Notes

5. Gibbs and Sweet, p. 623.
Postscript

Knowledge does not come without cost. Three centuries elapsed between the first epidemic of childbed fever and the discovery of penicillin. For three hundred years, physicians examined young women in childbirth, watched them die, dissected their corpses, and deposited their remains in unmarked graves. The doctors gained knowledge, but at the sacrifice of more lives than were lost in all the wars of those centuries.

In towns and villages around the world are memorials that preserve, in honored glory, the names of men who died at war—men who, in hatred, killed one another, for causes that now seem empty and vain. But there are no memorials to the victims of childbed fever. We remember them no more, and their names are lost forever. Yet their sacrifice purchased knowledge that blesses all our lives with increased health and security.

Never have blessings been sanctified by the payment of so terrible a price. Never have the beneficiaries of such blessings been so oblivious of the cost and of those who paid it.
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