

**ON THE MORTALITY OF
CHILDBED AND
MATERNITY HOSPITALS**

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On the Mortality of Childbed and Maternity Hospitals by J. Matthews Duncan

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J. MATTHEWS DUNCAN

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AND
MATERNITY HOSPITALS

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ON THE
MORTALITY OF CHILDBED

AND
THE
MATERNITY HOSPITALS



BY

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Obstetrical Society of Louisville, of the Imperial Royal Society of Physicians
of Vienna, and of the North of England Obstetrical Society,
etc. etc. etc. etc.



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TO
ROBERT CHRISTISON,
PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH,
ETC. ETC.
WHO CAN NOW,
WITH GENERAL ACCLAIM,
ADD TO HIS OTHER TITLES OF DISTINCTION
THAT OF
FATHER OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

PREFACE.

THE present work is, in some respects, premature. Questions are raised in it which cannot as yet be settled. But although in this aspect it is unripe for publication, yet it appears to the Author that some work of the kind is loudly called for at the present epoch. In times of revolutionary violence, when useful institutions are attacked, it is necessary to defend them with such weapons as can be quickly got. In science the only weapons available are truths and sound arguments. This book is an attempt to arrive at truths, and to use them in argument justly, so as to reach sound conclusions, and expose and destroy the unsound.

The work consists mainly of various essays composed during the recent discussions as to the value of Hospitals. The Author has, as might be expected, taken Maternity Hospitals as the field for his observations and arguments. But though an obstetrician naturally takes his facts from the statistics of Lying-in

Hospitals, yet the Author believes that they are, on the whole, best adapted for the discussion of the value of Hospitals generally. There is a unity about childbirth that does not exist in connection with amputations or any other surgical operations. Childbirths can be scrutinised in vast numbers. Their data have been collected without a view to any controversy. A lying-in woman is very liable to be affected by all kinds of insalubrious influences.

The Author was impelled to undertake the work by two considerations. Of these one was practical, the other scientific.

The practical consideration was the defence of Hospitals against unjust attacks. These invaluable institutions he found misrepresented in a manner which he considered most unfair, and which he knew to be most injurious. He felt bound to try what he could do, not so much in their defence as to secure them fair play.

The scientific consideration was the circumstance that a terribly erroneous statement by a most respectable author—Le Fort—was extensively quoted and applied, indeed made a text for several great tirades against Hospitals. This statement is that the mortality of women delivered at home is 1 in 212, and that the