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Obstetrical Society Of London

Source: *The British Medical Journal*, Jan. 1, 1859, Vol. 1, No. 105 (Jan. 1, 1859), pp. 15-17

Published by: BMJ

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25192989>

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### HEALTH OF LONDON:—WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 25TH, 1858.

[From the Registrar-General's Report.]

THE London returns give satisfactory indications of an improved state of the public health. The deaths which in the week ending December 4th were 1738, and in the two following weeks were 1531 and 1442, have still further declined, and in the week ending last Saturday they were 1240. The mean temperature of the air last week was 44·5°, which is 9° higher than it was in the third week of November.

In the ten years 1848-57 the average number of deaths in the weeks corresponding with last week was 1142; but as the deaths in the present return occurred in an increased population, they should be compared with the average after the latter is raised proportionally to the increase, a correction which will make it 1256. It appears, therefore, that though the difference is small, the actual return for last week is less than the result obtained by calculation.

If the deaths in London last week had been according to "the healthy rate" of mortality derived from certain selected English districts in the last quarter of the year, they would have been 765; and the excess above this point which the true number exhibits is 475, and represents what may be termed the *unnatural* part of the mortality.

The deaths referred in the present return to zymotic diseases amount to 320, the corrected average being 280; those ascribed to pulmonary complaints (not including phthisis or whooping-cough) are 307, the corrected average being 264. The deaths that arose from phthisis (or consumption) are 126, whilst the average is 135. The mortality from scarlatina continues to decrease slowly; it numbered 106, which, however, is still double the average. Measles was fatal in 40 cases; it carried off five children in the sub-district of Whitecross Street. Sixteen fatal cases of scarlatina occurred in Pancras, many of these in Somers Town, where it appears to be very prevalent. Twelve deaths from the same complaint occurred in the Poplar district; and 6 in the sub-district of St. Peter, Walworth.

Last week the births of 703 boys and 709 girls, in all 1412 children, were registered in London. In the ten corresponding weeks of the years 1848-57 the average number was 1489.

At the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, the mean height of the barometer in the week was 29·438 in. The barometrical readings varied from 29·09 in. to 29·68 in. The mean temperature of the week was 44·5°, which is 6·5° above the average of the same week in 43 years (as determined by Mr. Glaisher). The mean daily temperature was above the average throughout the week, and on three days, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, this excess was from 7° to 10°. The thermometer in the shade fell to its *lowest* point, 34·9°, on Monday, and rose to its *highest*, 53·5°, on the following day. The extreme range was therefore 18·6°. The mean range of the week was 10·2°. The difference between the mean dew-point temperature and air temperature was 3·6°. The mean degree of humidity was 87. On two days the humidity of the air was 95, approximating to complete saturation. The mean temperature of the water of the Thames was 42·2°. The wind blew from the south-west. Thursday night was very wild and stormy. Rain fell to the amount of 0·79 in. in the week.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SOCIETY. On Monday, January 3, 1859, a paper will be read, entitled, "Practical Remarks on Cholera Morbus, its origin, nature, and treatment." By H. Cameron, Esq., Surgeon 1st Battalion Artillery H.M. Indian Forces.

### OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

THE inaugural meeting of this Society took place on December 16th at the Freemasons' Tavern. A large number of metropolitan obstetric teachers and practitioners were present. The chair was taken by EDWARD RIGBY, M.D.

Dr. RIGBY briefly explained the objects for which the meeting had been called together. They were there assembled for the purpose of inaugurating a society to be devoted to the advancement of the knowledge of obstetrics and the diseases of women and children. It had long been a matter of exceeding surprise to him that no society had been instituted in the metropolis for this purpose. There could be no question as to the fact, that a very large amount of experience was wasted and lost, owing to the circumstance that no machinery for the systematic collection of facts relating to midwifery could be said to be in operation. The new society would be eminently useful to general practitioners, most of whom have daily brought before their notice facts which the Society might be the means of registering. The Society could be made a depository for general heads of important cases in midwifery throughout the country, and it would, he trusted, be largely supported by country as well as town practitioners. The foundation of the Society would, he was convinced, be attended with advantages of extreme importance to science and to the community at large. Before calling on Dr. Tyler Smith to propose the first resolution, he could not abstain from remarking, that the energy and perseverance which that gentleman had exhibited in promoting so successfully the foundation of the Society, entitled him to the deepest thanks of all interested in the undertaking.

Dr. TYLER SMITH moved the first resolution:—

"That it is expedient to institute a society for the promotion of knowledge in all that relates to obstetrics and the diseases of women and children, in which practitioners resident in the metropolis and the provinces shall be invited to take an active part; and that such a society be now founded, under the name of the Obstetrical Society of London."

He detailed the steps taken for the formation of the Society, and which had resulted in the present meeting. There was no other city in the world in which equal scope for such an association existed. London contained thirteen obstetric schools, all well appointed and in full activity. There were between thirty and forty practitioners who either were or had been obstetric teachers, besides others engaged in special obstetric practice. Nearly 2,000 gentlemen were engaged in general practice in the metropolitan districts, upon whom the responsibilities of midwifery fell even more heavily than the responsibilities of medicine or surgery. No cases equally urgent with *placenta prævia* and *post partum* floodings, or those in which craniotomy or turning might be thought necessary, occurred in medicine or surgery under conditions of equal urgency to the general practitioner. In medical or surgical cases assistance could generally be obtained; but in obstetric cases dangerous emergencies were often so sudden as to throw the whole responsibility on the individual practitioner. The number of labours occurring in the metropolis annually amounted to about eighty thousand. In this great field, and with so many workers, a rich harvest of knowledge might be brought in through the agency of an Obstetrical Society. But they were not limited to London alone. Already the principal teachers in the provinces had joined themselves to the undertaking. We might get something like a fair idea of the importance of obstetric practice in this country from the fact, that of all the women delivered in England and Wales, no fewer than one in each one hundred and eighty-nine died in child-birth. The number of still-born children was over twenty-two thousand a year. The chief business of an obstetrical society would be to diminish this mortality, and the task was one of the highest importance. It seemed to him a positive duty, from which obstetricians could not escape, that they should unite together, and promote the scientific and social interests of the branch of practice in which they were engaged. In the course of the proceedings which it had been necessary to take, he had met with various objections to the institution of an obstetrical society, which he would notice and endeavour to refute. It was said—why have a special society for obstetrics when no special surgical or medical societies were considered necessary? The answer to this was, that the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons were in reality great institutions for the special advancement of medicine and surgery. Those engaged in obstetric practice had no public body to which their allegiance was due, and upon which they could depend for the

promotion of their department of the art of healing. This had always acted as a discouragement; but it would, to a great extent be removed by the operation of a successful obstetrical society. Other objectors were loud in their warnings against the evils of everything like a separation from the colleges of physis and surgery. No wish existed for any such separation; but it was felt by many, that we had too long leant upon others; that we were now able to walk alone; and that we should be all the more respected in the colleges to which we belonged, if we could show ourselves possessed of something like an independent power of action. Some, who opposed our proceedings, argued that the Society would only increase talk and talkers, and that reticence was more to be desired than publicity. He wished to speak with every respect of those who differed from him; but he thought this dictum was somewhat out of joint with the age in which we lived; silence was not progress. As iron sharpeneth iron, so in the collision of mind with mind, true doctrines were brought out and sustained. Discussion had well been said to be the very life and soul of science. There were others who acknowledged that science and practice would be advanced by the proposed Society; but were fearful that obstetrists would suffer, in a social point of view, from placing themselves in any degree apart from the physicians and surgeons engaged in what was called "pure practice." This he did not believe. At all events, it was their plain duty, first and foremost, without thinking of consequences, to advance the science and art in which they were engaged. They certainly need not dread the results of such a course of proceeding. It was an idle fear to imagine that they could lower themselves in the social scale by raising themselves in knowledge. Union ought not to excite jealousy. These were not the times in which improvements were made by individual efforts alone, but in which numbers of men engaged in the same pursuit, by uniting together, have produced some of the greatest results of modern civilisation. On every ground, therefore, having reference to their scientific and social position, he had the greatest satisfaction in moving the resolution to found the Obstetrical Society of London.

Dr. GRANVILLE, F.R.S., seconded the resolution. He stated that he attended with pleasure this second attempt to establish an Obstetrical Society in London. He was grieved to notice that he could claim the privilege of being the oldest veteran in the room; a whole generation of obstetrical practitioners had passed away, who knew of his earnestness in promoting their art and science. He hoped that this endeavour to establish such a Society would prove more permanently successful than the first. The book which he held in his hand would shew that, in November 1825, a meeting was held at his house, attended by the *élite* of the obstetrical practitioners of that time. A Society was then formed, over which Sir Charles M. Clarke presided. The plan originally laid down by himself was considered too vast; and, as it embraced two distinct parts, the majority of the members enrolled resolved to adopt one only; viz., the political or *state* part of the question. Dr. Granville next alluded to the condition of the practice of midwifery in this country at a former period. At his return from Paris in 1817, this condition was a most anomalous one. Not only any one might practise midwifery without let or hindrance, and indeed without any medical qualification whatever (there being no repressive laws in existence to prevent it), but this very license was made the means of enabling quacks to do their work with impunity, defying judge and jury, when summoned before a Court of law, by setting up as a defence, that they did not pretend to be doctors, surgeons, or apothecaries, but only man-midwives. The degraded state of the profession of the art was such that the College of Physicians considered a Licentiate practising midwifery as unworthy of a Fellowship; while a Member of the College of Surgeons was deemed ineligible to be on the list of Council or Court of Examiners, if he practised as an accoucheur; and the Apothecaries' Company, which had been pressed to institute an examination in midwifery, long resisted the "soft persuasion". This being the case, the Society brought together in 1825 applied themselves to the removal of all such indignities, and to raise to a proper and dignified station the practitioners in midwifery. By memorials and letters to the corporate bodies, and through the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, this was accomplished. He had the task of replying to the many cavils and the bold sophistry of the late Sir H. Hallford, who fought hard to perpetuate their exclusion from the College. Sir H. Hallford's contemptuous (to his mind infamous) expression, made use of in a letter to Sir R. Peel, that "midwifery was an unfit occupation for gentlemen of academical education", was

well known. After exertions continued during three years, that Society succeeded in obtaining the following points:—  
 1. A recognition of the honourable position of obstetricians among the medical practitioners of the three corporate bodies.  
 2. An examination in midwifery by the Apothecaries' Company.  
 3. The admission of persons practising midwifery (being members of the College of Surgeons) to be eligible for a post in the Council.  
 4. The concession by the College of Physicians, that Licentiates practising midwifery shall not be ineligible for the Fellowship of the College. At present these reforms had gone farther; the corporate bodies examined in midwifery; one of them delivered diplomas in obstetrics. Accoucheurs were made Fellows of the College of Physicians, and accoucheurs were on the Court of Examiners of the College of Surgeons. Thus the first attempt of an English Obstetrical Society had not been altogether barren of results. All state or political difficulties have been removed; and there is left for the Society it is now proposed to establish, the much more congenial task of promoting the purely scientific part of the great questions which such an extensive field as the practice of midwifery, the treatment of children, and the study and management of female diseases, offers to the attention of the highly educated physician, surgeon, or general practitioner of our days. Though having long ceased, after nearly thirty years of actual midwifery, to attend labours, he was happy to have an opportunity of joining his feeble efforts in promoting the welfare of the proposed Society.

Dr. BARNES moved the second resolution—

"That all legally qualified medical practitioners be eligible for election as ordinary Fellows of the Society."

He hailed with satisfaction the establishment of a Society in the metropolis for the cultivation of obstetrics. He considered it a reproach to us that, in consequence of the absence of a Society devoted to the promotion of this department of medicine, we were not in the same position as the obstetricians of towns on the continent of considerably less magnitude than London, from which authorities on particular questions emanated, and derived that weight which a Society is always capable of imparting. If, as he believed to be the case, the practice of midwifery was, notwithstanding, more successful in London than on the continent, there was the more reason that our practice and opinions should be disseminated. It belonged to obstetrics to teach as well as to learn. He felt confident as to the future of the Society.

Dr. METCALFE BABINGTON, who seconded the resolution, dwelt on the many and great opportunities in the metropolis for obtaining and collecting statistics and other valuable information on that very important branch of our profession, the obstetrical art. He was much surprised that the former Society, the history of which had been detailed to them by Dr. Granville, had not thought fit to continue its efforts. He agreed most entirely with Dr. Tyler Smith, and thought that any objections likely to arise to the formation of such a Society had been most completely answered by him. Not many years ago, certainly, the obstetric practitioners occupied a position by no means flattering. We were considered unworthy to take a place in a scientific brotherhood. Not long since, an eminent physician said derisively of the obstetrician, that his *métier* was to undertake everything; and that the witty saying of a late divine in regard to Lord John Russell applied equally to him, "that he would deliver a woman with child, cut a man for the stone, or take the command of the Channel fleet". Now he believed that the obstetrician would, in the practice of his art, undertake and accomplish anything that required boldness, energy, talent, and presence of mind. He had great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

Mr. FERGUSON, in proposing the third resolution, said it might seem curious that one in that department of the profession to which he had chiefly devoted his attention should come to such a meeting. At one time in his own history he should have had such a feeling; but years, which bring experience, had led him to think differently on such matters than he did formerly, and he was now convinced there was no man more useful in his walk in life than such as practised that department in which the generality of those present were so much interested. He could not let the opportunity pass without congratulating the gentlemen present on the objects of the meeting. He thought the proposed Society highly desirable, particularly in London. If it were desirable to have specialities, there was no place like London for such professional divisions; and if such societies as that contemplated flourished in smaller communities, it was certainly needful that this metropolis should be thus represented. There were already so-



cieties for physicians and surgeons, but he thought the department of medicine to which most of the gentlemen present were devoted, deserved a higher representation than that hitherto accorded to it. In the progress of time, obstetric medicine had acquired a high position, and in his opinion this was a strong mark of the progress of civilisation. Should the talented author of the work devoted to that subject require a new theme for his pen, he would humbly suggest this one as worthy of his attention. As civilisation advanced, the attentions of the masculine sex to the female became more marked. In savage life, the female was left almost to her own resources. He would not enter upon the question of mortality in civilised or savage life on such occasions, but he would not hesitate to affirm that attention to the female in her hour of trouble and peril was a strong characteristic of civilisation. No department in medicine had made such rapid strides in modern times as that in which they were interested; and it was gratifying to perceive how, in the progress of time, the position of the obstetrical practitioner had at last been recognised by the Colleges of Physicians and of Surgeons in London. The youngest man in that room might perhaps know of the frightful results attendant upon the practice of the midwives of former times; and all the gentlemen present, with the numerous body of their contemporaries in the same department, might congratulate themselves that the step now about to be taken would go far to shake off all such dangers in time to come. He moved—

"That the following gentlemen be elected officers of the Society for the year 1859.—*Honorary President*: Sir Charles Locock, Bart., M.D. *President*: Edward Rigby, M.D. *Vice-Presidents*: Robert Barnes, M.D.; Samuel Berry, F.R.C.S.E. (Birmingham); Lawson Cape, M.D.; A. B. Granville, M.D.; J. C. W. Lever, M.D.; Edward W. Murphy, M.D.; Henry Oldham, M.D.; Thomas Radford, M.D. (Manchester); W. Tyler Smith, M.D.; C. Waller, M.D. *Council*: James Allen, Esq. (York); E. Batty, Esq. (Liverpool); Edgar Barker, F.R.C.S.E.; C. Metcalfe Babington, M.D.; I. B. Brown, F.R.C.S.E.; W. J. Bryant, F.R.C.S.E.; John Butler, Esq. (Woolwich); Jos. Cholmondeley, Esq.; J. Hall Davis, M.D.; G. D. Gibb, M.D.; S. W. J. Merriman, M.D.; F. W. Mackenzie, M.D.; J. T. Musgrave, Esq.; W. O. Priestley, M.D.; C. H. F. Routh, M.D.; Spencer Wells, F.R.C.S.E.; R. U. West, M.D. (Alford, Lincolnshire); James Whitehead, M.D. (Manchester); with power to add to their number. *Treasurer*: W. Tyler Smith, M.D. *Honorary Secretaries*: Graily Hewitt, M.D.; T. H. Tanner, M.D."

Dr. ROUTH, in seconding the resolution, gave his cordial support to the Society. To none did woman in the time of trial allotted by the Creator owe more than to the accoucheur. Every man might not have a wife, but most had sisters; surely, then, that midwifery should be well understood and practised was greatly to be desired. Many in the room he felt had obligations to other accoucheurs which nothing would repay. He hoped that in the new society the political element would not be entirely lost sight of. How many lives of young and interesting children were daily sacrificed by prescribing chemists and druggists! By pointing out the difficulties in the treatment of children's diseases, this source of evil might be removed. With regard to midwives, again, he considered that, as on the continent, it should be obligatory on them to go through a regular course of study, and that the state was guilty in allowing them to practise midwifery without such education. There was therefore still much room for political intervention. If the society not only sought to advance the science of the art, but also endeavoured to extend the knowledge thereof amongst those who practised it, a great service would indeed be performed and immense good would be derived by all classes.

The next resolution, empowering the Council to frame laws and to draw up and circulate a prospectus setting forth the objects of the Society, was proposed by Mr. SPENCER WELLS and seconded by Dr. MACKENZIE.

On the proposition of Dr. TANNER, seconded by Dr. GRAILY HEWITT, a vote of thanks to Dr. Rigby for his kindness in presiding and for his able conduct in the chair was carried by acclamation, and the proceedings terminated.

#### THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND AND THE MEDICAL COUNCIL.

On Monday, December 20th, 1858, a conference of Members and Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons was held at the Freemasons' Tavern, for the purpose of considering the recent act of the Council of the said College in electing (to the exclusion of the members and fellows) a member to the General Council of Medical Education and Registration, and to take

such steps as may be necessary to secure the corporate rights of the members and fellows. Among the gentlemen present were Mr. Brady, M.P., Mr. Wakley, Mr. G. Bottomley, F.R.C.S., Mr. Spencer Wells, F.R.C.S., Mr. Luke, Dr. Tunnalley, Dr. Macgregor, Mr. J. F. Clarke, Mr. Chatto, Mr. George Ross, Mr. Lobb, Mr. Day, Mr. Gant, Dr. Burford Carlisle, Dr. Fowler, Dr. Kidd, Dr. O'Connor, Mr. McAndrew, Mr. Beattie, Dr. Dillon, Mr. Hutchinson, etc.

The chair was taken by J. LAVIES, Esq. The following resolutions were passed.

1. Proposed by Mr. BOTTOMLEY, of Croydon, and seconded by Dr. J. H. WILLIAMS:—

"That, in the opinion of this conference, the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, having excluded the members and fellows of the College from a voice in the election of their representative to the General Council of Medical Education and Registration, under the Medical Act, have thereby invaded the corporate rights of the members and fellows, and infringed the provisions of the said Act; and, further, that in the opinion of the conference a principle is involved in the said election which would subvert the representative rights granted to the members and fellows by the legislature in that Act."

2. Proposed by Dr. LADD, and seconded by Mr. POCOCK:—

"That this conference cordially approves the proceedings, up to this time, taken by the committee which has acted on behalf of the members and fellows of the College; and, further, this conference empowers the committee to name another day to hold a public meeting, or to take such other steps as may be necessary to ascertain the views of the members and fellows in respect to the exercise of their corporate rights and the provisions of the new Medical Act."

#### CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INSANE.

THE following letter has been addressed to the *Times* by Dr. Mayo, the President of the Royal College of Physicians of London.

"SIR,—The report of the trial of James Atkinson at York, for the murder of Mary Scaife, in the *Times* of the 18th ult., deserves consideration on grounds which apply to a large number of similar cases, not without important bearings on the interests of society. The plea of mental unsoundness was successfully urged in favour of the criminal. Without any disposition to question its appropriateness,—indeed, with a strong conviction of difficulty attending such criticism on the part of any one not present at the trial,—I would still call your attention to consequences indirectly, but certainly, appertaining to this class of cases upon our present system—a class of cases in which the immediate act is resolvable into normal principles of action, while the context of character affords some grounds for a suspicion of mental unsoundness. Whether James Atkinson was, or was not, insane in that sense of the word in which the plea is exculpatory in the eye of the law, there is, I imagine, no doubt that he was not insane in that sense of the word in which he would have been consigned to a lunatic asylum previously to having qualified himself for such detention by a criminal act. The argument of Dr. Forbes Winslow would not, I imagine, have satisfied the Commissioners in Lunacy that vice, cruelty, intemperate passionateness, defective memory, feeble moral qualities, and limited intellect, inadequate notions of the nature of the Deity, even accompanied by a goitre, would warrant their depriving Atkinson of his liberty. Now, this consideration, which applies, I say, to a large group of cases, is fraught with very perilous interest as far as the public is concerned. The interests of the public and the prisoner are mischievously at variance in our present mode of applying the plea of intellectual deficiency or perversion. So far as it protects the one, it places the other in jeopardy. Until he has committed a frightful crime the delinquent is a vicious brute, subject to all the minor penalties of the law. Let him only murder the woman whom he has ruined, and he becomes the subject of a metaphysical exculpation, and is maintained for the rest of his life at the public expense. Such is English law—at one period of our history a sanguinary code, protective of the public at the expense of the delinquent; at another period protective of the delinquent at the expense of the public safety.

"But how is this state of things to be remedied? Not, as I have already observed, by making all such persons as James Atkinson subject to detention lest they should commit murders