

There is no doubt that, while the mortality of abdominal operations remained high, the scope of abdominal surgery was limited in proportion. It is only desperate cases that admit of desperate remedies, and as long as the risk of operation was greater than the risk of leaving matters alone, it was wise and practical advice to recommend patients to endure their sufferings with Christian resignation rather than face the risks of surgery; and patients would have been justified, when operation was advised, in replying in the words of King David, "Let me fall into the hands of God, rather than into the hands of men."

We now come to the consideration of what has happened in the last twenty-five years, and therewith to the more special subject of these remarks, which is the phenomenal extension of the scope of operations, not for the saving of life alone, but for the relief of suffering.

To illustrate how the field of operations has extended in inverse ratio to the rate of mortality, I cannot give you a more graphic picture than is presented in the records of the Chelsea Hospital for Women. I have investigated the records of all the abdominal operations performed at this hospital during the twenty-five years from 1886 to 1910; and grouping them in periods of five years each, we find the results as follows:—

Years.	No. of Abdominal Operations.	No. of Deaths.	Percentage Mortality.
1886—1890	126	27	21.4
1891—1895	206	35	17.0
1896—1900	879	50	5.6
1901—1905	1,493	63	4.2
1906—1910	1,880	54	2.8

Thus, while fifteen times as many operations were performed in the last five years as compared with the first five years, the percentage mortality was eight times less.

By way of further illustration, I will take two individual classes of operation, one for the removal of the tubes and ovaries for inflammatory disease, and the other, the removal of the uterus for fibroids. I have chosen these two, because, while these operations are performed in a certain proportion of cases for the direct saving of life, their purpose is even more the relief of suffering and of chronic invalidism. The records of the Chelsea Hospital for Women, taken in the same way as before, are as follows:—