

We need constantly to be reminded nowadays that septic deaths did not occur as a rule in the private practice of obstetric physicians living in the pre-antiseptic era to an extent sufficient to excite local alarm. Then, as now, men practiced midwifery for long periods with an entire freedom from septic mortality, and these periods of immunity extended also to the maternity hospitals.

It will probably come as a surprise to some that, in the year 1766, 611 women were delivered within the walls of the Rotunda Hospital, with a maternal mortality from all causes of three, nor is this seen to be a very exceptional year, for a low death-rate is also recorded during many other yearly periods. In fact, a perusal of the old records makes one at first rub one's eyes with astonishment at the comparatively good results obtained.

It is not until we compare figures by the thousand that the superiority of the present-day methods asserts itself, and this superiority is seen to be overwhelming if our judgment be not based on a death standard alone.

It rarely falls to the lot of the private practitioner to be able accurately to tabulate his cases by thousands, and therefore, from a statistical standpoint, individual experience expressed by a mortality-rate is for the most part of little value. In a standard of morbidity, however, we possess a ready and certain means for determining success either in private or hospital practice, whether the number of those attended be few or many.

In the early history of the Rotunda Hospital about the period before alluded to (1766 to 1780), maternity patients slept two in each bed. They lay on tick bedding, in a condition none too clean. The water supply to the hospital was provided by means of a pump drawing a well which must almost certainly have been contaminated. In the report from which I have obtained this information, the Master seeks permission from the Governors of the hospital to employ two men to clean out the hospital cesspool, which had become a grievous nuisance to his patients and to the neighborhood. In spite of all these disadvantages the total yearly death-rate frequently stood at seven with a total of 800 or 900, or even at a lower figure.

If figures such as these prove anything, they prove that the majority of women will survive the processes of childbirth under the most disadvantageous circumstances. If, however, there should be neglect in carrying out the well-recognized