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At their request I undertook the literary department, and I must confess with diffidence, after the excellent treatises of Drs. F. Ramsbotham and Rigby. I have, however, entered more fully into the physiology of the system than they have thought necessary; nor have I hesitated to avail myself of their labours, and those of other distinguished authors, so as to render the theory and practice as complete as possible.

I regret very much that it was incompatible with the size of the volume to admit ample references; however, after the avowal I have just made, it will be understood that their omission has resulted neither from a wish to claim the merit of originality, nor from a desire to save myself trouble. I can truly say that I have examined every author of eminence within my reach, in the course of composition of the work, and have done my utmost to lay before the student a condensed and yet extensive statement of the present state of the science.

Perhaps I ought to say a word as to the elaborate statistics I have given. I would not overrate their value; at the utmost they only afford an approximative estimate, owing to the drawbacks upon their exactness, and could not alone furnish us with accurate conclusions; nevertheless, their value is considerable, as showing the relative mortality of the deviations from natural labour, and of the different operations. Whatever value they do possess it is evident will be in proportion to their extent and accuracy; and to secure both these points, I have examined the various reports myself, and obtained access to some but little known in this country, forming altogether a very large number.

For the very beautiful illustrations, the work is indebted to the talent and good taste of Mr. W. Bagg, and it will be admitted, I am sure, that they add considerably to the value of the work.

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Many liberties have been taken with the text. The prescriptions had been thrown together at the end, and carefully arranged under distinct heads, instead of being scattered through the body of the work; the original text and the emendations made in the later editions, have been fused together and blended with the additions made by the editor; many parts of the work have been so much shortened as to admit of the introduction of a great number of diseases not described in former editions; many others which were only incidentally mentioned are treated under separate heads; and a still greater number have been so much altered as to be nearly new.

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