

Selected Article.

THE HIGH RANGE OF NORMAL TEMPERATURE AND PULSE THROUGHOUT THE PUERPERIUM.

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Amongst the many myths of our profession there is none more common than the belief that puerperal sepsis has long since ceased to be a scourge, and this is the belief generally entertained by practitioners concerning their own districts. One cannot peruse current periodicals even for a short time without the prevalence of this idea becoming apparent. There appears to be an almost universal assumption that this black scourge of the past has ceased to be a terror to the lying-in women because of increased knowledge and greater precision in obstetrical technique.

A reference to the Registrar-General's reports, however, shows little, if any, improvement in the death-rate from sepsis. This is flippantly accounted for by the assumption of a higher diagnostic skill among the younger race of practitioners as compared with those who went before them, and by the increased carefulness which is now displayed in furnishing statistical figures. Have we not all long since been satiated by the assertions of our friends as to the immunity from sepsis enjoyed by their patients? and are they not ever ready to refer us to longer or shorter periods in which no record of such a cause of death can be found in their practice?

It is known to us all that many fatalities from sepsis are not registered as such. We are also aware that memory often fails to recall disasters of a distant past, and that statistical results quoted from memory are the most fallacious of fallacious figures. Even were we disposed to ignore these sources of error, and accept without reservation these honest beliefs, they would nevertheless utterly fail as proof of the non-existence of septic infection.

Success in obstetrical practice, as it exists in the larger maternity hospitals, or in the district of the private practitioner, is more accurately gauged by a low percentage of morbid cases than by any table of septic mortality.