

CHAP. VII.

STATISTICS OF LYING-IN HOSPITALS, AND OF THE STILL-BORN.

THE most prominent fact afforded by medical statistics, next to the diminished mortality of infancy, is the peculiar change which has supervened within the last 100 years in the fate of lying-in women. In 1750, at the British Lying-in Hospital of London, 1 woman died out of 42; in 1780, only 1 died in 60; and, finally, the improvement became so great, that only 1 case was fatal out of 288, in the 10 years between 1789 and 1798. The proportion of still-born children was at that time about 1 to 25; and of women having twins was about 1 to 84. The deaths of the children during all this period preserved a constant proportion to the fate of the mothers. In 1750, one child died out of 15; in 1780, 1 in 44; and in the last decade, from 1789 to 1798, only 1 in 77.

Let us compare with this statement the situation of the lying-in women, about the same time, in France. Tenon, a distinguished French writer on hospitals, assures us, that the mortality of the lying-in women at the Hôtel Dieu of

Paris (where they were then admitted) was about 1 in 15, while that of the British hospital was only 1 in 60; and the still-born were 1 in 13 at the former, while 1 in 25 at the latter. But it is pleasing to observe that this state of things no longer exists at Paris: the mortality of the Lying-in Hospital there was in 1822 1 in 30; which is at least the double of what at present occurs in our lying-in institutions. At the City of London Lying-in Hospital, in 1826, the deaths were 1 to 70; but, compared with the average of the Dublin Lying-in Hospital during 70 years, the present deaths at the Paris hospital are about treble in amount. The average stay of each female admitted into the Paris hospital was about 22 days.

The loss at the Dublin hospital was only 12 women among 2675 delivered, in the year 1822. The following is the official report of the results observed there during nearly 70 years, from its origin in 1757 to 1825:—

Proportion of males and females born, about 12 males to 11 females.

————— children dying in the hospital, about 1 to 19.

————— children still born, about 1 to 17.

————— women having twins (and more), about 1 to 60.

————— women dying in child-bed, about 1 to 89.

————— women having three and four children, about 1 to 4000.

The deaths at the Lying-in Hospital at Stockholm were, in 1822, about the same as at Paris,

being 1 in 29. In 472 deliveries were 11 cases of twins, 1 triplet, and the still-born were 36. Of the 21 deaths of mothers 16 were from puerperal fever; and 12 of the new-born infants had ophthalmia purulenta, which is a very common affection, also, of the foundlings at Paris. A beneficial change has occurred at Berlin, corresponding to what has been seen at London and Paris. From 1796 to 1806 one lying-in woman died out of 32 received into the Charité Hospital at Berlin; but in the ensuing 10 years, from 1807 to 1817, only 1 fatal case occurred amongst 45. The average fate of pregnancy throughout the whole kingdom of Prussia in the year 1817 has been published under the sanction of that government: it is the only document of so comprehensive a nature, and embracing all ranks of society, which has yet been published. According to it 1 mother dies in that country out of 112; and as it relates to the rich equally as to the poor, and to rural districts as well as to cities, it places in a strong light the very low mortality of the Dublin Hospital, which in 1814 lost only 1 in 100 of women, always poor, and often miserable.

The following report of the obstetric practice in a healthy provincial town (*Lewes*) has been published by Mr. Mantell :* —

* London Medical Gazette, vol. ii. p. 782. 1828.

During the last 15 years occurred 2410 cases.

Arm presentations four, or 1 in 600.

Cases in which turning was necessary eight, or 1 in 300.

Cases of embryotomy, three: in one the foetus dead; in two, destroyed: 1 in 800.

Puerperal convulsions six: three delivered by natural efforts; one, the child turned; one by forceps; one convulsions *after* delivery: 1 in 400.

Fatal cases only two: one uterine hæmorrhage, fifth month after pregnancy, occasioned by too early exertion, died 48 hours after delivery; and one fatal syncope, without any apparent cause, died twelve hours after delivery: 1 in 1200.

This document forms a remarkable contrast with the registers of the lying-in hospitals of great cities. It proceeds from a gentleman whose name is familiar to the friends of science.

The mortality at the Edinburgh Lying-in Hospital is about 1 in 100. The following table shows also the number of still-born, and other particulars, obtained at that institution, during a period of nearly three years: —

EDINBURGH GENERAL LYING-IN HOSPITAL.

WOMEN.				CHILDREN.				
Year.	Number of Patients.	Died.	Disease.	Male.	Female.	Died.	Still-born.	Abortion.
1826	196	1	Peritonitis.	97	104	4	12	2
1827	218	2	Phthisis.	116	103	3	11	
1828	149	1	Exhaustion.					
to 29th Sept.		1	Peritonitis.	76	74	5	8	3

STATISTICS OF THE STILL-BORN.

It appears that 1 infant out of 32 is still-born in Prussia. The proportion of the still-born is also in Hanover about 1 in 30.

The varieties in the number of the still-born at different places are very difficult of explanation, or baffle it entirely. At Edinburgh, in the middle of last century, the proportion is said to have been 1 in 25, at the very time when at Strasburg it was 1 in 8. At Strasburg the number is now lessened, but continues larger than elsewhere. On an average of 20 years it has been 1 in 11 there, at present it is one in $12\frac{1}{2}$ of all births. In Sweden and in Finland, on the contrary, it is only 1 in 40. Generally speaking, the still-born are more frequent in towns than in the country, and more common amongst the poorer classes than the affluent. At Stuttgard it has been remarked, that the

number of the still-born augments nearly in the same proportion as that of the illegitimate births, and it may be added that of the legitimate children in Prussia, only 2 out of 10 die in the first year, but of the illegitimate ones, 3 in 11.

The proportion of the still-born has continued nearly the same for the last 50 years at Berlin : it is at present 1 in 19½. According to Caspar, the rate in some other cities is,

London and Vienna, 1 in 24 ;
Paris and Dresden, 1 in 19 ;
Hamburg, 1 in 15.

It is scarcely necessary to prove that abortions and still-births are far more frequent amongst the unmarried than among married women. If we observe what happens among the most unfortunate of the former, as in the Hospital *des Vénériens* at Paris, the excessive proportion of two children out of seven are born dead ; and in a similar establishment at Hamburg the proportion is 1 in 3. If we take a whole town, as Göttingen, only 3 per cent. of the children born in marriage are still-born, but so many as 15 per cent. of those born out of wedlock.*

* Casper. Beiträge, &c.