

Wiltbank (Jno.)

A Plea for Obstetrics.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE

COURSE OF MIDWIFERY,

IN THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

OF

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.

For the Session of 1848-49.

BY JNO. WILTBANK, M. D.

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*Philadelphia, November 2d, 1848.*

Prof. JNO. WILTBANK.

DEAR SIR:

At a meeting of the gentlemen composing the Medical Class of Pennsylvania College, the undersigned were appointed a committee to solicit, for publication, a copy of your interesting and instructive Introductory Lecture.

Hoping you will comply with their request, we are Sir, with sentiments of high regard,

Very truly yours,

GEORGE W. PATRICK, Indiana.  
HENRY D. GRAHAM, Delaware.  
GEORGE MURRAY, Nova Scotia.  
W. L. ROBINSON, Canada West.  
W. H. H. MILLER, Pennsylvania.  
LUTHER A. WINTER, Virginia.  
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GEORGE S. GOODHART, Wisconsin.  
J. F. ADOLPHUS, Jamaica (W. I.).  
A. B. WILLIAMS, Michigan.  
ALLEN WARD, New Jersey.  
EPHRAIM DETWEILER, Pennsylvania.

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*November 6th, 1848.*

GENTLEMEN:

Your kind note, soliciting a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication, has been received.

To refuse a request so politely tendered, would be ungracious; I therefore place the Lecture at your disposal, regretting that it is not more worthy of the subject and of the honor you have been pleased to confer upon it.

With sentiments of respect for you and every member of the class, believe me to be your sincere friend,

JNO. WILTBANK.

To Messrs. PATRICK, GRAHAM, MURRAY, } Committee.  
ROBINSON, and others. }

## INTRODUCTORY.

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GENTLEMEN :

I appear before you this evening to introduce to your notice and to commend to your favorable consideration that department of medicine which I have the honor to represent in this Institution.

The science of medicine is so extensive ; it embraces such a variety of subjects, calls into requisition such a diversity of talent, and demands such large stores of knowledge, that it has been deemed convenient, for the purposes of instruction, to divide it into several distinct branches. Of these, some are preliminary, others practical. Some are looked upon by the student as of superior interest, while others may be supposed to be of greater importance. Some, therefore, are valued, others neglected. But they are all valuable—all intimately associated—all necessary—and no man, ignorant of any one branch of medicine, can be an accomplished physician.

I have the honor to occupy the chair of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children. In the course of instruction to which I invite your attention, we shall be called upon to discuss a variety of topics, as important as they are interesting. Our branch relates chiefly to woman—to her, who is so highly distinguished for beauty, grace and loveliness—for her versatile talents, moral instincts and virtuous sentiments—for her modesty of demeanor and purity of life—for her weakness and dependence upon man, and for her wholesome, pervading and unbounded influence upon individuals, communities and nations. Our poet well says :

“ How excellent is woman, when she gives  
To the fine pulses of her spirit way ;  
Her virtues blossom daily, and pour out  
A fragrance upon all who in her path  
Have a blest fellowship.”

We are to regard woman, more particularly, as a reproductive agent—as the one designed by her Creator to increase and multiply her species, and to replenish the earth by keeping up

an uninterrupted succession of generations. In this view, obstetrics assumes a high character; higher even than medicine and surgery. These relate to a passing generation merely; obstetrics looks to the future—to the welfare of beings yet unborn—to a continuation of the race through successive generations—to a perpetuation of man to the end of time.

As the teacher of midwifery and the diseases of women and children, it will be incumbent upon me to teach you the process of parturition in all its forms;—to explain the manner in which it is conducted by the unassisted powers of nature;—to show you the deviations from the natural course that may, and occasionally do, occur, and the manner of correcting them;—to set before you the difficulties, obstructions and accidents that may intervene, and the various methods by which they may be prevented, counteracted or overcome. That you may have a clear and distinct understanding of all this, I shall be obliged to demonstrate the anatomy of the structures and organs concerned in reproduction and delivery;—to teach their functions in a state of health;—to show how they may be modified by peculiarities of conformation, of temperament, of habit, by disease, and, in a word, by the various causes which may exercise an influence, whether it be favorable or unfavorable, upon them.

Nor is this all. Obstetrics embraces the welfare of two individuals. The child, as a matter of course, is entrusted to the care of the accoucheur during the whole period of gestation, and for some time after the delivery; and he thus becomes the medical adviser of both the mother and her child. If, then, you take into consideration the great proportion that the women and children bear to the whole human family, and the number, variety and severity of the diseases to which they are liable, you may be able to form some conception of the value of the instructions of this chair.

In assuming the relation of teacher and pupil in any department of science, it is highly important, at the very outset, to have just views of the value of the subject to be discussed. They show the teacher his responsibility, and stimulate him in the use of all the means within his reach to enable him to meet it faithfully, and they furnish the student with the most powerful incentive to employ all his faculties and powers in the acquisition of knowledge.

Upon each succeeding year I have felt, more and more, the responsibility resting upon me as a teacher of obstetrics. I am well aware that the precepts and practice that emanate from this chair will be spread abroad throughout the land, and that their influence will be beneficial or pernicious, according as they are true or false. Not only will they affect you as prac-

titioners, but your patients and their children. For it cannot be denied that, while in the hands of the educated physician our profession is elevated and useful, with the ignorant, it is degraded and may be destructive.

Deeply impressed with the importance of a thorough knowledge of this branch of our profession to the practising physician, I have endeavored, upon several previous introductory occasions, to urge its claims upon your attention by various considerations. Once, I gave a rapid sketch of the more prominent topics that must come successively under discussion, and endeavored, in passing, to show the necessity of a thorough knowledge of them. Again, I attempted a delineation of woman; I described her peculiarities—mental, moral and physical—and while I showed you how admirably every thing contributed to qualify her for the reproduction and propagation of the human race, you must have seen that she is subject to numerous evils peculiar to herself, affecting both her and her offspring. On one occasion, I exposed the ignorance which, until very recently, was universally prevalent among physicians upon this department of medicine, and encouraged you in its pursuit by exhibiting the rapid advances that had been made since it had been deemed worthy of being cultivated by the profession. And on another, I held up for your approval and imitation some of those great men who had elevated obstetrics to its present position, by stemming the current of popular prejudice, and by devoting to its improvement their brilliant talents and active and untiring energies.

In this manner, I have endeavored, year after year, to impress upon the minds of the pupils of this institution, a just sense of the dignity of the obstetric art, and of the benefits it is capable of conferring. Deeply solicitous for the honor of the science, for its advancement in the profession, and its extension throughout the country and the world, I have omitted no opportunity of pressing its claims upon the attention of those who are engaged in the acquisition of knowledge to enable them to relieve suffering and to preserve life.

And yet, it must be acknowledged, that obstetrics does not command the respect and the services of the entire profession. While some of the most distinguished physicians of Europe and of this country hold it in the highest esteem, and are engaged almost entirely in its pursuit, others look upon it with contempt. Some seem to consider it a mere art, requiring for its practice a very trifling amount of observation, tact and experience—no more, indeed, than may be readily acquired by the most illiterate persons, and they, consequently, conclude that the whole business might, very properly, be entrusted to the *midwife*. The profession in England is obnoxious to the

same charge. Ramsbotham remarks, with much feeling, that obstetrical knowledge "has been held in such low estimation by some members of the profession, as to be thought unworthy of cultivation by the scientific and literary mind;—unfit to be possessed by men of respectable station in society: and the adaptation of which knowledge to practice has been characterized in an official document under the seal of the highest of our medical corporate associations, as an art foreign to the habits of gentlemen of enlarged academical education." The art was there viewed in so degraded a light, that but a few years ago, its practitioners were not admitted to the honor of a fellowship in the Royal College of Physicians. This stigma, it is true, is now removed, and the obstetrician enjoys equal privileges with other members of the profession. In this country, no *public* dishonor has ever been done to midwifery. The influence of the distinguished men in different sections of the land who have been, from time to time, devoted to its pursuit, has shielded it from open reproach. But its claims, though generally respected, are, by no means, universally acknowledged. We sometimes hear physicians, who should be the last to do so, speak disparagingly of them. Some absolutely refuse to practise the art, and others use it only as a means of introduction to a general practice, to be abandoned as soon as they have accomplished their design.

Why, let me ask, is this department of medicine undervalued and neglected? The answer to this question will occupy the remainder of the lecture. If it can be proved to your satisfaction—as I think it can—that there is no valid objection to the cultivation of obstetrics, but that it is well worthy of the respectful attention of the whole profession, I shall consider that I have done a good service to you and to all within the sphere of your influence.

Why, then, this neglect of midwifery? Has woman no claims to our assistance in the hour of her greatest need? And can our neglect of obstetric medicine be due to a want of respect to these claims? This would seem impossible, and yet facts point to it as a great, if not the principal cause. From the earliest ages of which we have any record, until a very recent period, woman has been held in low estimation. She was considered and treated as an inferior being,—a slave,—made to minister to man and his gratification. "In pagan lands she is still a slave, and in half civilized countries, though somewhat raised in the scale of humanity, is still degraded below the sphere in which Providence designed her to move. The tendency of Christianity has been to exalt her virtues, to consecrate and hallow her affections, to ennoble her reason, to shed a halo of light about her path, and thus add dignity to her

nature, and influence to her sway. It is the glory of modern times, that woman is no longer the abject, despised being that she once was, and now is, in many parts of the earth; but exalted to a station corresponding to her high aspirations and lofty destiny."

Is it then surprising, that among ignorant and barbarous nations of ancient and modern times, the obstetric art should be undervalued and despised? How, indeed, could it be otherwise with those who have no regard for her for whose benefit it is designed! But shall the same be said of civilized, enlightened and christian nations? Look abroad upon the different parts of the world, and you will find that where woman is esteemed, there is our art and science duly cherished. It has been well said, that "America is the Paradise of woman." In no country is she more highly exalted and honored. It is unnecessary, and would be out of place, to advocate the rights of woman here. Her very weakness and sense of dependence are acknowledged to give her a just claim to our regard; and especially in parturition—the period of anxiety, of suffering and of danger—she is pre-eminently entitled to our sympathy, our protection, our assistance, and to all the advantages to be derived from science and from art.

The question then recurs: Why is obstetrics undervalued? In some cases it is unquestionably to be ascribed to a want of appreciation of the benefits it is capable of conferring. Too many physicians look upon it as a mere art, requiring of the practitioner a very limited share of tact and skill. They know that parturition is a healthy function, which is accomplished with entire safety, in the great majority of cases, by the unaided powers of nature. They have, probably, witnessed numerous cases that needed no assistance, and hence conclude that artificial aid is never necessary. They think that too much midwifery is taught; it leads, they argue, to officious interference, and thus creates the very evils we deplore; they imagine that if the process were more commonly left to nature we should hear less of difficulties and dangers; and, in proof of their position, they confidently refer to the accounts given us by travelers of the facility and safety with which labors are ordinarily conducted by *midwives* among barbarous and savage nations.

Such arguments are plausible, and probably have had much influence in retarding the advance of the science; but they will not bear investigation. Obstetrics is, it is true, an art; but it is a difficult art—an art founded upon science—having its abstract principles which must be understood and applied—an art calling into requisition an assemblage of the finest of our intellectual and moral faculties; demanding a delicate and

educated sense of touch ; extensive, exact and available knowledge ; sound judgment to determine when this knowledge is to be brought into exercise, and skill to apply it ; presence of mind to be ready to meet unforeseen difficulties, and moral courage to be able to meet them successfully. It is the remark of the learned Dr. Parr, that "in the whole practice of medicine and surgery no subject requires greater firmness of conduct, more profound reflection, nor more sound judgment, than the practice of midwifery."

The argument drawn from the easy labors of women in uncivilized countries, is scarcely worthy of consideration. It is but another exemplification of a truth well known. Functional disorders are extremely rare in savage nations ; as, however, persons depart from simplicity in their mode of living, and increase in civilization and luxury, the aberrations from the healthy play of the functions of the animal economy become more numerous, diversified and mischievous. Now, apply this fact to the case before us. I suppose that you have heard as marvellous accounts of the *digestive* as of the *parturient* powers of our aboriginal Indians. They, however, rarely, if ever, suffer from indigestion. Would it, thence, be fair to conclude that there is no such disease as dyspepsia ? or, if so, that it required no treatment ? and yet, the argument is as good in the one case as in the other.

Neither is the argument that, because parturition is a healthy function, which is ordinarily conducted by the natural powers, therefore artificial aid is unnecessary, more tenable. Dewees refutes this argument so conclusively, that I may be excused for quoting his language. He says, "Were the constitutional powers of the system ; the physical conformation of the pelvis ; and the size of the child's head always and undeviatingly the same ; were the most favorable presentation of the child ; the best construction and the most healthy play of the powers concerned in this operation never to be assailed by accident or complicated by disease,—the opinions of those who contend for the supremacy of unassisted nature, would deserve much, perhaps exclusive, attention. But, as it is well known that this never has, nor ever can be the case, I must insist that the powers of nature have their limits, and that the interference of art sometimes becomes absolutely necessary."

But the advantages of science and skill are displayed in the management of even natural labors. If any one doubts this let him compare the treatment pursued by midwives of former times, with that of the physicians of the present day ; the former stimulating and absurd, having been based upon erroneous views of the nature of parturition and of the condition of the system resulting from it ; the latter a rational antiphlo-

gistic plan, founded upon correct physiological principles. Besides, although I am no advocate for officious interference, I do not hesitate to assert that the judicious practitioner will be able, in certain cases, by an apparently trivial act, properly timed and directed, to accelerate the labor and save his patient hours of suffering.

If science and skill are useful in the treatment of natural labors, how indispensable do they become in the management of difficult, complicated and impracticable cases. The deviations from the healthy process are almost infinitely varied in form and character, and the interposition of art may be rendered necessary by numberless mal-presentations and other causes affecting the child, or by a variety of accidents, diseases and mal-formations of the mother. It is in the management of these cases that the value of science and art is most signally displayed. They endanger the life of the mother, or of the child, perhaps of both, and the accoucheur must ever be ready for all emergencies; for, in most cases, the assistance must be rendered as soon as the danger is discovered. Need I allude to those dreadful hemorrhages, aptly called floodings, which, if not arrested, may destroy both mother and child in a few moments?—to those fearful convulsions, whose invasion is so sudden and whose results are so disastrous?—to mal-presentations of the child, which are so easily corrected by the skilful accoucheur; and which, if let alone, can only be remedied by mutilating and destroying the child?—or to mal-formations of the mother, involving the dreadful alternative of craniotomy, or the cæsarian section—the one surely fatal to the child, the other almost equally so to the mother?

I might greatly extend these questions, but it is unnecessary. The bare allusion to such cases is sufficient to show the indispensable necessity of knowledge to the accoucheur—extensive, exact and available knowledge, not of obstetrics merely, but of every department of medicine—indeed, he must be an accomplished physician. Midwifery is intimately associated with every branch of medical science, and they are all necessary to a proper performance of its duties. The physician may, perhaps, dispense with the knowledge of midwifery, but the accoucheur, if he would practise his calling with honor to himself and advantage to his patients, must be thoroughly indoctrinated in medicine in all its departments.

Anatomy is as truly the foundation of midwifery as it is of surgery. Indeed, the whole art and science are based upon it. It is utterly impossible to understand the science or to practise the art without an accurate knowledge of that portion, at least, which is concerned in the process of parturition. Conceive of a man ignorant of anatomy, attempting the simplest manœuvre

of the art. How is he to understand the mechanism of a natural labor?—how to correct any deviation? The mere touch of such an one is torture; his attempt at aid may result in irremediable injury or even death!

If the man, ignorant of anatomy, is unable to perform the minor duties of the art, how shall he accomplish those great operations by the hand or by instruments, which may become necessary to preserve the life of the mother or her child? How can he operate by version who is ignorant of the axes of the pelvis? How can he apply the forceps, the perforator, or the crotchet?

Obstetric surgery is also an important branch of the art. The accoucheur should therefore be a skilful surgeon. Some of the most difficult operations must be performed by him, and, as they become necessary during the progress of the labor, and delay might be ruinous, he must be fully prepared to meet the difficulties as they arise. These operations demand the exercise of tact, to ascertain the nature of the case requiring aid; judgment, to distinguish the kind of assistance that is necessary; discretion, to determine when the interposition of art is proper; anatomical knowledge, to understand how they are to be performed, and presence of mind, courage and skill, to be enabled to perform them properly.

The introduction of instruments into the practice of our art constitutes a most important era in its history. They do, unquestionably, furnish us the means of overcoming various obstacles otherwise insurmountable, and of saving many valuable lives which, without them, would be inevitably lost. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in the hands of the ignorant and unskilful they have done much mischief—so much so, as to cause them to be considered by some as a curse rather than a blessing. Would it be possible to advance a more powerful argument to induce you to devote your careful attention to this important subject?

Besides these obstetric operations, there are others—more purely surgical—that the accoucheur is occasionally obliged to perform. I need only allude to the removal of tumors and other impediments to the passage of the child, the existence of which is revealed during the progress of the labor; to the mutilation of the child without injury to the maternal structures; to the application of cutting instruments to the mother to preserve her life and that of the child; to the surgical treatment of the various accidents and diseases that sometimes attend or follow labor, and to that which may be required to remedy the congenital deformities of the infant. It is true, that in cities and towns, where several physicians are congregated, a surgeon may be called in to operate; but even in such places it is not

always practicable, and in country locations, the accoucheur must, generally, be his own surgeon.

But how shall the obstetrician pursue his vocation without the knowledge of materia medica, therapeutics, and the practice of physic? He has to deal with woman—with her who is so acutely sensible to the impressions of external agents, whether morbid or remedial. He has to deal with her too, in the performance of the functions peculiar to her sex—those functions that modify and control all others. Who, let me ask, requires a more thorough knowledge of the various structures and functions in a normal and abnormal condition than he whose duty it is to treat the functional and organic diseases of the uterus? Who, a nicer discrimination or a sounder judgment than he who is continually called to the management of the various forms of that protean disease of woman, hysteria? Who, more tact in diagnosis than he who has to decide the question of pregnancy in obscure and doubtful cases? Who, a more complete knowledge of pathology and therapeutics than he who is every now and then brought into contact with such formidable diseases as phlegmasia dolens, puerperal fever, and mania? Who, a more ready knowledge of every thing pertaining to medicine, than he who encounters, suddenly and unexpectedly, frightful convulsions, and alarming and dangerous floodings?

In all these cases, and in many others that might be mentioned, exact and available knowledge is demanded; and it must be acquired beforehand, for it is often called into requisition at a moment's notice. You will meet with cases, when you come to practise obstetrics, where you will have no time, even to call a consultation, much less to consult your books or to try experiments. You must judge promptly, and act quickly, or it is too late.

The present advanced condition of midwifery renders it obligatory upon every one to cultivate it who intends to pursue the healing art. There is now no excuse for ignorance. The art and science are every where taught. No medical school is without its chair of midwifery. Private opportunities of cultivating this branch of medicine are abundant. The books already published upon it are numerous, and the press is continually adding new works, every one of which increases our stores of knowledge. Men of education and standing have not hesitated to devote their closest attention to the subject; and the people in every community, perceiving the benefits to be derived from the art when properly practised, look up to its cultivators with admiration and respect. They know what they have a right to expect from us, and will not excuse, or tolerate ignorance of this branch. They have seen cases in which the

skill of the accoucheur has been displayed in relieving suffering and, perhaps, in saving life, and they justly conclude that no man, ignorant of obstetrics, is qualified to practise our beneficent profession.

And, allow me to add, ignorance of our art is not easily concealed. The physician may err in his diagnosis and treatment, and the effect is not, perhaps, immediately apparent; but it is not so with the accoucheur. He must be thoroughly furnished for his work before he enters the lying-in chamber; for it is knowledge alone that can satisfy his patient and himself there. Every parturient female has a right to expect her attending physician to possess a knowledge of obstetrics. It gives him confidence in himself and secures the confidence of his patient; and this of itself has a happy influence upon the progress of the labor. Whereas ignorance is more prejudicial in this branch of medicine than in any other. It imagines evils where none exist, and sees them not when they are on every side. It is presumptuous in action when it should allow nature to perform the work, and is inefficient and helpless when assistance is imperatively demanded. In its restlessness it may convert a natural into an unnatural labor; and in cases of difficulty and danger it allows the opportunity for assistance to pass by unimproved. In scenes of agitation and alarm where all is confusion and dismay, and where the power of knowledge is manifest in allaying the tumult and in overcoming the difficulty, the ignorant man, "alarmed, confused, apprehensive of the patient's safety and his own reputation," is struck dumb and is helpless! Ah! then he feels his ignorance, and then does it appear to all. Then it is that conscience rises up and upbraids him. Then he calls to mind time mispent and opportunities unimproved. Then he feels the value of the knowledge he had spurned—knowledge that would have enabled him to remain calm and unmoved amid such scenes of terror and dismay, conscious of his ability to meet the exigencies of the case—and then he resolves never again to enter the chamber of the parturient female until he has supplied his deficiencies and is fully prepared to fulfil all the duties that may devolve upon him.

Some of you may be settled in destitute sections of our country, where the light of obstetric science has not penetrated, where its advantages are unknown, and where its practice has been assumed by females. And you may imagine that, as but few cases of midwifery will, probably, be presented to your notice, therefore, you are under no obligations to cultivate the science. This consideration, instead of discouraging, should rather stimulate you to increased efforts in its prosecution. The management of natural labors will be entrusted, almost exclu-

sively, to females; you will, therefore, have but few opportunities of acquiring tact and experience; and yet, wherever difficulty and danger are, *there* you must be. Your obstetric practice will, in this manner, be restricted to those cases which demand the largest share of tact, experience, knowledge, judgment and skill. In the very first case to which you are called, you may have to decide the question as to the necessity of sacrificing the child, in order to insure the safety of the mother. A most momentous question truly; the erroneous decision of which will lead, on the one hand, to the unnecessary destruction of the child! on the other, to the death of the mother from a vain dependence on the powers of nature! Hesitation may be fatal; you *must* decide; you cannot shrink from the responsibility upon the plea of ignorance. It is a branch of your business, and it is your duty to understand it!

Besides, if what I have said of our art be true, it must be evident that females are unfit—as, indeed, they have ever been found to be—to practise it. History proves that they are incompetent, both by nature and education. Their sympathies with suffering are so acute and overwhelming, as to warp their judgments, and render them helpless at the very moment when their services are most imperatively demanded. And, when the parturient process is interrupted by unforeseen occurrences, and the patient is in danger, they have neither the force of intellect to appreciate the difficulty, nor the moral courage to avert the danger. It is the duty of every medical man, therefore, to take the business out of their hands, by proving the superiority of the male practitioner; and thus, while he is extending the borders of his profession, he is, at the same time, promoting the true interests of women and their children.

Some may object to midwifery on the ground that its practice is not apt to lead to distinction and wealth. Now, if these are the prime objects of any member of this class, I would advise him to abandon our profession at once, and to seek for them in some other vocation. He may, perchance, attain them in the legislative halls, at the bar, or in the counting room; but they are rarely reached in medicine. Indeed, they are accounted as unworthy objects with the physician. They arise from intercourse with masses of the people, with which he has nothing to do. His *duties* are quiet and unostentatious; they are with individuals—the sick, the suffering and the afflicted—and his *great object* should be to administer solace to the mind and ease to the body. This is, or ought to be, his great aim—the first and ruling object of his life—and if he keeps this object ever before him, and pursues it by a faithful discharge of duty in any department of medicine, distinction and success will be sure to follow as natural consequences. But to make

them the objects, is to reverse the order of things—it degrades the profession, and must end in disappointment. If it be said that surgery is more attractive; that its brilliant operations are captivating to the people, that their results are visible to all, and that it, therefore, leads more rapidly to eminence and success, it may be answered, that obstetrics, though less brilliant, is not less useful and honorable; and that the road through it to the high places in our profession, though it may be somewhat longer, is no less open, direct and sure. Our city—I should rather say our country—can boast of a RUSH, a PHYSICK, and a DEWEES, men that would do honor to any country—each distinguished in a different branch of our profession. Now, permit me to ask, which of these is most favorably known at home and abroad? in other words, which is most highly distinguished? It is no disparagement to the others to give the palm to DEWEES. His name may be seen in every book upon midwifery that has been published since his time; no matter from what country it comes. His opinions are everywhere treated with respect; his practice is followed with confidence, and his name is universally honored. Obstetrics, then, can confer true distinction.

Permit me to urge you, in conclusion, to give your close attention to this department of medicine. Fix your minds upon high attainments in the art. Lay broad and deep the foundations of the science by ardent, devoted and persevering study. Follow the example of BARD, of FRANCIS, of JAMES, of DEWEES—men who enlarged the borders of our profession and elevated obstetrics to its present exalted rank—men who enjoyed a great reputation during their long and useful lives, and whose memories are embalmed in thousands of grateful hearts.

Take the case of DEWEES—he was one of my preceptors, and I love to dwell upon his many excellent traits of character. About fifty years ago he came to this city with the view of prosecuting the practice of his profession. A single man, of youthful appearance, without money, without friends, without influence; and with such competitors as BARTON, SHIPPEN, WISTAR, RUSH and PHYSICK, his prospects must have been gloomy indeed. But he possessed genius, energy and a noble ambition, and he determined to carve out his own fortunes.

At that period the practice of midwifery was, almost exclusively, in the hands of ignorant females. The science was not cultivated in America, and could scarcely be said to constitute any portion of medical studies. True, Dr. Shippen *professed* to teach it; but when you consider that his professorship included anatomy, surgery and midwifery, you must, at once, perceive that the obstetrical instructions were, necessarily, general, and

very limited. The few physicians who, at that time, engaged at all in the practice of the art, had received their instructions in Europe. Even this advantage was denied to Dewees. But he soon perceived that midwifery presented the most extensive field of usefulness, and that in the prosecution of it, he could turn his zeal and abilities to the best account. He embraced the opportunity thus offered, and, feeling his deficiencies, labored assiduously in supplying them. He began by reviewing carefully all that had been published upon the subject; observed attentively the process of parturition in all its forms, and prepared himself by unremitting study and practice, to perform all the requisitions of the art.

Having thus acquired a thorough knowledge of this, hitherto neglected, branch of medicine, his next effort was to excite the attention of the profession to its claims upon their regard. To him belongs the honor of having been the first, who taught obstetrics as a science, in America. In a small room, to a few pupils, and in a familiar manner, he daily poured forth his stores of valuable knowledge. These private lectures and instructions were continued, with but little intermission, during the greater part of his professional life. They were listened to with attention and profit by numbers of young men who annually resorted to this city to prosecute their medical studies; they awakened the attention of the profession to its claims upon their regard, and it is to them that I am indebted for the interest that I have always taken in midwifery.

The celebrity he obtained by his indefatigable exertions in this department of medicine extended throughout the country, and persons came from the most distant regions to receive the benefit of his experience. No medical man in America enjoyed a more extensive celebrity, and none more truly deserved it. By his close observation and unwearied industry, he enriched the science with many valuable improvements and discoveries, and, in the true spirit of his profession, he published the knowledge he had acquired, for the benefit of his profession and country. With a practice which seemed sufficient to occupy the whole of his attention, it is difficult to conceive how he found time to publish any thing; and yet publication succeeded publication with unexampled rapidity, and they were replete with sound, practical knowledge upon his favorite topics. His various works upon midwifery, and the diseases of women and children, were held in the highest estimation throughout the country, and he lived to see them translated into several different languages, and republished in Europe with the most gratifying commendations. His name has thus become known throughout the world, and is every where inseparably associated with American midwifery.

Talents and acquirements such as he possessed, with a reputation so exalted, and fame so universal, peculiarly qualified him for the professorial chair; and though he enjoyed its emoluments but one short session, his name has added imperishable honor to the institution which had the benefit of his services.

He is now departed from among us; but he has left us the vast stores of useful knowledge which he was at such pains to acquire. He has left the practice of midwifery in the hands of the profession. He has left us his name, to add dignity to our profession; and he has left us his example that we should follow his steps.

Yes, gentlemen, follow the example,—imitate the character of Dewees! Pursue your obstetric studies with the same ardor, industry and perseverance—observe with the same attention—practise with the same judgment and dexterity—and publish the knowledge that you may acquire with the same fidelity. Devote yourselves, as he did, to the advancement of science, to the honor of your profession, and to the good of mankind, and you shall reap his rewards. Like him, you shall shed lustre on your profession, and honor on your country. Like him, you shall live respected, prosperous and happy in the love, esteem and confidence of your patients; and like him, you shall die full of honors. And, when your body shall have mouldered in the grave, your fame, like his, shall endure as long as science is respected or our art appreciated.