

**RESEARCHES ON THE
PATHOLOGY AND TREATMENT
OF SOME
OF THE MOST IMPORTANT
DISEASES OF WOMEN, PP. 1-220**

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RESEARCHES
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THE MOST IMPORTANT
DISEASES OF WOMEN.

BY

ROBERT LEE, M.D. F.R.S.

PHYSICIAN-ACCOCHEUR TO THE BRITISH LYING-IN HOSPITAL AND
THE SAINT MARY-LE-BONE INFIRMARY; — LECTURER ON
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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

By the Author,

TO HIS EARLIEST BENEFACTOR

AND MOST REVERED FRIEND,

SIR GILBERT BLANE, BART. M.D. F.R.S.

WHO HAS, FOR UPWARDS OF HALF A CENTURY,

DEVOTED HIS TALENTS TO

THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEDICAL SCIENCE.

PART I.

ON PUERPERAL FEVER

AND

CRURAL PHLEBITIS.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE PATHOLOGY OF PUERPERAL FEVER.

THE term "puerperal fever" has been employed for upwards of a century, to designate the most fatal inflammatory disease to which child-bed women are liable. The name is now generally adopted by medical writers, and is considered to be synonymous with the terms, Puerperal Peritonitis, Child-bed Fever, Peritoneal Fever, or the Epidemic Disease of Lying-in Women.

The records of medicine afford indubitable evidence, that puerperal or child-bed women have, from the most remote periods of antiquity, been liable to attacks of this destructive affection. In the works, however, of the earlier authors, its history is short and imperfect: and, it is probable, that the disease did not attract the particular attention of physicians, before the middle of the seventeenth century, when it oc-

curred as a malignant epidemic in the lying-in wards of the Hotel Dieu. Since that period, it has often occurred in the principal cities and lying-in hospitals of Europe.

Most vague and contradictory opinions have hitherto prevailed respecting the nature and treatment of this disease. Inflammation of the peritoneum, omentum, or other of the abdominal viscera, has by some been considered as the cause of all the phenomena; and copious blood-letting and cathartics have been recommended for the treatment. Other writers, who refer all the local and constitutional symptoms to a specific fever, peculiar to women in the puerperal state, deprecate the employment of venesection, and urge the necessity of employing the most powerful stimulants and cordials. The morbid sensibility of the hypogastrium, usually observed at the commencement of the attack, and the changes of structure from inflammation often discovered after death, both in the uterine and other organs, have been considered by them as the consequences of this idiopathic fever, in like manner as inflammation of the brain, lungs, or intestines, often supervenes during the progress of typhus.

Those who have most attentively perused the works of Drs. Hulme, Leake, Denman, Walsh, Gordon, Joseph and John Clarke, Hamilton, Hey, Armstrong, Douglas, Campbell, Mackintosh, and Cusack, must have felt convinced that the pathology of puerperal fever required a more careful investigation than had been made by any of these distinguished authors. To reconcile their discordant statements, with respect to the nature and treatment of the affection, it appeared to me requisite, that it should be examined not only in hospitals, but also in private practice, for several successive years, throughout all the different seasons. In this manner only did it seem possible to ascertain, whether diseases had been described essentially dis-