



should be attended to solely by women; and all through the United States you now meet with regularly-bred female physicians, most of them having the degree of M.D. from a university, and many of them being in the enjoyment of large and lucrative practice.

“ We have the pleasure of an acquaintance with Mrs. Dr. Longshore—she is a lady possessing a strong and original mind, close powers of perception and reasoning, and a thorough medical education. As a practical anatomist she has few superiors, even among practitioners of the ‘sterner mould.’ Mrs. Dr. Longshore is ‘a Friend,’ and her whole character is marked by the excellencies of the ‘Friends,’ or Quakers, as they are called. Placid, thoughtful, observant, full of sympathy, and governed by an active benevolence, she delights in doing good. Her practice is large, rapidly increasing, and generally successful, and she is devoutly attached to her noble profession. . . .

“ Medicine and midwifery are both domestic arts; woman is all but born a doctor. Ladies of England, think of this. Hitherto you have left the field of ‘labour’ to men who would be better employed with your distaffs and spindles. Mothers of England, you have a mission—fulfil it; proclaim to your daughters that the birth of

a child is not a surgical operation, but a natural process; and that there is no case of parturition so difficult that may not be better managed by a well instructed woman than by a man, whose very presence in the sick chamber disturbs the uterine action, and causes the greater number of difficulties that occur in such cases."

"In a country like England, to clear away a given folly is too often, unfortunately, only to make room for some other folly equally egregious. This, in our day, has been the case with medicine. Just as a considerable number of physicians had come to adopt my own view of the true constitutional origin of diseases, up sprung a class of people who will have it, that in the majority of female complaints, at least, there must ever be more or less of *local wrong*, which no possible constitutional treatment can cure! Whispering mysteriously the words 'engorgement,' 'tumour,' 'inflammation,' 'ulceration of the os,' 'version,' and 'retroversion'—phrases for the most part invented for the mere purpose of striking panic into the hearts of families who must ever be in the dark *here*—these men straightway confine the patient to her couch—in which unnatural position they keep her for months, and, if possible, for years together—during which they subject her to the most odious treatment; perform-

ing, with speculum, caustic, and other dangerous appliances, the most daring and indecent operations. . . .

“By the people to whose practices I have just alluded a woman is told all possible and impossible things—things the most frightful that imagination can conceive—to cure which, forsooth, she must lie on her back for months. And if this oracular sentence be enforced by two or more of their number, acting in consultation—anglicè in *collusion*—the weak creature believes accordingly. From that moment she is the dupe and the victim of the most unprincipled scoundrels, many of whom, by mixing up religion with their medical cant, contrive to bring some of the richer class of women to such a state, that they become annuities to those impostors throughout the greater part of their most unnatural and most miserable lives. . . .

“If, in common with these medicines, then, every medicinal force will produce its own peculiar *local effect, when swallowed by the mouth*, why, in the case of ‘uterine disease,’ of all others, should any woman submit to the local application of any remedy that cannot be used thus without the odious manipulations of the persons whose conduct every right mind, when properly instructed, must deprecate?

“But, as a matter of fact, these manipulations,

so far from curing any disease of the womb or its appendages, have actually set up in the sound structure a very large share of the possible diseases for which these people pretend to apply them; and some of the disorders thus set up too frequently cease only with the life of the victim. Men of England! if you only knew what your wives and daughters needlessly—mark that word!—*needlessly* experience at the hands of those ruthless cheats, your brows would burn with shame and indignation. How such brutality as these creatures practise ever came to pollute our shores, is one of the miracles of the times. A proper feeling in the minds of our women should have preserved them from the humiliation and torture to which they have been subjected; while Englishmen of all ranks should have united, long ere this, to expel from the land the sordid wretches who first introduced the grossness and indecency of the hospitals of Paris to the houses and hearths of a too-confiding nation!”

Again, the Author of “*Physic and its Phases*” brands these counterfeit professors with infamy in racy and vigorous verse:—

“Men, are you men—who lead such hybrid lives,  
Who, being surgeons, sink into midwives?  
If with the sex you seriously would vie,  
Why not the distaff and the spindle try?”

Throughout the Orient, Arab, Turk, and Jew  
 On such occasions, never send for you ;  
 Not even the Nubian, by the harem door,  
 Dare show his face, until the birth is o'er.  
 Talk of the sanctity of married life—  
 Nation of fools! who thus degrade the wife!  
 At such a moment, when the feminine mind  
 Shrinks from the succour of her nearest kind,  
 Could you do worse, were she a courtesan,  
 Than to her chamber introduce a man?  
 No longer left to woman's gentle care,  
 Travail is now her terror everywhere.

Once in the sick room, with an eye to fees,\*  
 Tales they get up of uterine disease ;  
 Disease, the realms of Physic never knew,  
 Till 'speculating Simpson' gave the cue ;

---

\* A correspondent has kindly communicated to us the following "over true" tale of humble life:—"A poor girl, married, at the age of sixteen, to a youth not much older than, and equally poor with, herself (so impoverished are they), fell in labour of her first child. She was living with her father and mother, and he with his, for they were too poor to keep house, and her father was an old man and paralyzed, and both generations, on both sides, were as poor as was possible, consistently with living at all. Nevertheless, the wife's mother, having known better days, was ambitious of having her daughter attended by a doctor, and, during her pregnancy, had, by one device or another, scraped together the sum of half a guinea—the doctor's fee—which was laid up in store—an uneasy possession, in the meantime, for the poor mother, whose pressing occasions often tempted her to break in upon it. Labour, at length, coming on, late at night, as usual, the chosen doctor was sent or rather gone for, and came. The girl was in considerable pain, but the doctor, after the usual examination, declared his services to be, for the present, unnecessary. The doctor, however, was not so occupied with his patient

And, working thus on woman's weaker nerves,  
 They raise whatever ghost their purpose serves.  
 Then, not the young alone, but graver dames,  
 Fooled by mere phantoms with un-English names,  
 Endure 'examinations'—Ladies, speak!  
 Do these not shock the soul and blanch the cheek?  
 Surprise comes first—next horror, ill disguised,  
 But soon to worse some get familiarized!  
 For what will trusting woman not believe  
 And bear, when 'scientific men' deceive?  
 With no suspicion of the game these play,  
 Their tales of terror haunt her night and day.

but that he was observed, by her mother, to cast sundry glances around the forlorn and desolate apartment, as if doubtful of his fee. It is but justice to the apartment to state that it fully warranted the doctor's suspicions. The doctor, however, not being wanted, as he said, went home, leaving it to be understood that he would come again. Not coming, a long time having elapsed, and the labour becoming urgent, the mother went to the doctor's house (this was the third time that, full of trouble, she traversed a mile of windy streets at midnight). Her application to the knocker was answered from the window by the doctor's wife, who stated that her husband was in bed, and meant to stay there unless his fee was paid down. In vain the poor woman urged that the fee was ready, pleading besides her daughter's extremity. 'No,' was the reply, 'if not paid then and there the doctor would not stir.' This being simply impossible, the poor woman again sought her home, which, by this time, was a scene of pain, terror, and confusion. And now, instead of the 'usurper,' the 'true prince' was first thought of in the person of an old woman in a neighbouring court, who was well spoken of, and, by her timely aid, the long protracted labour was at length terminated for the moderate fee of five shillings. So the girl did well, the mother saved five shillings and sixpence, and the doctor remains a *respectable man!*"

Now she dreads 'tumour,' now 'occlusion,' now  
 'Version' she talks of, with a 'why' and 'how.'  
 Reasons, of course, and numberless occasions,  
 Have these quick rogues for their 'manipulations.'  
 But who—immortal truth!--can justify  
 The frightful means they locally apply?  
 Caustics, that keep their patients always ill,  
 Yet ever ready to indorse their skill;  
 While abscess, ulcer, hæmorrhage itself,  
 Attest what men may CAUSE for love of self.  
 Note the result.—whatever the pretext,  
 In soul, at least, the woman is unsexed;  
 Words that of yore would make her forehead flush,  
 She now blurts out to men without a blush!  
 Heavens! how can husbands, fathers, brothers lend  
 Their countenance to such an odious end!  
 In all the *animal* kingdom, where or when  
 Were such things needed—tell us, Englishmen!  
 Of 'base chirurgery' let the world take heed,  
 For this is base chirurgery indeed!"

Dr. Ewell, in the introduction to his *Letters to Ladies*, says:—

"The serious object of my present solicitude is to wrest the practice of midwifery from the hands of men, and transfer it to women, as it was in the beginning, and ever should be. I have seldom felt a more ardent desire to succeed in any undertaking, because I view the present practice of calling on men, in ordinary births, as a source of serious evils in child-bearing; as an imposition upon the credulity of women, and upon the fears of their husbands; as a means of

sacrificing delicacy, and consequently virtue; and as a robbery of many good women of their proper employment and support.

“Several observing moralists have remarked that the practice of employing men-midwives has increased the corruption among married women. Even among the French, so prone to set aside the ceremonies between the sexes, the immorality of such exposures has been noticed. In an anecdote of Voltaire, it is related, that when a gentleman boasted to him of the birth of a son, he asked who assisted at the delivery; to the answer, ‘a man-midwife,’ he replied, ‘Then you are travelling the road to cuckoldom!’ The acutely observing historian of nature, Count Buffon, observes, virginity is a moral quality which cannot exist but with purity of heart. In the submission of women to the unnecessary examinations of physicians, exposing the secrets of nature, it is forgotten that every indecency of this kind is a violent attack against chastity; that every situation which causes an internal blush is a real prostitution. . . . .

“But the opposition, the detestation of this practice cannot be so great in any husband as among some women. The idea of it has driven some to convulsions and derangement; and every one of the least delicacy feels deeply humiliated at the exposure. Many of them, while in labour,



have been so shocked at the entrance of a man into their apartment, as to have all their pains banished; others, to the very last of their senses, suffering the severest torments, have rejected the assistance of men. To be instrumental in relieving one of this truly interesting class, will be a heavenly consolation to all who can be alive to the pleasures of serving the virtuous."

Dr. Beach, in his work on Midwifery, has the following:—

"Who shall officiate in parturition? In consequence of the practice which prevails in the present day, this has become a grave question. The physician contends, with much zeal, that it is his province to officiate. Females, he alleges, are incompetent; and these assertions of physicians have influenced the minds of females to such an extent, that they are forcibly impressed with the belief that there are no others competent; and when it is proposed to many women to employ a midwife, they appear to shrink with horror, and many even suppose that in trusting themselves to the most accomplished female accoucheur, they jeopardize their lives. . . .

"The physician takes it for granted, and even boasts, that if he can attend one single case of midwifery in a family, he has *for ever after* secured their patronage; so that both interest and prejudice operate as obstacles and barriers to any

improvement or change in the practice; and although the most fearful consequences have (occurred), and are still daily occurring, modern females cling to this unnatural practice.

“Notwithstanding, however, the existence of the above obstacles, we are well assured that females, if rightly qualified, are not only as fully capable as men, but are even more so; and, therefore, the most valid and conclusive reasons may be assigned why a reformation should take place in this department of the practice. What more conclusive than the fact of the actual attendance of women in child-birth in all nations, previous to the sixteenth century; and the attestation of competent persons during the first century of man-midwifery to the fact, that not half so many fatal cases occurred before as after the innovation. And, in the first settlement of this country (America), when females\* attended

\* Dr. Stevens mentions, that Dr. Gregory took from a gravestone in “the old burying ground” in Charlestown the following inscription:—

“Here lyes interred the body of Mrs. Elizabeth Phillips, wife to Mr. John Phillips, who was born in *Westminster*, in Great Britain, and commissioned by John, Lord Bishop of *London*, in the year 1718, to the office of a midwife, and came to this country in the year 1719, and, by the blessing of God, has brought into this world above 3,000 children.”

An obituary notice in the *Boston Liberator* of 1845, runs thus:—

“Mrs. Janet Alexander died in Boston, September 15, 1845,

exclusively on such occasions, it was as rare a fact to hear of a woman perishing in child-birth, as it is now to hear of an Indian or an animal perishing in labour, who are delivered by the unaided powers of nature."

A letter, addressed by Sir Anthony Carlisle, late President of the College of Surgeons, to the late Sir Robert Peel, on the attempt by some members of the medical profession to legalize man-midwifery, is well worthy of the perusal and consideration of our readers. The letter appeared in the *Times* newspaper, and raised a ferocious howl from the men-midwives; but the ever gullible British public looked upon the affair as a mere medical question in which it had no concern, and the howl carried the day against reason, morality, and truth:—

"SIR,—The high ministerial station which you deservedly occupy, must often expose you to the various kinds of applications respecting

after an illness of nearly four months, aged 61 years. She was a native of Scotland, and was instructed in the theory and practice of midwifery by Dr. James Hamilton, the celebrated professor of Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh. She received her diploma from him in 1817. She arrived in Boston in November, 1819, and commenced the exercise of her profession on the ensuing Christmas day; and for a period of more than twenty-five years' practice among the most intelligent and respectable portion of the community, was most singularly successful, having NEVER, IN ANY INSTANCE, LOST A PATIENT."

the condition and management of our national institutions, and also to personal or partial interference about their several real or pretended interests. In all such instances you must perceive the fairness and the ultimate advantage of preferring direct information from the respective constituted authorities, of requiring advice from rival institutions upon doubtful measures, and of regarding with jealousy the private communications of interested individuals. It is, however, reported that you are, at this time, beset upon the subject of introducing an ordeal for licensing men-midwives, by certain members of the London College of Surgeons, and that you are urged by popular men (whose wisdom and disinterestedness may be questioned) to favour their scheme with your powerful influence.

“As the prevalent vice of avarice may have some share in this professional movement, it is fit that you and the public should be acquainted with the probably concealed effects of granting the solicited privileges ; and, for the reasons already given, I am induced to address you through the press.

“Man-midwifery has only been practised in England during the last hundred years, and it was introduced as a French fashion. From the beginning it has been strongly opposed on the score of its indecency, by many distinguished

and scientific medical men; and also, because the birth of mankind appears to them to be a purely natural process, so wisely ordered, that it very rarely demands any other aid than experienced mothers can safely give. Even so late as the illustrious mother of his present majesty, that exemplary Queen was personally attended by good Mrs. Draper, without difficulties or misadventures; whereas the contrary result, under male management, in the fatal affair of the Princess Charlotte and her infant, will be long remembered.

“ If it should be asked why so many professional men addict themselves to a degrading vocation, it may be answered, that the practice of man-midwifery leads to unlimited power in every family, and thence to lucrative ends. Women, naturally timid, and ignorant of their own structure, are peculiarly exposed, during the most important office of their existence, to the persuasions or menaces of more knowing persons, and they are thence easily made to believe, that the natural and wholesome delays and pains of childbed are within the controul of medical or surgical art—an assumption which is too generally acted upon, and with unvarying evil consequences; because it is a violation of the ways of nature. Men-midwives have continually alleged that ignorant women practi-

tioners commit many fatal mistakes, and now they present similar objections against unlicensed men. If, as I believe, the safeguards of child-bed are amply provided for by nature, and that not one instance in a thousand calls for any other help beyond what any moderately experienced woman can give, why are we to license adventurers, who may seek notoriety by desperate acts, often involving manslaughter—operative acts, the moral propriety of which is very doubtful, and the time and the methods for performing them still subjects for rancorous disputes? But the present affair is not respecting the utility of men-midwives, but the impropriety of empowering any special corporate medical body to coerce the rest; to further impede female-midwives in a becoming duty, and to deprive delicate women of that great resource of self-respect. Already the prevalence of man-midwifery has driven country surgeons and apothecaries to adopt this humiliating office, and the number of women practitioners has been thence so reduced, that paupers are in many places delivered by apprentice boys under sixteen years of age. The Royal College of Physicians in London, who rank the highest for learning and decorum, have lately rescinded their admission of licentiates in midwifery, whether for considering the practice as derogatory to a physician, or

as an overweening privilege towards females and children, is not avowed; but it seems that no London physician, educated at Oxford or Cambridge, has yet condescended to be a man-midwife. The Royal Colleges of Surgeons in London, in Dublin, and in Edinburgh, have likewise hitherto renounced every connexion with man-midwifery.

“The teachers of midwifery are indiscriminately doctors and surgeons; but at this moment the majority of lecturers and superintendents of lying-in charities are physicians, while a multitude of legally appointed sub-physicians (styled apothecaries) are equally entitled, with the other classes of the faculty, to establish tribunals for examining and licensing candidates for man-midwifery, if they should deem it expedient. Finally, it may be noted, that the different classes of men-midwives have never yet agreed among themselves to adopt a common ordeal for certifying the qualifications of their calling, and you may be assured, Sir, that many worldly interests will rage against the establishment of any monopoly of this kind in any single institution, because man-midwifery is the covert way to medical fortunes. If, however, the greediness of a few individuals should expose this subject to free discussion, and the judgment of married men and modest women should be copiously

awakened, perhaps the general custom of employing women may be again resorted to, and their competent instruction publicly enforced.

“ It is said, that our changeable neighbours at Paris are already tired of their fashionable freak; and when our countrywomen reflect, that not one in ten thousand of their sex throughout the globe allow of the presence of a man during the rites of child-bed, they may acquire courage, and unite their efforts to replace the routine of midwifery among themselves. I will not offend you and the public by any observations upon the outrageous stories collected on this occasion, to prove the violent and fatal injuries committed by unlicensed men-midwives, because I think the privilege sought for would increase those evils.

“ With the greatest respect, I have the honour to be, your very obedient Servant,

“ ANTHONY CARLISLE.

“ *Langham-place, Feb. 19.*”

“ In a recent number of the *North British Review* appeared an excellent article on ‘The Employment of Women;’ under the head of women doctors, the writer says: ‘ But the something practical—where is it?’ We believe that a great deal, which is very practical, is scattered over this article. But we have still some further suggestions to offer. Not very long ago, a state-



ment 'went the round of the papers,' to the effect that there were already eight diplomated female physicians practising in Boston (U. S.), and that there were thirty-eight students in the Female Medical College. 'Whenever,' says an American writer, 'there are sufficient data to establish the truth (now little if at all disputed in America), that child-birth is freed from its worst difficulties and dangers when the unnatural presence of men is dispensed with, the medical and surgical care of women and children will pass into the hands for which nature designed it.' There would appear to be nothing very unreasonable in this, but, on the contrary, something extremely rational and hopeful. But see how the facts stated above are received by the faculty in England. The leading medical journal of this country thus comments upon them:—

“ ‘Female physic thrives apace in America. At Boston, where Columbia gave birth to the young Constitution, which is now sowing its wild oats broadcast, there is a female medical college, numbering thirty-eight students. A grant of government money has also been voted towards establishing a similar institution at New York. This is to be under the immediate superintendence of Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D., late of St. Bartholomew's, with a bevy of those spinsters mentioned by Shakespeare as free

“maids who weave their threads with bones” for anatomical demonstrators.

“At Boston, moreover, there are eight doctresses with diplomas in full practice. We suppose some of these female physicians are married, and this involves a great social mystery of which we have as yet received no account. When the Mrs. M.D.’s are attending to patients in their boudoirs of consultation, or pointing out pathological nicknacks in their anatomical drawing-rooms, or going their rounds with stethoscopes in their bonnets, what are their husbands doing? Do they superintend the perambulators, or are these hitched on to the professional broughams of their mammas? Is it a part of the husband’s marital duty to manage the nursery—in short, to attend to the domestic affairs generally? Perhaps matrimony is ignored altogether. Indeed, we do not well see how a conscientious doctress could promise to love, honour, and obey a husband who might order her to give her patients a dose of strychnia all round.’

“Surely this is not the way to deal with so grave a question. Argument must be wanting, or the sneer would not be resorted to by so distinguished an authority. The same questions as are here put might be employed also to write down any description of independent female labour. When women go out to teach drawing

or music, or when they attend to shops, or make caps and bonnets, gowns or mantles, what, it may be asked, are their husbands doing? Attending to their own business, if they have any, or living on their wives' earnings, Mantalini-like, if they have not. We do not mean to say that there are no practical difficulties in the way of the effectual working of this scheme. Objections will readily suggest themselves; but they are not insuperable objections. All women may not be fit for such work. But all men are not fit for it. Many women will lack the necessary amount of nerve; but many men lack it also. In difficulty and danger women have great presence of mind. They are often calm and collected where men are unhinged and unbalanced, and incapable of exertion. Women have more tenderness and more patience, and they must necessarily understand many female ailments better than men. They will always have one great advantage over male practitioners—female patients will be more unreserved in their communications to them. Many women have been sacrificed to their delicacy—to their repugnance to state fully their ailments to men-doctors; perhaps even to call them in until it is too late. Let such objections as these be fairly balanced against those which may be adduced against

female practitioners, and let us calmly consider the average result.

“ We do not pretend to know, under the existing order of things in Great Britain, what proportion of children are annually brought into the world without the assistance of any male practitioner. But we know that in humble life it is very common to employ only a nurse or midwife. And we do not believe that, under such circumstances, more dangerous cases of parturition occur than where men are professionally employed. But if such were the case, if the number of deaths or injuries were proportionately greater, no argument could be derived from the fact against the employment of educated and diplomatized women. If, in the present state of things, accidents arise from the absence of men, it is not on account of the sex, but on account of the ignorance of the practitioner. The same amount of knowledge, as indicated by the diploma, existing in both cases, we cannot help thinking that the advantage, in most cases, will be on the side of the female attendant.

“ We might pursue this subject much further; but time and space have alike narrowed to a small compass, and we have by no means exhausted our notes. In the early part of this paper we

have touched on the subject of nurses, but rather in connexion with amateur than with professional labour. Many women of a better kind might find profitable employment in this path of life; and if licenses, or diplomas of an inferior class, indicating a certain amount of medical and physiological knowledge, were granted to them, the business would not be beneath the adoption of women of birth and education. *But here again, perhaps, the jealousy and selfishness of men would step in and thwart our efforts; for the presence of such educated nurses would often render it wholly unnecessary to call in a regular practitioner at all.*—*North British Review*, No. LII. page 333.

“Among the highly civilized and numberless ladies and women of China\* and the East,” says

\* “We may, with tolerable safety, estimate the present population of the Chinese Empire as between 350,000,000, and 400,000,000 of human beings. The constant flow of emigration from China, contrasted with the complete absence of immigration into China, is striking evidence of the redundancy of the population; for though that emigration is almost wholly confined to two provinces, namely, Kwangtung and Fookein, representing together a population of probably from 34,000,000, to 35,000,000, I am disposed to think, that a number nearer 3,000,000 than 2,000,000 from these provinces alone, is located in foreign countries. In the kingdom of Siam it is estimated that there are at least 1,500,000 Chinese, of which 200,000 are in the capital (Bankok). They crowd all the islands of the Indian Archipelago. In Java, we know by a correct census, there are 136,000.

Sir Anthony Carlisle, "ordinary matrons are universally employed in the sanctuary of child-birth: and they would revolt with horror from any proposal to admit the presence of a man." This statement, coming, as it does, from such a high authority, when inveighing against the needless outrage upon the modesty of women, which we commit by the employment of men-midwives, cuts from under them the argument of the interested professors of "the art," who would have us believe, that British women, from the peculiarities of the climate, and a high state of civilization, are more liable to accident and danger in the parturient state, than the women of those countries in which the *fashion* of man-midwifery is unknown.

Even Robertson, one of themselves, is compelled to admit, that any argument based upon climatic influence is fallacious, and easily capable of disproof, for he says, in his apology for the

Cochin China teems with Chinese. In this colony we are seldom without one, two, or three vessels taking Chinese emigrants to California and other places. Multitudes go to Australia, to the Philippines, to the Sandwich Islands, to the Western Coast of Central and Southern America, some have made their way to British India. The emigration to the British West Indies has been considerable; to the Havannah greater still. The annual arrivals in Singapore are estimated at an average of 10,000, and 20,000 is the number that are said annually to return to China."—*Sir John Bowring.*

study of midwifery as a science:—"In reply to such a statement as this (Sir Anthony Carlisle's), it has been common to argue that, in warm countries, the parts concerned in admitting the passage of the child are so relaxed, that labour becomes comparatively easy; and that hence we are to account for the nonemployment of accoucheurs. This is a very false view of the subject. In warm countries, whose inhabitants live after the same manner as ourselves, parturition is in no degree easier than it is here. In the town of Sierra Leone, so near the equator as latitude 8° north, we are assured by Dr. Winterbottom, who resided there, that having been present at a number of labours, they in every respect resemble those of women in the same situation of life in England. "I have met," says he, "with instances in England where the fœtus was expelled with more ease than I ever knew it to be at Sierra Leone." . . . .

"The prophetic writings of the Old Testament furnish many allusions to painful parturition. The Jews inhabited a warm climate; and yet, were we to judge of parturition among them from the frequent reference the prophets make to it in figures and similes, when predicting the sufferings to be produced by impending judgments, we should conclude that in no people was nature's sorrow more severe. Thus, Jeremiah,

the coming miseries of Judah passing before his vision, exclaims:—‘I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the *anguish* as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands.’ A multitude of passages containing a similar allusion might be cited. In the historical part of the Scriptures, too, there is incidental mention of several cases in which parturition proved fatal. So much for the relaxing influence of a warm climate! a notion which, like various others respecting the influence of climate on the human system, is at variance with facts.”

Among the myriad peoples inhabiting the vast Continent which, in the aggregate, we term India, men-midwives are unknown. There have been, no doubt, attempts made by Europeans to introduce the abominable custom, but we believe, excepting in some of the towns most frequented by them, without any considerable success. As the inhabitants of Tahiti, and the isles of the Pacific, once the abode and very Paradise of nature in her glorious perfection, have found to their cost, so we fear in all other portions of the world’s surface, where our boasted civilization has set its foot, the evils which accompany its progress invariably take precedence, and largely preponderate over its advantages. Wherefore



should we add to the primal curse fulminated against woman, irrespective of locality or race, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," a far greater one in the ruin of her modesty, by the introduction of man into the sanctuary hallowed by his absence from the beginning of the world. O ye fine ladies of England, who talk so glibly of all the virtues, and blazon your moral excellencies before the nations! if ye will not take example from the highly civilized and numberless ladies and women of China and the East, learn from the poor savage, in whom, though doomed to the lowest grade of earth's inhabitants, there yet glows fresh from Heaven, like a pure star gleaming through the night of heathenism, that loveliest attribute of woman—modesty. Over that mysterious rite which God has confided to the female sex, the rude, wild, cruel, ignorant, uncivilized, naked, idol-worshipping natives of New Holland, throw a veil impenetrable to man. Robertson says, page 480, "Among them (the New Hollanders) a man is not permitted to approach where parturition is going on." There are, however, rare and beautiful exceptions to that accursed fashion which now so debases the women of this country; for we have undoubted authority for stating that "there are ladies, and ladies of rank, titled ladies, who would not let a man near them." In these

bright examples propriety still finds a refuge; in their chaste minds the light of reason and refinement shines with a fair and unsullied ray amidst the gloom of apathetic indecency, which shrouds in its cold and clammy cerements so many of their sex. All honour to those true-hearted women who so proudly uphold their native modesty, their sex's loveliest charm, above the rank pollution which, in these sensuous and degenerate days, infects the sanctuary of marriage.\*

Among the Jews, the peculiar people, guarded and preserved so wondrously by the Providence of God, from the day that Israel went down into Egypt with three score and ten souls, until they had multiplied "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore," no such violation of decency was permitted or required to insure the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. We learn that females were regularly authorized and appointed as midwives, for the Sacred writings give us the names of two of them: "And the King of Egypt spake to the

\* "Notwithstanding all our affectation of superior delicacy, and our reprehension of the coarse manners of our ancestors, we suspect that they would have been shocked at the idea of the *indelicate* and *unnecessary* presence of a man in the sanctuary of the lying-in room."—*Plea for Physicians, Fraser's Magazine*, March, 1848.

Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the King of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. And the King of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharoah, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that He made them houses." We know also that there were physicians in those days, for "Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel." Now, it is most certain that if the great protecting power of the Jews—the father of his people, had deemed it necessary or proper, for the safety of mothers or of offspring, to afford any assistance beyond that which nature and the midwife supplied, it would have been so ordained, and as

surely mentioned by the great historian and leader of the Israelites, or by some other of the sacred writers; but of this there is no sign whatever, and we must, therefore, infer that this innovation was not so much as thought of by the Jews, highly civilized and vicious people as they were, and that it was reserved for us, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, to permit such a scandalous breach of decorum as the prostitution of our wives to the impure touch of a *man-midwife*. Robertson says, in his Apology —“ But an objector will ask, cannot a matron practise these expedients? and if so, where is the use or propriety of such a class as men-midwives? I reply, doubtless a matron may practise many of the expedients referred to, if they have been taught her. It is of the value of midwifery as a science, originating with and practised by men, compared with matron or uncultivated midwifery, of which I have been speaking. A certain proportion of instructed female midwives in a community may, for aught I know, be a benefit.” Let the reader mark, learn, and inwardly digest these words! Here is the admission of an accoucheur of the present day, confirming the words of Roussel, and the many other authorities whom we have quoted, as to the fitness of women for the practice of the expedients necessary in midwifery, and, further,

a most important acknowledgment, as coming from one of his class, that females, properly instructed as midwives, would be a benefit to society. To be sure they would! Who doubts it? And is there not enough of wealth, and energy, and right feeling in England to say— We will that there shall be in every community properly instructed midwives; we will that there shall be organized, in all our great towns, schools of midwifery for the instruction of women,\* who shall go forth from them fully competent in “nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand,” to perform that office which is now, from their sex, so indecently performed by men. The instruction of midwives has nothing of novelty in it: women are so instructed in the Dublin Lying-in Hospital, at this day, and we believe† that they are so instructed at Manchester and in London; they “walk the hospital,” as

\* “An institution such as I have in my mind, should be a place where women could obtain a sort of professional education under professors of the other sex,—for men are the best instructors of women;—where they might be trained as hospital and village nurses, visitors of the poor, and teachers in the elementary and reformatory schools,” &c.—*Mrs. Jameson's “Sisters of Charity,”* page 116.

† Robertson says, “In speaking of the small mortality in child-bed among the poor, I limit my remark to those of this community (Manchester), who have long had the advantage of being attended chiefly by midwives carefully trained and educated in connexion with our Lying-in Charity.”—*Pag. 437.*

the term is, for six months, and at the end of that time they receive a "diploma;" but there is a jealousy on the part of the accoucheurs, who fear, naturally enough, that their trade (a very lucrative one\*) might be injured if these women should assume too much responsibility, and the consequences of this jealousy† are injurious to the full and complete instruction and competency of the "nurses."‡

\* We have heard that the almost incredible sum of five hundred guineas has been paid as a fee to one of the fashionable "ladies' doctors:" and that another caused it to be understood that he would not take a less fee than fifty guineas, whereupon the number of patients soliciting his attendance increased a hundred fold.

† We know a case in point, where a lady was anxious to engage a midwife who had been recommended to her as perfectly competent to perform her office without the intervention of the *man*-midwife, but the latter would not hear of this, and insisted on the substitution of one of his "own nurses." It is easy to perceive the reason of this manœuvre. Had the original midwife attended, she would have undertaken the operation, and the importance of the *man*-midwife would have been materially lessened. The lady's delicacy and comfort were not of sufficient weight to counterbalance this consideration. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

‡ "In 1848 sixty-one mothers died to every 10,000 children born alive. Since that year the mortality has progressively declined, as follows:—58, 55, 53, 52, 50, down to 47 in 1854. This is a gratifying result, and there can be no doubt that by further care and skill, especially by training up a class of educated nurses, the deaths in child-birth may be largely reduced from their present high number, 3009."—*Medical Times and Gazette.*

These nurses are very much in the power of the accoucheurs, for it is principally through the latter's recommendation that they obtain employment, at least among the upper classes, and the evils which arise from this state of things are fatal to the interests of morality. *The nurse is afraid to act without the man-midwife*, not because she is incompetent, for she has walked the hospital and has her diploma of efficiency, but because it essentially concerns the *man-midwife* to play the principal part, in order that the belief in the necessity for his presence and *assistance* should not, by any act of hers, be shaken; such is their jealousy on this head, that we have known the *man-midwife*, on arriving too late to be present at the birth, roundly rate the nurse of his own appointment for not having sent for him sooner, although the case was of the most ordinary description, and great additional ease of mind and general comfort were experienced by the patient, through the absence of the doctor.\*

\* So far from the presence of a *man-midwife* being a source of consolation or assurance to the sufferer, as Dr. Ramsbotham alleges, we have it on the authority of a lady, the mother of many children, that on three occasions, when the "doctor" *was not present*, her labours were much easier, and in all respects more thoroughly natural and happy in their results; than on those in which the *man-midwife* officiated; and further, *that the very ring of the bell announcing the arrival of the hated accoucheur has frequently "put back" the pains of labour.*

The nurses in their six months' training at the hospital learn much, however, that is useful to them in their own after-practice, for many of them are employed by the humbler classes from motives of economy, and we would fain believe of delicacy also. Through one of these nurses we have learnt the frightful indignities to which the poor hospital patients are sometimes subjected. A difficult case of labour, as it is termed, occurs, the wretched victim is stripped naked, candles are placed around the bed, and the students assemble in crowds, perched on ladders and benches, to watch the progress of the labour, and the manipulations of the operator. O God! that in a Christian land, in our boasted Britain, priding herself on her civilization and proprieties, such orgies, which would raise a blush amidst the rites of devils, should disgrace the name of science!

We have said that women are admitted as pupils at the Lying-in Hospital in Dublin, and that after a six months' probation they obtain a diploma: but, as they are never permitted to operate in any but ordinary cases, it cannot be intended that their education should obviate the necessity for the employment of accoucheurs. Now we would suggest, that instead of this partial instruction they should be afforded ample opportunity for acquiring a perfect knowledge



of the expedients necessary for overcoming the difficulties of their profession; that, instead of dismissing them at the end of six months, they should be retained until they are sufficiently instructed to be able with confidence and facility to undertake those extreme cases which are now reserved to men. No man of intelligence, who reflects on this subject, will for a moment doubt that where nicety of touch and delicacy of handling are required, the female organization is more perfectly adapted for them than that of men; and when we consider the delicate duties to be performed in midwifery, we cannot but think (and the thought will find an echo in the minds of thousands) that woman, and woman alone, is both morally and physically fitted for the office.\* It may possibly be urged by the men-midwives, that, if they were to be deprived

\* Before we laugh at this short-sighted folly and cruelty, which supposes that the interests of the two sexes can possibly be antagonistic, instead of being inseparably bound up together, we must recollect that we have had some specimens of the same feeling in our own country, as, for instance, the opposition to the female school at Marlborough House, and the steady opposition of the inferior part of the medical profession to all female practitioners. That some departments of medicine are peculiarly suited to women, is beginning to strike the public mind. I know that there are enlightened and distinguished physicians both here and in France who take this view of the subject, though the medical profession as a body entertain a peculiar dread of all innovation, which they resist with as much passive pertinacity as

of their ordinary practice, and to be superseded by women, in all cases of labour in which no extraordinary difficulty presented itself, they would not be so well prepared to operate when accident might call for their interference. We may in all justice reply, what is that to us? see ye to that; are we to prostitute our wives to your impure touchings, "manipulations," tentatives, and experiments, in nine hundred and ninety-nine needless cases, in order to afford you the requisite experience for the thousandth? We trow not; and the science of surgery must indeed be at a low ebb if, when occasion requires, there are not to be found men of that noble profession who could undertake with success any needful operation.

In former times the difficulties in certain cases of parturition, which are now trumpeted forth by the writers on man-midwifery "with all the pomp and state of academic learning," were easily overcome by discreet and experienced women, who, although innocent of physical, classical, or mathematical science, knew full well how to operate

Boards of Guardians and London Corporations."—*Mrs. Jameson's "Communion of Labour,"* p. 40.

"When educated gentlemen set an example of selfishness and exclusiveness, it is only to be expected that the working classes should follow it, and so the greed of man is the degradation of woman."—*North British Review*, No. 52, p. 337.

when necessity called for their intervention. We find the following passage in Albertus Magnus:—  
 “Whence it is to be known that in some women there is greater suffering than in others, because in some it happens that the fœtus sometimes presents a hand, and sometimes a foot, all which are hurtful. Then the midwives carefully thrust back the fœtus, and hence great pain is produced, so that many women, unless very robust, are weakened even to death,” &c. Then, after describing the effect of an accident which sometimes occurred even with the more appropriate assistance of the female hand, but which\* *if the truth was known*, since the invention of instruments has probably been of much greater frequency, he continues: “Then discreet midwives use a certain ointment, anointing the vulva, because the womb is often injured and wounded in the vulva, and therefore it is necessary that discreet women and experienced in this operation should

\* “According to Osborne’s testimony, instruments are used *dangerously* in parturition, *one thousand one hundred and seventy-six times* in every twelve hundred cases; and the same author, in his reprobation of Denman’s culpable and inconsiderate introduction of them into practice, makes this memorable remark: ‘I must believe that he must have forgotten **THE MANY UNHAPPY EFFECTS** which have come from their use to our mutual knowledge, even when they had been in the hands of very experienced and skilful men.’—*The Author of “The Death-blow to Man-midwifery,”* quoting Osborne’s “*Essays.*”

be employed in delivery.\* But this I have learnt from some women, that when the fœtus presents its head in the outlet, then the business fares well, because then the other members follow without difficulty, and an easy labour is the result."†

To the casual reader who has the curiosity to wade through the filthy and disgusting details of the ponderous tomes on obstetricity, for the most part garnished with engravings at which "purity must blush and licentiousness may gloat," and who incontinently pins his faith upon the dogmas thereof, it will seem absolutely incomprehensible how unit after unit, of millions on millions numberless, who have peopled earth, contrived to see the light, from the days of our general mother Eve, until that happy hour when first "obstetric science" flashed upon the world, and by its magic touch scattering the dreams of a primeval curse, vouchsafed its "art" to teach poor feeble ineffectual nature how to act.

\* "The conduct of medical men in all former ages proves still farther that which we would establish (that the profession of man-midwife is repugnant to nature). If they required information on the state of their female patients, it was to the midwives they applied. The midwife, therefore, passed for the eye of the doctor, because it was through her ministration that he assured himself of what he neither committed to his own examination or to that of another man."—*Hecquet "De l'Indecence aux Hommes d'accoucher les Femmes,"* page 6.

† Albertus Magnus de Secretis Mulierum. *Ed. Amst.* 1662, p. 85.

One result of the frightful tissue of imaginable and unimaginable horrors contained in these books, is that almost every woman in the upper and middle classes believes that the chances are ten to one in favour of a "cross birth;" the nurse, instead of relieving her fears, rather confirms them, and on the strength of that understanding which always prevails between the nurse and the *man*-midwife, she takes care to impress upon the sufferer, wrought up to a pitiable state of nervous excitement, that nothing but the beastly manipulations of the "doctor" can render the labour successful.

Women, while suffering under the severe pangs of parturition, most frequently lose much of that natural delicacy belonging to the sex, and at the moment when terror and anxiety overrule every other feeling, the *man*-midwife approaches, and offers to the trembling victim that disgusting insult, the examination *per vaginam*; an inquest both morally and physically injurious to the patient, and utterly needless, from the information previously obtained by the female attendant.

Furthermore, these men well know that "one fool makes many," and that the more they are able to convince the public of the dangers and difficulties of child-birth, the more sure are they of an unfailing trade in the practice of *man*-midwifery. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute,*

and when they had successfully achieved one generation of patients, the rest was easy; all henceforward was plain sailing; the mothers, despite the qualms of outraged delicacy, once convinced that their safety had been dependent on the skill of the *man*-midwife, the daughters, as a matter of course, followed in their wake; the idea, if perchance it occurred, of the indecency of the act, being promptly set at rest by the recollection that their mothers had done the same. Thus a kind of freemasonry is established between the *men*-midwives and women, which, from its very nature, cannot be free from gross impropriety, and is sometimes attended with most pernicious consequences, of which the husband is kept in entire ignorance.\* It is a common occurrence in ordinary life to see the *man*-midwife seated as a guest at your dinner-table, or as a morning visitor in your wife's drawing-room, who perhaps but a few weeks before may

\* The *man*-midwife usually intimates his wish to make the examination *per vaginam*, through the medium of the nurse of his own recommendation, and should the patient, struck with the daring impropriety of his request, desire to inform her husband of the infamous proposal, the nurse dissuades her by saying, that "husbands are not supposed to understand these things," and that she will probably destroy both her own life, and that of her child, by refusing to submit to it! After this the accoucheur soon triumphs, the examination is effected without further remonstrance, and the victim is irretrievably entangled in his insidious toils.

have informed himself both by *touch* and *sight* of all the inmost secrets of her person, who knows as well as you do yourself every hidden charm which she possesses. Faugh! the very thought is gall and wormwood, and outraged delicacy demands instant and eternal redress.

Sir Anthony Carlisle, late President of the Royal College of Surgeons, assures us that childbirth, like parturition in the lower animals, is purely a natural process, the safety of which Divine Providence has most wisely secured; and consequently that it is always mischievous to tamper with pregnant women, under the pretence of hastening, easing, or retarding their delivery. Robertson, in allusion to the above, says—"If this be correct, it follows of course that midwifery is no science, but a presumptuous fraud."\* Again he says, "Admitting, as I do, not that ninety-nine in a hundred, but that a large proportion of labours, say nineteen out of twenty, would terminate well under the eye of an intelligent nurse, were they left *solely* to the energies of nature,"† &c.; and again, "I have admitted that a considerable proportion of labours would do well, unaided, under the eye of a nurse," &c.‡ Dr. Johnson says—"The ordinary

\* Robertson, Apology, page 470.

† Robertson, page 486.

‡ Ibid. page 489.

treatment of women in child-bed is irrational, indefensible, and most preposterously foolish. Nothing can be more absurd. Childbirth is not a disease! It is simply the performance of a natural function, like eating, drinking, &c., yet we treat it as though it were some formidable and dangerous malady. Dr. Conquest, a London accoucheur of repute, says—' Child-birth is that natural process by which the womb expels its contents, and returns to the condition in which it was previously. I call it a natural process; and in my opinion no sentiment is more pregnant with mischief, than the opinion which almost universally prevails, that this process is inevitably one of difficulty and danger. I am well aware that some degree of suffering is connected with child-birth; and this applies equally to the whole animal creation, whether human or brute, though the former suffer more than the latter, *because the habits of brutes are less unnatural.* That the suffering of women during child-birth is referrible, in a great degree, to their artificial habits of life, and not to their form and make, is evident from a variety of circumstances. History, in all ages of the world, establishes this position. What made the striking difference between the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians, of whom it is said: " The Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are



delivered ere the midwives come in unto them?" What, I would ask, made the marked difference in the labours of these two classes of women, but the plain, simple, and industrious habits of the Hebrews, as contrasted with the effeminacy, and luxurious living of the Egyptians? Look into more modern history, and you will see the same fact established again and again. I could mention innumerable proofs, but a few must suffice.

“ ‘The celebrated traveller, Bruce, says, that the Abyssinian women retire by themselves, and go through the process of child-birth with so much ease and expedition, that they do not confine themselves a day after labour, but return to their usual occupations immediately.

“ ‘The same simplicity, expedition, and freedom from danger, attend this natural process amongst the natives in most parts of Asia, Africa, the West Indies, and America, where the mode of living among the natives is more simple and abstemious, and their occupations and general habits more laborious, than in more civilized countries.

“ ‘The Moorish women have no midwives, but are usually alone at the time of delivery, lying on the ground under an indifferent tent. They will even travel, on the same day, a distance of fifteen or twenty miles.

“ ‘In Morocco the women suffer so little, that

they frequently go through the duties of the house on the day after their delivery, with the child on their back.

“ ‘ One respectable traveller assures us, that with the native Africans labour is so easy, and trusted so entirely to nature, that no one knows of its existence till the woman appears at the door of the hut with the child.

“ ‘ Another, equally respectable, tells us, that as soon as an American Indian woman bears a child, she *goes into the water and immerses it and herself.*\* One evening he asked an Indian where his wife was: he replied: “I suppose she has gone into the woods to set a trap for birds.” In about an hour she returned with a new-born infant in her arms, and holding it up exclaimed: “Here, Englishman, here is a young warrior!” Were it necessary, many more instances might be brought forward. But it has been said, this occurs only in warm climates, where the heat

\* “The moon had gathered oft her monthly store  
Of light, and oft in darkness left the sky,  
Since Monnema a growing burthen bore  
Of life and hope. The appointed weeks go by,  
And now her hour is come, and none is nigh  
To help; but human help she needed none.  
A few short throes, endured with scarce a cry,  
Upon the bank she laid her new-born son,  
Then slid into the stream, and bathed, and all was done.”  
*Southey's Tale of Paraguay.*

relaxes the parts concerned in parturition. This objection is not consistent with truth, for the natives of Livonia, and the savages of North America, retire to some private place, and return immediately after their delivery to their customary work; and the Greenlanders do all their common business just before, and very soon after their labour, and a still-born or deformed child is seldom seen or heard of among them. Still further to establish the assertion that human parturition is not necessarily a process of danger, we know that in this country servant girls, who become illegitimately pregnant, very often absent themselves for an hour or two, and, after giving birth to a child, return to the discharge of their household duties immediately.\* It is, therefore, obvious that the difficulty and danger that so often attend child-bearing in civilized society,†

\* See Rousset, *ante*.

† What will the men-midwives, with all their precautionary humbug, say to this?

“On the 3rd of June, 1857, at Moradabad, amid the terrors of mutiny, the wife of Captain M. B. W——, Bengal Native Infantry, gave birth to a son, and on the same day, with all the officers and their families, escaped to Nynee Tal, a hill station distant about sixty-five miles, which they reached in safety on the 5th instant at 11 a.m. They fled with only the clothes on their backs, having been plundered of everything.”—*Correspondent of the Times*.

Well might this English lady exclaim with the Indian mother, “Here, Englishmen, here is a young warrior!”

are attributable, principally, to *unnatural customs and habits of living*, in which women, in this and other countries, indulge from their infancy,\* and which operate by preventing the constitution from acquiring its proper firmness and vigour, and by producing a weak, feeble, and irritable state of body, &c." Dr. Johnson adds: "This is the language of Dr. Conquest—a metropolitan accoucheur physician of much eminence—a man who, from the long and successful practice of his profession, has deservedly acquired wealth and distinction—a man, therefore, who can afford to be honest—a man who, unlike Archdeacon Paley, can afford to keep a conscience. With those, therefore, who put their trust in authority rather than in the light of their own reason—that is to say, with nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of every thousand—the opinions of such a man as Dr. Conquest cannot fail to have more than ordinary weight."†

In the foregoing pages we have sought to

\* There cannot be a doubt that the habit of wearing stays is as injurious to the internal organization of women as it is to their external form. Physiologists are well aware of this, yet European women are so enslaved by custom, that we see them tightening up their daughters, from very infancy, in a framework of iron and bone, until their bodies assume the shape which the corset-maker chooses, instead of that which nature, in the perfection of her knowledge, would bestow.

† Diseases of Women, by E. Johnson, M.D.

place before our readers, in the clearest light, the opinions of Roussel and other eminent men, touching the practice of man-midwifery; opinions the force and truth of which, based as they are upon principles of the purest morality, and the sound doctrines of physical science, cannot be controverted or denied. We have shown that the Royal College of Physicians, so lately as the year 1827, designated the practice of *man*-midwifery as "an art foreign to the habits of gentlemen of enlarged academical education," and one which might safely be entrusted to discreet matrons. We have, in confirmation of these opinions, quoted the sentiments expressed by Sir Anthony Carlisle, late President of the College of Surgeons, who styles the boasted "art" "a pretence," and accoucheurs "mere nurses." We have proved, by the admission of men-midwives themselves, that the great majority of cases of midwifery would do well under the eye of a nurse, and that skilled midwives would be a benefit in every community. We have before our eyes the example of France with her schools of midwifery; and against the arguments and dispassionate opinions of men of the highest rank in the medical profession, mooted as they have been at various times, and in different countries, yet all tending to the same conclusion, we find absolutely nothing but the self-interested

doctrine of an anomalous class\* of medical men, whose policy it is, for the furtherance of their own selfish views, to decry the powers of nature, and to abrogate the employment of females in the sanctuary of child-birth; a doctrine which suffers its disciples, regardless of all delicacy, and in defiance of the contempt of their professional brethren, to prey upon the weakness and natural timidity of the sex, and with presumptuous indecency to arrogate to themselves duties proper only to women; a doctrine which, while it deals an irreparable blow† at the very heart of

\* "The most natural proof that, in the first ages of the world, the *man*-midwife (*accoucheur*) was unknown, is, that there is no word whatsoever in the mother or original tongues to signify this profession in a man, whereas that which signifies a midwife (*accoucheuse*) is found in all languages."—*Hecquet de l'Indecence aux Hommes d'accoucher les Femmes*," p. 1.

† Let any man who disputes this position peruse the case of D— against D—, in Robertson's Reports of Cases in the Ecclesiastical Courts, a terrible picture of conjugal contention and wretchedness in high life, all clearly attributable to the *accoucheur*, who insisted upon the husband leaving the lying-in chamber, and influenced the wife, fatally for her husband's peace and her own, to concur in his exclusion. A more flagrant instance of medical presumption and insolence could not readily be found.

"Here then," says Sir Herbert Jenner Fust, in his judgment, "is the clue to everything that subsequently took place—an end of all that happiness and comfort which might have been expected to attend the union between these parties."

The archives of the law would afford the inquirer many a fearful example of similar evils consequent on the unnatural and sinful practice of *man*-midwifery.

every family, threatens with destruction virtue, modesty, and honour.

Husbands, fathers, countrymen, **THINK OF THESE THINGS!**

We do most heartily believe that if, unbiassed by the self-interested and fraudulent assertions of quackery and empiricism, you would exert your own reasoning powers on the question, the doom of this abuse would soon be sealed. But as, in many another usage which men individually admit to be blots in that high state of civilization to which we have advanced, our apathy overcomes our desire for their correction, and we let them pass; so, because this wrong has forced its prostituting influence through the length and breadth of the land, magnified and sustained as it is by the terrorism of treatises, and the artistic display of its abettors, despite the warnings of our consciences, we yield ourselves to its guidance, we dare not lift up the veil which conceals its abominations, and even fear, cowards that we are, to question its privileges, privileges which a "damned custom" has accorded; privileges the very thought of which should make the blood curdle in our veins with disgust and horror! For if we for a moment reflect upon the precepts laid down in the indecent farragos of "obstetric science," and further upon the fact, that these precepts are invariably carried into

effect, whenever the "patient" can be induced to submit to the outrages therein enjoined, we must acknowledge that in all such cases purity itself can oppose no effectual barrier to these insidious assaults, and that modesty must fly from the chamber when the *man*-midwife crosses its threshold.

O hateful, horrible thought! that the young bride, radiant with joyous innocence, and love's glowing fantasies, "beautiful exceedingly," and pure as fair, must in a few short months, in blind obedience to a spurious custom, yield herself to the pollution of a stranger's *touch*, and banish for ever from her husband's soul that dear delicious dream, entirety of possession!

This is no exaggerated picture, no overstrained description of that mortal stain which rends into very shreds the charm of delicacy; but a simple truth, a terrible reality, not to be glozed over by the fallacious reasonings of frigid philosophy. O men! if you have the souls of men, if one drop of the old chivalrous blood of your ancestors yet palpitates in your veins, if you have not irrecoverably bowed down to the idol custom, if mammon, lust of gain and power, with all the fell catalogue of vicious inclinations, have left but one cell unoccupied in your heart's mansion, if you yet hold woman to be the fairest, purest, best of the Creator's works; oh! let the



cry of "out damned spot," rise heavenward from every home in the United Kingdom; let sacred purity once more assert her rights, let nature's illimitable powers do their work unaided, undefiled by the sordid infamy of charlatanism, and future generations shall gratefully invoke unnumbered blessings on the memory of those who saved the daughters of England from the curse of a cruel degradation.

THE END.







25.A.4.33

COUNTWAY LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

RG  
950  
M79  
1857

