

THE  
**MIDWIVES MONITOR,**  
AND  
**MOTHERS MIRROR:**  
BEING  
THREE CONCLUDING LECTURES OF A  
COURSE OF INSTRUCTION ON  
**M I D W I F E R Y.**

CONTAINING

DIRECTIONS for pregnant Women; RULES for  
the Management of natural Births, and for  
early discovering when the Aid of a Physician  
is necessary;

AND

CAUTIONS FOR NURSES, RESPECTING BOTH  
THE MOTHER AND CHILD.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A Syllabus of Lectures on that Subject.

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## P R E F A C E.

*HAVING frequently had to witness the accidents attendant upon mismanagement, in the practice of Midwifery, and having, with pain, reflected upon the limited knowledge of that business among most of the female practitioners, I have, for a considerable time past, had a wish, that some means might be adopted for the better information of those necessary, though too much neglected, members of the community.*

*I consider midwives as necessary, and, not only necessary, but indispen-*

fably so, notwithstanding the abundance of physicians, because some women, absolutely refuse having a man to attend them in their labours, or at least not till they are convinced of being in a critical or dangerous situation, and oftentimes not until they are beyond the reach of the greatest skill. However indiscreet and ill-founded this prejudice may be considered, let it be called whim, a false delicacy or what we will, it matters nought to me, existing distress, whether it arises from reason or folly, equally demands our attention; and if we cannot afford relief by one method, it behoves us to attempt it by another. If women cannot be persuaded to submit themselves to the care of male practitioners, it is our duty to instruct females how to give them the necessary aid. That this prejudice does exist, and that some women will have none but their own sex to assist them upon such

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*occasions, every day's experience teaches us : and that this disposition is firm and not to be overcome, the arbitrary decrees of the government of Athens clearly demonstrate; for while with them midwives were prohibited from practising, the fatal sufferings of many of their women, fully proved the futility of attempting to confine that business entirely in the bands of the men.*

*However sufficient in itself this reason may be, it is by no means the only or the greatest one for encouraging the study of Midwifery with women : for even were there no objections in the mind of any to the employment of male practitioners, still the nature of the practice of physic, in this country, is such, that physicians cannot afford to give up so much of their time from their other business, as would be necessarily employed*

upon such occasions, for the small compensation, that the greater proportion of citizens are able, without distressing their families, to make them. What then must be done? The only means to relieve the major part of the community, both from oppression and from danger, in such cases, is the judicious establishment of regularly instructed midwives.

Besides these reasons, which are of a general application, there is an additional one for their establishment in the country. In cities a physician often may, in lingering cases, steal time enough from them to visit his other patients; but, in more thinly settled places, the necessary distance of their patients is such, as to render it impossible for a physician to practise midwifery with prudence, and to do justice to his other practice: in this respect, then, the assistance of mid-

wives is not merely convenient, but indispensably necessary.

So forcibly has the propriety of instructing females in the art of midwifery, impressed the liberal minded in Europe, that their most celebrated physicians have not failed to express an “ardent wish that schools might be erected in their principal cities for that purpose.” And the committee, in their proposals for regulating and improving the practice of Medicine in France, have carefully recommended measures to that effect: considering it as an object deserving their particular attention.

Whatever may have been the desire, and whatever may have been done elsewhere, no plan of the kind, as far as I can learn, has heretofore been established in America: consequently the midwives, with a very

few exceptions, are as ignorant of their business as the women they deliver: and I much doubt whether one out of twenty of them have ever seen the bones that support and protect the womb: indeed I cannot but suspect whether some even know, that, in being born, a child has to pass through a bony passage. The greater part of them, at least as far as my enquiries have reached, having taken up the business by accident, having first been catched, as they express it, with a woman in labour, they were forced to receive the child. Attendant success inspiring confidence, they without more ado, consider themselves competent, and become immediately established in the profession. But the more diffident and considerate, those who seek further information, have not generally been much better off: Books were their only helps, and books, of themselves, are but dim lights indeed;

generally rendered still more gloomy by the cloud of technical obscurity in which they are involved. To learn such a handicraft business by reading alone, is like learning ship-building without touching timber. Can we expect, but that such workers, in either occupation, must destroy more materials than their good work will ever pay for?

How, it may be asked, in the primitive times, did they do? We have no account of obstetrical schools, nor bear any complaint of ignorant midwives; children were born then as well as now; why may not women, without so much study and instruction, attend one another as well now as then? or, is child-birth a disorder, that women must always have a skilful person to assist them? Probably in the early ages, before the pampering stews of luxury had taken the

place of the salutary calls of nature in diet, and before the warping trammels of fashion had taken the lead of comfort and convenience in dress, seldom, very seldom, was there any disease in child-bearing, or difficulty in travail. Delivery is certainly a natural process, and so far am I from considering assistance as always necessary, that I doubt whether the whole art of midwifery will ever compensate for the mischief arising from the officious interference of ignorance in its practice.

Under the impression of the foregoing considerations, in the fore part of the last winter, I proposed to the female practitioners in this city, and such other women as wished information in the art of midwifery, to deliver them a course of instruction in that business, connected with the privilege of their attending the practice

of the lying-in ward in the Alms-House. And altho' it must be regretted that a great proportion of them, either from an idea of self-sufficiency, from not duly appreciating the importance of their profession, from indolence, or, possibly, from a dread of the retrospect, that opening their eyes might present to their senses, still chose to grope on in their original darkness. Yet, to their credit be it said, a number, and those also who appeared to be among the most considerate and better informed, embraced the proposition with alacrity, and have since attended to the establishment with a punctuality and attention, worthy the high object of their pursuit.

The following sheets, besides a short syllabus of the lectures, contains the substance of the three concluding ones, being a short recapitulation of the parts most material to midwives; with

*directions and cautions respecting their conduct in the practice of their profession; published by the particular request of the class.*

*The author has consented to their publication, not from a pretension of the new light that they may throw upon the art of midwifery, but with the hope of their serving as a medium through which, as far as they go, to transmit its present perfection to the attention of those to whom they are directed: should be thereby promote a more general spirit of enquiry among the female practitioners, his purposes will be fully answered; should be not, be rests upon his intentions as a security from censure.*