

u

**ESSAY**  
ON  
**CHILD-BED FEVER,**  
WITH REMARKS UPON IT, AS IT APPEARED IN THE  
**LYING-IN-HOSPITAL OF DUBLIN,**  
IN JANUARY, 1813,  
AND  
**OBSERVATIONS**  
UPON THE  
ILL AND PROPER MODE  
OF TREATING THAT  
**MALADY.**

---

“ *Neque si quis ex Mortuis Surrexerit Credent.* ”—Luke, xv.

“ Neither if one should have risen from the dead will they believe. ”—Luke, xv.

“ *Si quid Novisti rectius istis candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.* ”—Hor.

“ Doctors, if you know better drugs than mine,  
“ Say where they're hid; if not, use turpentine.”

---

DEDICATED TO THE GOVERNESSES OF THAT LYING-IN-HOSPITAL,  
AND RECOMMENDED TO THE PERUSAL OF ALL PREG-  
NANT WOMEN IN IRELAND.

---

BY JOHN BRENAN, M. D.

---

DUBLIN :  
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

1813.

215116-B.

# ESSAY

ON

## CHILD-BED FEVER.

---

**T**HE Disease incidental to lying-in women, called the Puerperal or Child-bed Fever, has engaged the attention of many, and much ingenuity has been exhausted in giving a rationale of the complaint. The experiments that have been made, in attempting its cure, have been adapted to every theory that the wildness and philosophy of the practitioner of Physic, from the most lofty scientific blunderer to the most creeping idiot in medicine could furnish; and alas! the theorist practitioner, and the practitioner without any theory, have at last met at one point. The circle that all have ran in has ended in death, and child-bed—fever is now become the *opprobrium medicorum*, the doctor's puzzle-stick, as well as the gout. From the Hotel Dieu to the Edinburgh and London Hospitals, its ravages defied all the ingenuity of the physician, and from all these quarters have issued learned works, which shew, that nothing could stem its violence; every thing was tried; practice the most opposite was adopted; one great man of scientific name tried one mode, it failed! another tried an

**B**

opposite method, and that failed! the intermediate plan was adopted by another, this experiment was mortal; the two opposites were united, this had a quicker fatality; and, in short, theory and quackery, if they are not the same thing, were equally unproductive in the attempt to moderate this calamity.

I was led more particularly to the consideration of this disease from its appearance in the Lying-in-Hospital, in January, 1813, where it made its approach, and was received as an old acquaintance; as the holy king said, "Welcome Attila, thou scourge of God," so did all the medical garrison of this Hospital unto this plague; it entered, it sojourned, and, as an incurable disease, it got a fair trial of every thing that ever was done to oppose its progress. Bleedings in *large* quantities and in *small* quantities in all its stages were tried, and failed; purging, as it is generally understood by that term, was tried, and failed. The practitioners from about the town were solicited and visited, and they who did not visit sent in their opinions. Doctor Clarke advised shutting up the wards, and the wards were shut up and painted, the Doctor having in his day tried the round of remedies. Doctor Harvey visited, shook his head sagaciously despondent, ordered his old electuary of scammony potion and blisters to the belly, and said the *Ladies* would travel.

I spoke to several as to the nature of the complaint; I was answered generally by men called deeply read men, who told me the disease was a peculiar disease, confined to the Puerperal or Child-Bed state; that there were certain symptoms which they enumerated, most of which I am not sorry to forget. I recollect a peculiar cast of countenance, a peculiar flaccidity of the muscles and such nonsense, amongst them, as marking the disease, and placing it in a

classification of fever quite apart, and as no way related to any known malady but Peritonitis, which name a Doctor Foster said was the name it should legitimately receive in Baptism.

Before I came into the Lying-in-Hospital, from all I heard and read, I considered this fever a contagious disease merely affecting Hospitals, for so all the accoucheurs assert, but upon beholding it in the Lying-in-Hospital, I found it the same fever I had often cured about the town amongst the poor, as a fever attending the irritated state of pregnancy, and I considered the cure of no greater moment than severer fevers of other type that I could manage. But amongst the rich I saw none of the cases of Puerperal fever, but a few lately in the last stages, as the great ladies Doctors monopolize this, as all other complaints consequent on Child-Birth, in right of possessing the business of delivering women, and thereby acquiring an exclusive acquaintance with what belongs afflictively to human nature, when it happens to be quartered on a pregnant female who has much money and a genteel constitution. This has kept me from knowing accurately or by experience, whether a Duchess and an Oyster-woman are delivered in the same way, or whether a Horse or a Duchess or a Beggar-woman are all cured one way or by one remedy, when similarly affected.

By some assumption and by some concession that are very strange, this malady is said to be insulated and merely confined to Lying-in-Hospitals; but when we consider, that allowing it to be a contagious disease arising from infection softens the responsibility of the physician, who is, as it were, treating a kind of plague, we will not be astonished that the Hospital Doctor will not assert its affinity to any external distemper; and when the private practi-

tioner has so many loop-holes to get out of, such as a consultation with others, which splits blame to indivisibility, such as imputation of rigid or lax fibre, such as irritability and morbidity of the system, and such cants, he will be easy about the real nature of the complaint, when he is not personally punished for his ignorance.

The disease which was said to affect merely the Lying-in-Hospital at the period I spoke of, was infecting, particularly, the patients of one or two ladies Doctors of my acquaintance all through Dublin; and I was latterly much surprised to find that a young lady, of the first fortune in Ireland, about some miles from town, on the Northern road, had sickened on the third day, and died of a bilious fever, as they chose to call this unfortunate malady! When you hear that such and such a lady died in Child-Bed, you ask a few simple and natural questions; you ask naturally had she a good labour? you are answered never better, if a first child, you hear all went on well; you ask then how did she die, and you are told that a fever, not a Child-Bed fever or Puerperal fever, but a fever which it is always insinuated was in the neighbourhood, or about the town, and of which she shewed symptoms before her accouchement, as they call delivery, and that this fever set in with shocking new symptoms, from the delicate irritable state of her nerves and fibres and predisposition, and that she died of this malignant, dreadful (not Child-Bed) fever. But when you come to inquire about this fever, you find that it set in after her delivery with rigors, shivering, head-ach, &c. for all the world like what nurses call the weed; that the belly became sore, that she was bled, or, as they say, the lancet was freely used, that the blood shewed the buffy coat, that the belly was not relieved, that she was stuped, took purgative medicines (note that term), and that the abdomen grew tense, could not bear pressure, that she vomited the

greenest and the yellowest bile (the circumstance upon which the Doctor escapes upon bilious fever, as out of his midwife way), that she began to sink, that the extremities grew cold, that she then got wine, but nothing would lie on her stomach from the *bilious fever*, and that the wine was given to fortify her against the mortification which had now to succeed the high inflammation, and that the lady, or shop-keeper's wife, or bishop's daughter, died like one of the patients of the Lying-in-Hospital.

If any person that has had friends who died latterly, will inquire, they will find all the symptoms of their acquaintances who died in private life, after delivery had those symptoms I mentioned above, namely, shiverings, swelled belly, vomiting, debility, and death, and that they grew ill on the third or fourth day, and the usual remedies of bleeding, stuping, the common place purges, &c, gave them no relief; and they will be pleased to allow, that if I suggest what no man ever did in Dublin or elsewhere with a lying-in woman, that I may be allowed to say to the accoucheurs of Dublin, *oh servum pecus*. Gentlemen go to school.

From observing this barbarous humbug that leaves so many orphans and such desolation in families, I was led to consider this disease; and the more I consider it, the more do I believe that the ignorance of the Physician is the cause of all this catastrophe. I long have observed the mischief of treating diseases by Nosological rules, of christening a malady, billeting it here and there, and treating it according to the situation the Doctor's crazy imagination placed it, instead of treating it according to the symptoms that presented themselves in the disease.

In the present complaint I consider the patient la-

labouring, under fever, excited by the utmost exertion of which human nature is capable; this exertion has been made partially, although affecting the whole nervous system. The uterus or womb is the seat of this exertion, and it is connected with the peritoneum and viscera of the abdomen; and the fever, as in case of tooth-ach; rheumatism, erysipelas, and gout, deposits its matter or determines to the weakest part; the viscera have become inert from the long gestation; the bile that has got into the intestines has been pent up with the fæces; the mesentery has been compressed and rendered partially quiescent from the situation of the foetus. After delivery all the intestines suddenly assume a new tone, and are some time before they can be themselves; the absorption of the bile is not so quick as in other fever, because the liver has not had its free action, and because the bile had not been effused and diluted through the intestines, and this accounts why the tongue is white in this fever, for after inflammation begins in the intestines the action of the mesenteric glands will cease, and this will account for the wonderful symptom that puzzles the Doctors, why the tongue has not the appearance that it has in typhus; but it will be remarked that in the beginning of fever the tongue is white, but after purging, when the bile is made to pass through the intestines, and when the intestine is restored to its natural action by removing the compression of the fæces, and when diluents have been taken, the absorption is evident on the tongue by its brown appearance, and in this disease the tongue frequently keeps white, though towards its close all the symptoms of bilious affection, such as *green vomiting* and a *yellow tinge* of the skin, take place.

Whether this disease is the effect of contagion, or whether it be not, the remedies, as in the small pox or fever, are the same. One inducement to me to doubt its contagious

nature is, that I saw one case of in Poolbeg-street, and another in Smithfield, and another in James's-street, all in the patients of one *ladies Doctor*, and still there were others of his patients that had it not, by which I consider that he rather carried the contagion, to speak his phraseology, in his own wool-gathering head, than in the lanugineous quality of his vesture. As to its contagious nature in Lying-in-Hospitals, I shall only say it went through every ward in the one in Dublin, but used to seem to dance the hayes through the patients a woman at the door and a woman at the window, six beds intervening, and a woman in the inner ward would have it, and they in the next beds to each escaped.

I shall not here enter into the particular treatment given this disease in every hospital and private practice, for I shall not trouble myself with enumerating the blunders by which its fatality has been hastened; such as profuse bleedings, saline purgatives, blisters to the belly, saline injections, vomits of ipecacuanha, and tartar emetic, &c. as there is no Physician does pretend, or ever did pretend to cure it; and, as it has posed the first of the other Doctors in Dublin, I will briefly submit my ideas about the cure.

First, I believe no woman dies of this disease who may not be said to have died of fever, determined to a certain part of the uterine system and its connection. I believe no woman has died of this complaint whose bowels have yielded to proper medicine, and who has been properly purged. I therefore conclude that in this fever, as in almost all fevers, the error lies radically in this point; every apothecary's boy, and every one who reads Doctor Hamilton's book, thinks he knows the art of purging; and thus a dose of salts, or any medicine that discharges stools, though



watery, is called purgative medicine, whereas even the scammony and calomel purge so generally combined, is as judicious as claret and small beer, for the scammony runs away with the calomel, which has a good effect merely by its gradual operation, and, as it were, specific effect upon the upper intestine; and saline purges carry off merely liquid stools, and the patient in this case is not served by the evacuation, and in the other cases the resinous quality of the medicines irritate the intestines.

You are told that purges will not act in this complaint. Certainly, when you allow the bowels to inflame, and when you do not know what medicine by which to make them act. Bowels acting is a cant; a strong man's bowels after a surfeit of fatigue, and a woman's after labour, are expected to act in the same way, by a commonplace purge of scammony and calomel or salts; what will make one act will inflame the other into inaction.

The woman's bowels after labour should be solicited, as the phrase is, and not forced; emollient carminative injections should be given; calomel in small quantity mixed with castor oil, or olive oil if she rejects the castor oil; and these assisted by fomentation, and these repeated; and if these did not act, they should be made purgative by turpentine.

Doctor Clarke says, that after you empty the bowels (and he prefers *saline purgatives*), and that the fever continues, you may set it down as *Peritonitis* or Puerperal fever, and what are we to infer from that? just this much, that it is incurable.

Pray now would it not be as good, as soon as a woman got the *weed*, which is feverish shivering, succeeded by

heat to imagine that she got the Child-bed Fever, and begin to cure it before it arrived at the acme where the belly becomes sore to the touch, and when the Doctor begins to bleed for the *Peritonitis*, which his own neglect and ignorance have made, and might we not begin to prevent this fever before the woman's labour came on? Might it not be well done to give medicines previously to open the bowels? Might not *tinctura Jalapii* which operates quickly be given, even though the labour was to happen in three hours? Might not an injection be given in case the bowels were not free? Might not two or three grains of calomel be given when labour came on, and when it was over an injection to carry it off? This I know would prevent a great deal of the mischief that follows, and would prevent the necessity of attempting to cure what is thought incurable, merely by being allowed to run into symptoms that might have been prevented by common sagacity. But they say, when the inflammation sets in, it may be stopped by bleeding; but it may not and it is not stopped by bleeding, whether it be that bleeding is inefficient, which I am inclined to think is mischievous, or that the Physicians do not know how to bleed and purge, and do the other things necessary.

The blood they take gives a temporary relief merely to the chest, but the belly is never relieved by it, the acrid bile is still absorbed, and is still determined to the weakened part, and the mass of blood has lost by the bleeding so much of the aqueous part in the circulation that would go to its dilution; and though there be ease from the bleeding (and I say the ease is always in the chest, not the belly,) if it is not well followed up and taken early, it only hastens the mortality; but as to bleeding, I always considered its very apparent necessity might be prevented, by not allowing the belly to swell, which pushes up the diaphragm, compresses the lungs, increases the

labour of the chest, (which bleeding appears to relieve,) but which relief is merely transitory, for the heart being relieved from a quantity of blood and the circulation being lessened, it cannot propel the same quantity as before through the lungs; but when sanguification or the restoration of blood is complete, the belly, which is never relieved by the bleeding, and still keeps up its pressure, whilst the lungs still are said to be affected, and she is bled because the blood has a buffy coat, which is peculiar to all pregnant women, and between the buffiness of the blood indicating venescation, the oppression of the chest, from the swelled belly, (never yet relieved,) the patient is bled to death, and for a confirmation of my opinion read Margaret Connolly's case.

The state of pregnant women in Dublin is truly pitiable. The Accoucheurs, as they call the men who are midwives, are considered the only persons qualified to talk to a woman from the moment she becomes pregnant until she is done nursing, upon any malady that may befall her, and the only person qualified to treat a child in all its ailments, because he brought this child into the world, or rather hindered it from running astray when Nature shoved it into his doctoring fist. But to know what a class of people are the Accoucheurs of Dublin, look first to the Lying-in Hospital; there every day for seven years you see nearly one description of pupils, consisting of apothecary's boys, young surgeons, or rather lads who are studying to be surgeons, lads who are studying to be doctors, and sometimes lads who have taken a liking to learn the craft of a midwife without studying any thing; swaddling preachers, who add this branch to their theological accomplishments; deistical parsons, who have thrown up their gown, the Trinity, and the profession, to swaddle in physic; all these in due time, and the period is three and six months, start upon the

world from the Hospital, as ladies Doctors, and know, in right of having taken their practice in the Hospital, every thing relating to women and children.

Time has matured a great number of this description into great practitioners, with which Dublin now abounds; I shall merely notice as a sample one or two. The first is a man who may be said to ride the first horse in doctoring ladies, and he has, from his chivalry or horsemanship, obtained the title of the galloping midwife. This gentleman is fond of fomenting the legs which he directs in the classic terms of *foveatur crueros*. This Doctor last week presented the seminary that bred him with a charming case of *ruptured uterus*.

Another who creeps through the town, and is in high esteem for feeling for his patient, and being so gentle about a woman, directs the apothecary by Recipe scammonium grana tres. When the rabbit does not bolt, or, in plain English, when Nature does not do its business, what can people of this description do?

If a woman after labour gets a fever, as ladies Doctors, they are the only fit people to manage it; they call it Puerperal or Child-bed Fever, which they might as well call the Settle-bed Fever, but from the consequences always attending their attendance, would be better called the horse or Coach and Six Fever, of which they know no more than the governing Doctors of the Lying-in Hospital knew these thirty years of the fevers they met and ran away from in that house, the same as those I have cured there and about the town, and would remove from that Hospital if I was allowed.

I have mentioned the preventative part of this disease, and now when the disease has advanced so as to scare the most confident, I will mention what I would do, and

what I have done. When the belly becomes severely sensitive to external impression, I would give a table spoon full of the spirits or oil of turpentine; I would apply the same oil by friction on the belly, and in the severer state, wet flannel with it, and apply it there. I would give carminative injections with much oil in them. Saline injections and saline purgatives I consider highly pernicious. I would give calomel in two-grain pills, and in some hours after injections, but would rely chiefly and solely on the turpentine, which I would repeat at discretion. It may be said, and will be said, that the oil of turpentine is irritating and a stimulant, and upon what principle would I give it? My answer is, I would give it upon the principle of curing the disease; and I leave the wise Doctors to theorise upon it; and I give it into the hands of the Accoucheurs of Dublin, whom I defy to do harm with that dreadful stimulant, in any stage of Puerperal or Child-bed Fever. Certainly a judicious person will regulate it by circumstances, and assist its strong specific powers by his sagacity; but, like opium, we must trust it to its fate, and, like bark, we must let it try its fortune, still confident that it will be better armed by its specific powers, than either of the above great medicines were against the ignorance of practitioners; for it can never severely injure like opium and bark, the latter of which got into disgrace and disrepute, by an ignorant person killing the Lord Mayor of London with a dose of it.

I was first led to try the effects of this medicine, from observing that Farriers use it in cases of inflammation of horses bowels with good effect. It may be said, and will be said, that there is no analogy between a man and a horse, much less between a lady's abdomen and a horse's belly. Men judge of the difference between a man and a horse by their size, rather than by their structure. The

intestine of a horse is as irritable as that of a man; a grain of sand in a horse's eye, will cause as great a degree of ophthalmia, as in the eye of a leering Countess; and a prick of a cambrick needle on a tendon, will cause as speedy a lock-jaw in an elephant, as upon Count Borrawlaski or Sir Arth. Gallipot; as to the different treatment that a man and a horse receive, or ought to receive under disease, I will leave it to comparative anatomical Doctors and Philosophers to decide, but I believe the remedies are nearly similar. If a man gets inflammation in his bowels, he sends for a Doctor, the Doctor says he has *peritonitis*, the Greek for inflammation of part of the bowels, the man is bled, (if bleeding be the fashion of the day),\* gets purgatives, a blister to his belly, and is driven into agony; he may recover, and if he does not, his friends must say, that every thing was done for him.

If a horse gets inflammation of his bowels, and he gets it much the same way a man gets it, by taking cold drink when heated, or cooling the body suddenly when beyond the natural temperature—What happens? The horse has not the disadvantage of being able to send for a Doctor, or call a consultation, but his master sends for a Farrier the Farrier says, he has a colic, for every thing affecting the belly is a colic with the Farrier, (and it is as good a name as if it had *itis* tacked to it); he gives the horse a dose, he does not care how much, of what the Doctors call a stimulus, *the oil of turpentine*, and the horse gets suddenly well; though the same action of blood, nerve and muscle in a man would be an *itis* affair, such as Gastritis, Cystitis, Peritonitis, and in a woman, who lay-in, in a Lying-in Hospital, it would be Puerperal fever, and in a lady who lay-in with a high Doctor, it would be a terrible epidemic fever

\* Bleeding is now the rage, purging was lately the go, sweating yielded its place to both. Vomits are expected to be the next favourite Panacea.

in the neighbourhood, or as a Doctor Carter once said, after killing the Lady Lieutenant, it would be such as the Lady Townsend complaint, or like a later Physician, who called a case *Dumvilitis*.

The cases in which I chiefly gave the turpentine, from my restricted state, being no Assistant was merely in abandoned cases. I never gave it in any stage that it did not alleviate symptoms, but in the early stages I found its effects most extraordinary, and even when hope had fled the Doctors, found it effectual.

At several periods I heard it thrown out to me, that if I could suggest any thing of utility, I should have the full merit of it, for I believe it was suspected that I did things privately, and that I had it in my power to be of use. In one instance, Doctor Ferguson spoke to me to that effect; my answer to him was in the presence of Mr. Devit, that I knew the Doctors of that house too well, and that I was certain, that should I bring a cartfull of corpses from the church-yard, and make them dance a jig about the hall, they would say they were buried alive, and deny me the merit of restoring them; seeing the mortality thicken in the house, and sickened at the restriction put on me as a pupil, not daring to give any assistance, under pain of expulsion, I consulted a very eminent and humane Physician, who advised me to be candid with Doctor Ferguson, and told me he was a much fairer man than the most of them, and that I would not regret confiding in him; I accordingly told him that I thought I could be of use, and I mentioned a case that was then in a lamentable state; it was Margaret Rogers, in the inner ward of No. 7 she had been bled twice, and was now sitting up, not being able to bear a supine posture; she was vomiting green and yellow bile incessantly, and the

sensibility of the abdomen was such, that she could not bear the slightest pressure of the finger upon it; I mentioned this case, and told him I would wish to be allowed to treat it; he told me that he considered effusion to have taken place, and as this woman was then in the rapid stage of dissolution, from which no woman similarly affected ever recovered, he wanted to know what I could give her; I told him, the *oleum Terebenthinæ*. He started, and asked me how much; I told him, a table spoonful; however, as the woman seemed to have packed up her alls for travelling, he allowed me to give two tea spoonfuls, but said he would not stay by whilst I gave it; accordingly I gave it to her in a little sugar and water. In about three hours after; I met Dr. Ferguson, and his countenance expressed the event, he told me the woman was better, and he then had the courage to stand by at her taking a table spoonful, which he was very much astonished did not burn her alive; being asked, what she thought it was, she replied, geneva and water. I saw her in about five hours after she never vomited from the moment she took the first dose; her abdomen was flaccid, she lay at her ease, and I kneaded her belly with my hand, and gave it a heavy slap, to the wonder and delight of all the nurses present. The next day the pains of her belly returned slightly, she got the turpentine, and her pains and uneasiness of the abdomen ceased, and she called for food, and said she was starved, her pulse became weak, not that I ever found it full, she spit pus, and sunk into death. This case I consider strongly favorable to the credit of the Medicine, it relieved the seat of Child-bed fever, the vomiting and all the symptoms that foreboded quick dissolution, but being bled, sunk her, for she was previously asthmatic, and came straight from the hospital for venereal patients, after a severe course of mercury. This case has been objected to me, as an unsuccessful case; I



cured all I proposed in this case; in the annals of Midwifery, I defy any man to shew me such a sudden abatement of Puerperal fever symptoms, or one case cured, where the belly swelled in like manner, and green and yellow vomiting came on; in this case, I am confident, the bleeding caused the death of the patient.

Margaret Connolly, a servant of Mr. Grogan, in Merrion-square, had labour for two days, and got the fever; the usual remedy was tried, she was bled twice to the amount of thirty ounces; I suggested to the Assistant, the application of the turpentine to her abdomen, which was tense and sore to an exquisite degree; he allowed me to apply it, for the fears he held about it, even as to its external use, were such, as that he would not venture to apply it himself, and he therefore allowed me the privilege of doing any good, that might turn out from its application; I poured it on her abdomen, covered with flannel; in about three hours after I saw her, she said I had cured her; her abdomen was as flaccid as when in health, it could bear pressure to any degree, and her breathing was easy; from this circumstance, I saw plainly, that the difficult breathing, for which bleeding is so frequently used, arose from the pressure of the diaphragm upon the lungs, by the inflation of the belly, which never relieves the belly, and which always sinks the patient. I gave her two tea spoonfuls of the turpentine in hot water and sugar, and she said it disagreed with her stomach, (and I think cold water is a better vehicle); the next day her symptoms returned, and she was bled in the morning eighteen ounces, and in the evening eight ounces; the day after she begged me to apply the remedy I did before to her; I did so without permission, but for humanity sake; her belly became flaccid again, and she felt great relief, and could bear any pressure on the belly,

she said the only thing she complained of was her heart, but that could not rise; she sunk, but with no distress in the region of the uterus, and after death her belly was flat. I put down her death to the bleeding. I must note, that I had no further interference in this case than one permissive, act which relieved her, and one assumed authority, which also relieved her. I think, and I believe they about her think, that if I treated her alone, I would have been as fortunate as I have been with what I call worse cases. She was in No. 6, in the inside ward.

A woman in ward No. 7, her name I know not, she lay next bed to Mrs. Keefe's daughter, who died of the fever; she was seized with head-ach, sore abdomen, and a turning in her stomach; she complained severely, and moaned much; I gave her a table spoonful of the oleum terebinthinae, and a sup of water after it. In about fifteen minutes I came to her; she told me she got ease; I desired Mrs. Mills look at her, and asked her was she better? Mrs. Mills replied, "sure no one but a fool would ask such a question; don't you see by her face that she is better?" On coming into the ward the next evening, I went to her bed, and missed her; she was sitting at the fire very well, and I heard her say, "I at least have a right to pray for that gentleman."

A woman in No. 8, who lay next bed, to Mr. Allen of Dame-street's servant, who died, got the symptoms that were the usual forerunners of this disease; I contrived by stealth to give an ounce of the turpentine in some saline mixture; this abated all her pains, and the vomiting; and Doctor Harvey, on coming the next day, said nothing was the matter with her; she went home that day; the symptoms returned; a person from the Hospital went to her, bled,

D

and blistered, and gave the usual remedies she died vomiting green bile, with her belly swelled. In this woman I stopped all the symptoms, and her life was lost to a husband and four infants, because I was a pupil and I dare not prescribe. She lived in Gloster Place, and was a smith's wife.

Mary Murray, wife to a soldier in the Fermanagh militia, from Kilnese, near Naas, was delivered on Saturday, 12th of the month; on Tuesday the fever set in with her most violently; I was allowed a latitude with this woman, on account of the surprising efficacy of the medicine, with *Rogers*; she had a severe cough, and every time she coughed she screeched with the anguish of her belly, which was insufferably painful to the touch. I applied the turpentine to her belly, and gave her a table spoonful of it in water and sugar; the next day she was free from pain, and able to eat bread and milk for breakfast; she took a drink of cold milk, and got ill as ever, I repeated the turpentine; and applied it to her belly. The next day she eat stirabout, and got a relapse from *cold beer*; she continued very ill till Monday, when Doctor Ferguson shewed her to me as a forlorn case; he shewed me the blackness of her hands, which he said was the sure forerunner of death, and that no woman ever recovered that had it. Doctor Hopkins saw her; and agreed with Doctor Ferguson that she was one of the patients then moribund; nothing was ordered for her this day, I suppose from the dreadful state she was in. This was Monday; she was sitting up vomiting green bile; I gave her an ounce of the turpentine and repeated it in an hour, and applied it to her belly. The next morning I found her asleep; on Tuesday I gave her castor oil, tincturæ senæ, and two drachms of the turpentine in the draught; this purged her much. On Wednesday she breakfasted on stirabout and milk; on Thursday did the same; on Friday she sat all day

at the fire, and was put with the next case I shall mention, to sleep in one bed. On Saturday she requested to be left in the Hospital, and on Sunday she walked home to Barrack-street with her child in her arms. This woman was never bled. I shall make no commentary upon this case; I made the people of the Hospital remark it, and I believe, from its novelty and contrast with the Hospital practice, they will not forget it.

Biddy Cullen, servant to a Mr. Ennis, of Kingston, near Rathfarnham, was delivered of twins, on Saturday, 12th February; she had hard labour, and took ill on the couch; on Wednesday following she got severely ill with head-ach, turning of her stomach, and continued so all night; the next day she became a matter of serious consideration, and she had the turpentine applied to her belly by means of flannel sopped in it, and got a table spoonful by the mouth; in about two hours after she began to roar with the pain of her belly; the flannel was removed, and it acted as a severe rubefacient; in some hours after she felt herself at ease; the next day her pains returned, and she got the turpentine internally a table spoonful, she occasionally got it for three or four days, and on the 25th she was put into the same bed with Mary Murray, above mentioned, and on the 26th went home very well. This is a very strongly marked case, and it must be noted here that she was not bled.

I shall stop here with instances of the efficacy of this medicine; and to whomsoever that insists on a greater number of cases, I shall observe, as I did before to a Physician expressing that difficulty, that if a man contrives a parachute, and leaps from Patrick's steeple with two women, and lands them safe, is not his parachute as well established as if it dropt down with the Dean and Chapter, one after

another?—I rest my discovery here; I say the fever will never be cured but by the means I devised, and I leave the Accoucheurs to disguise it as well as they can. A few words more I shall say to satisfy an objection I even hear dinned in my ears, namely, that a stimulus should not be given in inflammation. How do the gentlemen know that turpentine is a stimulus? They say, because it even blisters the skin. But they should know, that what will irritate the skin will not irritate the intestines; for if the inside of the intestine was irritable in the same way as the skin, life could not be supported. The turpentine does not irritate the intestine, though it blisters the hand. I shall give these sapient stimuli gentlemen an example:

**Dolichos Pruriens**, or Cow Itch, is taken internally to kill worms by its mechanical action on their bodies, and still this is so little irritating to the intestine, that it must be worked off by some purgative medicine; still the Cow-Itch applied to the skin causes the most painful irritation, and the turpentine, when swallowed, will be mistaken for geneva and water.

**FINIS**

**DEDICATION.**  
TO THE  
GOVERNESSES OF THE LYING-IN-HOSPITAL.

---

LADIES,

I preferred addressing you to those of my own sex who govern the Lying-in-Hospital, from having seen personal feeling preserved in female associations, and from having observed that all good qualities are generally lost in corporations of men.

The case of every woman in the Hospital is the case of every woman in Society; many a governess has died of Puerperal Fever, it having got a new title, though differing, in essence, from that I cured, no more than a queen differs from a woman.

It might not be safe to enumerate the perils pregnant women, although of rank, are liable to, even under *great hands*. It might certainly enhance my discovery to shew you, that before nine months come round, some of you, if your\* bellies swell after labour, and that you get vomiting, must take my remedy or die; for all the Accoucheurs tell you that these symptoms are the bourne of midwifery, to which if you get, you cannot return by their means.

You have not all heard of the Foundling Hospital, and how there the cats and rats used to eat the little children; for a full account of it see the Harvean Memoir. You never heard that since the foundation of the Lying-in-Hospital the Child-bed Fever which was killing the ladies about town under another name, killed more women in that house than the Hospital would now hold if they were taken upon from their graves; and

\* I might call this Abdomen it would be more courtly, but I write for women not ladies, and I wish the meanest capacity to understand me.

you never heard that in the wards particularly No. 6, and No. 7, in the course of six weeks lately; every bed of three rooms of each had a corpse in it, and some of them three, and some two corpses, and that all this gave no uneasiness; and that my curing three women in Ward No. 7, all of whom were given up, caused terror and dismay amongst the Doctors. Curiosity is perhaps wisely implanted in the breast of woman. I never felt it till now forcibly, for I feel that it will operate to the good of the Lying-in Hospital, and, by that means, to a reformation in the trade of accouchering; and perhaps if God is mercifully inclined, it may break the man midwife charter in Dublin.

I am, Ladies, your dutiful servant,

JOHN BRENAN, M. D.

• Margaret Rogers, Bridget Cullen, and Mary Murray:

## PREFACE.

---

AS every Book is lame without a Preface, the following remarks may be taken as such :—

I apprehended that any discovery that might lessen the fatality in the Lying-in Hospital would be hailed as a blessing. I thought that a cure of a case, deemed incurable, would not cause any consternation; still the discovery that a woman was cured without Doctor Hopkins's, and Doctor Harvey's and Doctor Clarke's, and Doctor Evory's, and Doctor Cleghorn's knowledge, (men who never cured a case of puerperal fever) was deemed high treason by that eminent Quintet. The extremum jus, or right, was insisted on here to extreme injury or wrong, and the stoic rigour of Junius Brutus, who doomed his sons to death for gaining a victory without the orders of the General, was put to the blush by the stoic firmness of Dr. Hopkins, who said he had a notion of shutting the gates against me. This same Doctor Hopkins was the man who proposed to give a Lecture on Puerperal Fever, and did so, and made it nothing but a bill of mortality of all the desolation which Paris, London, and Edinburgh witnessed in the Lying-in Hospitals, and all this merely to keep his Hospital in countenance, and he finding that his patients had been cured, had the foolish confidence to tell these same pupils, whom a few days before he lectured with a long face, to the tune of De Profundis, upon the abomination of desolation that then reigned through his Castle, that a student, meaning me, a practitioner of 13 years had actually presumed to prescribe without his knowledge in his Hospital, whereas the poor old man should have sung Te Deum, if it was not a popish hymn, that under his administration a cure was made, that was never made in a similar case within his Empire, or any where else under the like circumstances.



I anticipated that the discovery would have been hailed as a national good; that all the women in Ireland would subscribe to raise a pillar to my memory; that the Lord Lieutenant would wait upon me to offer me knighthood and a pension; and indeed the garçon barbier in Gil Blas, when going to see his uncle the Canon, did not anticipate more flattering circumstances than I did: nor was the poor barber when he was coldly taken by the shoulder, and turned down the stairs by his loving uncle, more disappointed than I have been in all my expectations. In the first place, I was resolved to secure a patroness, and I had my eye upon Lady Charlemont; but I was not content with a Countess being sworn at Highgate. No, said I, a Duchess is little enough for such a discovery; accordingly I set myself down, and to the Duchess of Richmond I penned the following epistle worthy of an Empress, even as Empresses were when in fashion.

TO HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF  
RICHMOND.

MADAM,

Having become a Student of the Lying-in-Hospital, entirely from motives of humanity, not otherwise having an opportunity of administering that relief which I saw was wanting to the unfortunate women afflicted with Puerperal Fever that has infested that house for so many years, and finding that I have been successful in the cure of this disease, which has not only desolated that Hospital but society at large; and as I know no character to whom I could offer so justly a tribute of reverence for public and private virtues as to your Grace, I most humbly solicit the honour of dedicating my essay on that subject to you.

Should I be honoured by that condescension on your part, I shall ever feel it with all gratitude and dutiful thankfulness.

I have the honour to be, &c.

I. B.

▼

Her Grace, apprehending that, perhaps, this work would contain something that might cause abortion, or some dreadful consequence to her Grace's constitution, (surmises very natural to all ladies who have ladies' doctors that attend them) consulted the celebrated Accoucheur, vulgarly called Doctor Big Paw, and Big Paw called Doctor Kill Child into the consultation, the case not being purely puerperal, like the case of the Bishop's daughter. The Accoucheur improved his manners when a travelling Usher through France, and the Foundling Doctor, whose James's-street practice puts him much before the caitiff drugman in Romeo, or even before the Pharmacopolist of Jaffa, having consulted on the case between them, they contrived (putting the labour upon Sir Charles Vernon, as the midwives do in Connaught upon a Taylor,) to deliver his ugliness of the following bantling, so like Sir Charles and the baboon now at the New Bridge.

**TO MR. BRENNAN.**

*Castle, March 6.*

Sir Charles Vernon is desired by her Grace the Duchess of Richmond, to inform Mr. Brennan, that her Grace does not wish to have his Publication dedicated to her, as her Grace has been obliged to refuse so many of the like applications.

---

Knowing this to be so unlike what I knew, from experience, to be the true character of her Grace, I ventured to address her to the following effect:

## TO HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.

MADAM,

I took the liberty of soliciting the honour of laying at your feet a discovery, that I conceived was of just so much value as the lives of thousands of females may be considered worth by any woman of humanity. I have long venerated your character, and I selected you, in preference to many illustrious countrywomen of my own, to testify that feeling with an offering of a great discovery in medicine.

I was not a little surprised to receive a note from Sir Charles Vernon, in terms uncouth, and with an address not mine, bespeaking your disapprobation, ill expressed by ill manners. I am, now, of that profession, and I hope not the least in it, which the Scripture says deserves honor through necessity,\* and which the Prince of Poets,† who was no bad master of ceremonies, places before all others. My approaches to rank I never make with diffidence, as I have not forgot my rank and family, which, I must beg leave to mention to your Grace, would this day have as much property, with as long and honorable an ancestry, as the first man now in Ireland, if there never was a ‡ Lord Lieutenant in Dublin.

I have the honour to be, &c.

J. BRENAN.

¶ My acknowledgment to Sir Charles Vernon, was as follows :

SIR,

If you, Master Vernon, are so ignorant as not to know that there is offence in not addressing a man in the character he assumes by right, and *Mistering* a Doctor, you are a bur-

\* Honour the Physician on account of necessity—St PAUL.

† Who gives a drug that cures an aching belly,  
Is ten degrees before all men I tell ye.

HOMER'S ILLIAD.

‡ Lord Strafford, when Lord Lieutenant, bestowed the Brenan Estates to Sir Christopher Wandesford, his Secretary.

lesque upon ceremony, and disgrace the character who affects nobility, and bids you speak her sentiments.

The Duchess of Richmond could not desire you to offend me. I offered her a tribute, that, if I am not mistaken, was worth the acceptance of any woman—it was the discovery of saving female life. If she desired you to offend me, she knew not the honour I offered her, nor her own dignity. If you offended without her direction, she should send you to the kitchen, for adjusting the ceremonies of which place your face, and your figure, and your manners seem so well adapted.

JOHN BRENAN.