

Chas. A. Budd.
THE LADIES
MEDICAL COMPANION:

CONTAINING,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS,

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LATEST IMPROVEMENTS AND MOST
SUCCESSFUL MEANS OF PRESERVING THEIR

BEAUTY AND HEALTH;

OF

RELIEFING THE DISEASES PECULIAR TO THE SEX,

AND

AN EXPLANATION OF THE OFFICES THEY SHOULD PERFORM
TO EACH OTHER AT BIRTHS.

WITH ENGRAVED FIGURES EXPLANATORY.

ALSO,

THE BEST MEANS OF NURSING, PREVENTING AND CURING

THE DISEASES OF CHILDREN.

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LETTERS TO LADIES.

LETTER I.

Containing reasons why Ladies should attend to the subjects of the work.

THE influence of pure, delicate, and cleanly women in society has long been the subject of remark. With the appearance of but little power, they have borne a sway more irresistible than that of males. When mothers have been noble or debased, it has often been the consequence that men have been refined or depraved. In no age has violence imposed on the placable spirits of the sex, without severe suffering; not so much from present loss of pleasure, as from reaction on the rising generation. The interest, the affection, the duty of all require that every effort should be made to preserve women delicate and virtuous; to keep them out of the way of temptation, as well for the present as succeeding societies. Nothing can be more certain, than that in defiance of our wishes and expectations, our own daughters will partake more or less of the prevailing manners of the times; will be pure and refined, or indelicate or unprincipled, according to their associates. It is therefore obvious, that by assisting in the establishment and preservation of good practices in the community, we assist in perpetuating them among those dearest to our hearts.

It was, ladies, from very sincere feelings to promote your welfare that I designed this publication; feelings.

increased by the hope of its tendency to prevent practices I deem improper, from extending to my own female descendants and dearest friends, whose shield and whose power, in common with their sex, should rest on their virtue, their delicacy, and their usefulness. My first object was, to arrest the useless, the indelicate, the injurious, yet growing practice, of calling on men midwives, in common cases of births; the second object, to ensure better treatment of yourselves and children.

In soliciting your attention to this subject, it is not my desire to make you midwives or physicians. I only ask you to learn the principles of the facts you have already learnt, while gratifying the universal curiosity on the subject of the birth of man. Accurately understand, at least the outlines, leave nothing to fancy, and you will be able to command, to render important services in scenes where you have appeared as idle, useless spectators. You will be able to direct ignorant attendants, as physicians direct nurses at the bed-sides of those delicate patients refusing to exhibit their persons. You will not only save the expense of male attendants, the wives from disgust, and husbands from mortification, but what is of vast importance, indeed, you will always be able to detect, and forbid the officious meddling of the ignorant midwives, sometimes terribly destructive to mother and infant. The great importance alone, of giving these common women proper directions, enabling them ever afterwards to act with propriety, ought to be a sufficient inducement for all of you to attend to this subject.

Many of you pay great attention to the preparation of compositions for eating, you do not consider it improper to learn that this food is ground under the teeth, blended with saliva, swallowed, digested, and then passing through:

the bowels, is discharged by the organ and at the orifice assigned for the purpose. Truly then you ought not to think it strange, that I should request you to acquire a knowledge of the preparation and passage of the human body. None of your mixtures for eating, nothing in truth, that you have learnt, can be of greater importance. You can acquire all the necessary information in less time than you require for a novel. The famous Cleopatra of Egypt is said to have studied, and written for the public on the subject. Should affectation of feeling induce you to say that it is too indelicate—how inconsistent will be such an assertion with an unnecessary exposure of your persons at births, to the hands and eyes of physicians.

Indeed, it is on account of your delicacy, that I intreat you to acquire valuable information respecting your own structure. Nature has given you functions to perform, every body knows you perform them; and can you seriously think there is as much indelicacy in endeavouring privately to acquire accurate information, as there is in your neglect to do it, rendering it almost indispensable to expose yourselves to the hands and eyes of strangers?

There is not the least reason in the common aversion of mothers for their daughters to be acquainted with the history of generation before their marriage. Ignorance of any subject appearing mysterious, naturally tends to the excitement of curiosity; and it is very likely this ungratified curiosity to learn the nature of generation, has inclined females to dishonourable connection. According to reason and common sense, assuredly it must appear, that for inquisitive girls to act with prudence, it is best they should be instructed plainly, that they should be told, as Milton represents an angel sent to Adam in Paradise, declaring, that sexual connection is not the heaven or hap-

piness of a rational mind ; that it is an operation common to brutes. Learning that there is nothing so greatly desirable about it, so wonderfully mysterious, they must be less inclined to yield to a dishonourable prostitution. They will the more readily believe, that to be rational and proper, there must be a refined regard for the object of their love, and their union with him, consummated according to the usages of the virtuous. Indeed, it clearly appears to my mind, that a young lady, understanding the whole subject, not having had her fancy inflamed by a mysterious silence, could not be prevailed upon to tarnish by her conduct, the honour of her sex, and dignity of her family.

But this is not the serious object of my present solicitude. It is to wrest the practice of midwifery from the hands of men, and to 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 increasing practice of calling on men in ordinary births, as a source of serious evils to 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 : as a robbery of many of the good common women of their proper employment and support. Truly it shows as extraordinary a revolution in practice, as any afforded from a survey of all the arts. That all females do bring forth their young without assistance, excepting the human in a state of civilization ; and that women should call for the assistance of men, the only animals tormented by jealousy, is a fact that will scarcely be credited in a Turkish Harem, or by the christians of some future and purer age. Should the strangers to the practice, inquire if our men have large unwieldy hands—

great curiosity about women ; should they ask if our women had the requisites for useful services—small hands—good sense of touch, and patience in attendance—they will absolutely deny this monstrous perversion of the course of nature.

From the peaceful and retired occupations of women, they are generally more numerous in the community than men. Nevertheless, the men have assumed several offices, properly belonging to the weaker sex. The natural consequence is, that many women, as men in similar circumstances, wanting profitable occupation, seek the employments of the vicious. In as much, therefore, as these men midwives have meddled with this proper business of women, they have been instrumental in the depravity of many. Indeed, it is owing to their acting where they are not required, that the female practitioners are so often ignorant—not having the opportunity or means to qualify themselves for attendance on ladies.

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 among 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 his 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, (on puberty) observes, “ virginity is a moral being, existing solely in 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 situa-

tion which produces an internal bluish, is a real prostitution." It is very certain, where these exposures have been most common, as in large cities, there adultery has been most frequent. Be it folly, or prejudice, or not, there is a value in the belief, that the husband's hands alone are to have access to his sacred wife. Break through the prejudice, if you please to call it so, but for once, unless powerful reasons command it, the rubicon is passed ; and rely upon it, the barriers, on future emergencies, will not be so insuperable. Time and opportunity to press on a grateful heart, for a favour in regions where magnified favours have been conferred, have been used, and more frequently desired. To convince you of this, you will not require me to enter into the secret history of adultery. Many of these modest looking doctors, inflamed with thoughts of the well-shaped bodies of the women they have delivered, handled, hung over for hours, secretly glorying in the privilege, have to their patients, as priests to their penitents, pressed for accommodation, and driven to adultery and madness, where they were thought most innocently occupied. In one case, I was well assured, that a physician in Charleston, infuriated with the sight of the woman he had just delivered, leaped into her bed before she was restored to a state of nature. The melancholy tale of the seduction of the wife of a member of congress from Carolina, by her accoucheur, is a warning that ought not to be disregarded. The beautiful organization of the lady preyed on his mind for years : he sought her from one to the other extremity of the country, regardless of all dangers ; and on acquiring his game, received a premature and violent death—leaving horror and ruin in the family he had been hired to serve.

Whatever you may think on this subject, there are many

husbands to whom the idea of their wives' exposure of person, is horribly distressing. I have heard of cases, affording singular mixtures of the ludicrous and distressing. In one case in my neighbourhood, the husband sent for his physician to his wife in labour, yet was so strongly excited at the idea of her exposure, that very solemnly he declared to the doctor, he would demolish him if he touched or looked at his wife. No man possessed of a correct and delicate regard for his wife, would subject her to any exposure to a doctor, that could be avoided without danger.

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 in 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. There have been many of this description in all ages! virtuous and sainted souls—they preferred dying in all the agonies, the throes, and the convulsions of fatal labours! They did err on the side of delicate feeling! but their errors will be blotted out for ever! To be instrumental in relieving one of this truly interesting cast, will be a heavenly consolation to all who can be alive to the pleasure of serving the virtuous.

It requires but a little understanding of this subject, to enable you frequently to prove of great service in removing the fears and forebodings of many ignorant sufferers, who imagine that only professional skill can afford relief. Many such objects of commiseration have languished day

after day, solely from the want of a little information in one of the attendants ; all unnecessarily lamenting that physicians cannot be procured. By a little information, you can at all times prevent the miserable mutilation of mother and child, which has frequently been committed in a shocking manner, solely from the grossest ignorance. Indeed, to be able to say to ignorant widwives, fancying they must be doing something continually, “ Thou shalt not interfere—thou shalt not meddle with nature,” will alone be sufficient to effect essential service. On other occasions, and in all parts of the country, sudden labours coming on, before proper attendance can be had, you will be able to do important good to mother and child. One case of suffering of this kind, from want of assistance, in my opinion, is a great reflection on the ladies who are convenient for attendance. Indeed I think it disgraceful, that any female should be allowed to grow up in ignorance—in pursuit of pleasure, too fancifully nice—so falsely delicate, as not deliberately to get so much knowledge in one hour, as will enable her to do, or to direct the unlearned servant, how to perform the little offices required on the emergency, to which all of them are subject.

It is not to be disguised, that all classes in the community have to deplore the loss of some friend in child-bed. Many are mourning at the loss of amiable wives—victims to what ought to have been the subject of their joy. Parents are still lamenting the premature death of their daughters—buoyed up with the hopes of feeling as mothers, when the pains of labour were forgotten. Innumerable babes have been sacrificed in the most afflicting manner ; many of whom may have become ornaments to their country. All such calamities may have been prevented, if but one lady in the neighbourhood of each case, had

have devoted but a part of the time spent in guessing about the operation, to an accurate knowledge of the subject, so that she might have directed the ignorant and meddling attendants. It is said the Lord declared he would save the city of Sodom if but ten men were found good in it; and surely it is equally certain, that the whole of you should attend to this subject, with the prospect, even that only ten might be called on to render the needful assistance.

Every day shows that the practice of midwifery requires no particular skill, no superior knowledge, no slight of hand, nothing beyond the most common sense and observation, to do all that is required with perfect success. Nature has so wisely provided for the birth of the young, that even the extensive practice so highly rated among ladies is not necessary for the discharge of all the duties required from attendants. The male practitioners, who in general, from accidents, have got into great repute, received their first impressions from books, from directions which any one in the country can comprehend. The increasing applications to these women doctors, remaining satisfied with such business, are really made in vain; for most commonly, in qualifications they are not far removed from the sisters of the profession. Physicians of the best abilities, discovering, that it is by the fingers instead of the talents, that many get the most profitable business, attend to this subject only in the beginning. An introduction into better occupation, excepting in the cases of their favourites, is almost invariably followed by an abandonment of midwifery; so that the ladies have often to look out for different attendants.

In some parts of our country, the negro women, feeling their ignorance, and fearful of hurting their mistresses,

hesitate in acting, until they accidentally discover the powers of nature; then they obtain great reputation in the practice of midwifery, rivalling the most renowned doctors of the trade. They soon discover the secret, that nature does all the business, and that they have only to keep themselves quiet, and pocket the credit of the operation.

During the simplicity of the early ages, women alone officiated at births. In Egypt, the cradle of so much science, they were the sole actors. At Athens a law was passed forbidding them to practise; but from perseverance among the delicate, preferring death to exposure, the law was speedily repealed. Since then no government, it is believed, has been so ridiculous as to compel such unnatural interference. In consequence, the practice has been confined to women, until within a few years, in some European countries and their colonies. The excessive spirit for meddling with women is no where so great as in France. They are so fond of indulging their curiosity at births, that they even attend on the domestic animals in labour. Mr. S. told me, that he witnessed the operation by a professional character for cows. The cow, displeased with his intrusion, made all possible resistance; and when it was over, for hours endeavoured to attack the meddler. There is a stronger sense of propriety among the northern neighbours of the French. The Danish government, viewing the employment of men midwives in natural labour, as highly improper, established schools for the instruction of women in the principles of midwifery. Several of the German states have imitated the example. The American government should establish such institutions. The legislators in congress would thereby render the nation more essential service than they have done for years.

If the difficulty of obtaining doctors at the proper time ; if the indelicacy and tendency to immorality of having them in any but the critical and unnatural cases ; if the propriety of giving to helpless women proper encouragement and support ; if the salvation of many women, who, shocked at male interference, have their pains vanished, and minds deranged, and who sometimes prefer death to exposure ; if the salvation of many children born almost without warning ; if the prevention of the destructive interference of ignorant attendants cannot, united, induce you to attend to this subject, the mechanical advantage between a man's and a delicate woman's hand, ought to command your decision, in favour of employing and encouraging female assistants. Such is the confined organization of the parts for our birth, and such the large size of men's hands, that I verily believe as much mischief as good has been done by them, as has been stated by more extensive observers than myself. I conclude with the remarks, that when professional assistance becomes necessary, from unnatural occurrences, the case is altogether altered. The exposure is not of parts in a natural state, but deranged ; the woman becomes a patient for his operation ; is a subject of commiseration ; and the solicitude to remove her danger and agonies is the only thought a man can have. In such cases, there ought not to be the least hesitation in the female to submit to examination ; there is no indelicacy in it. Religion, future usefulness, command that life should be preserved at the expense of an hundred such sacrifices. The rule that I would prescribe to the females for whom I felt most affection and solicitude would be that which I now urge, on no account submit to the interference of men in common labour ; do it most readily in the uncommon cases,

when a nurse under the direction of a physician cannot afford relief. I will venture to add, that there is not a physician, disinterested, of sound sense, who would not approve of the rule. The best authors on midwifery decidedly recommend it.

An acquaintance with the subject of these letters will enable you to be of service to more than those in child-bearing. The rational treatment of your own peculiar disorders, often so injudiciously conducted, the prevention and cure of children's complaints, so interesting to every woman of extended feeling, are taken into consideration ; subjects well worthy of your serious attention. If no other benefit can be derived, but that of preventing the administration of improper doses, it will not be inconsiderable. Many disorders are rivetted in you, and especially in children's constitutions, by taking articles contrary to the indication for cure. So many of you are inclined to quackery, to believe in stories of cures from the prescriptions of common people, that it is an important point to impress on your minds, that our bodies are subject to laws, our diseases to be cured according to principles. If you will seriously believe this, will believe that medicine is a rational science, you will increase the respectability of the profession, and your own safety, by always selecting for your physician the man of sound mind, who reads the books of his profession, instead of the pliant, finical, "lady's doctor." You will discover that your diseases are to be prevented and cured ; not by the compounded trash of apothecary shops, but chiefly by the rational use of what may be termed the family materia medica. Cold and heat, in water and in air, bleeding, rest, exercise, mechanical irritation of the skin, an oiled feather to excite vomiting, and glysters to excite purging.