WOMAN AS A PHYSICIAN.

Illustrious Examples Drawn From History.—The Advantages of the Female Medical Student of To day Compared with those of her Predecessors, with Suggestions as to their Proper Utilization.

BY EUGENE F. CORDELL M D.,

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(Abstract of an Introductory Lecture delivered before the Class of the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore, October 1st, 1883.)

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(*Abstract of an Introductory Lecture delivered before the Class of the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore, Oct. 1st, 1883.*)

The Lecturer began with some words of greeting and wishes for the success of the students in the work of the ensuing session. The attempt to provide facilities for the medical education of women in Baltimore, such as they were obtaining elsewhere, had been successful far beyond expectation. In the brief period that had elapsed since the College had opened its doors to students, several measures had been adopted tending to promote its usefulness and elevate its standard; of these the preliminary examination deserved special mention. The policy of the College had been one of conciliation—but it had wisely deemed that the best way to conciliate men's prejudice and opposition was to show that it deserved their esteem and confidence.

The career upon which they were about to enter was not a new one for woman. From the earliest recorded times women have been engaged in the practice of medicine in some or all of its branches. In the very first book of the Old Testament—3,600 years ago—we find that the midwife held a distinct office. The courage and integrity of this class were illustrated by their refusal to kill the new-born children of the Hebrews, when ordered to do so by the cruel Pharaoh. To these persons was entrusted the exclusive charge of woman in her ailments, a custom that has prevailed among Eastern nations up to the present day. Among the Greeks more latitude was allowed, and hence the literature of that country—from Hippocrates down—is comparatively rich in treatises on diseases of women and parturition. Among the Greeks, too, women first assumed an equal rank with men as medical practitioners. Various examples were quoted from Homer in proof of this, as where the daughters of Arsinöus dressed the wound of the warrior-surgeon, Machaon. Socrates boasts in the Dialogues of Plato: "I am the son of a skilful and renowned midwife—Phænarete." Moschion described the qualifications of midwives in such a way as to indicate that many of them possessed cultivated minds and extensive professional attainments. Agnodice was a plucky Athenian girl who conceived a passionate desire to acquire a knowledge of medicine, which the law forbade to women. Disguised in male attire, she attended the school of the great Greek anatomist—Herophilus—at Alexandria (who has the honor of having first practiced human dissection), and applying herself assiduously, soon mastered the theory of medicine. Returning to Athens, she began practice, chiefly in midwifery and the diseases of women. She was successful, and soon began to monopolize the obstetric practice of the city. This so excited the jealousy of the men-physicians that they charged her with debauching the women whom she attended. She disproved this by revealing her sex to the judges. Her accusers then charged her with violating the law. This was more serious, and it would doubtless have gone hard with her had she not acquired such a hold upon the affections of her clients that the most prominent women in the city used their influence in her behalf. The result was the repeal of the law, and an order by the judges permitting any free woman to learn and practice medicine, and forbidding the men any longer to attend cases of confinement. Aspasia—not to be confounded with the mistress of Pericles—wrote upon uterine displacements and ulceration, abortion, and other subjects in gynecology, which are referred to by Aetius.

In Rome, women had still greater latitude, and we find them adopting the specialties then in vogue—there were obstetrices, and adstetrices, and sagæ, and iatraleptæ, and unguentariæ, and tractatrices. Plautus, in his "Miles Gloriosus," describes a midwife lamenting her poor pay thus: "Tum obstetrix expostulavit mecum parum missum sibi," and Terence, in "Andria," portrays a midwife given to drink. Paulus Ægineta, the compiler of Alexandria, copies extensively from the writings of Cleopatra, a Roman woman. St. Jerome tells of a Roman lady—Fabiola—who had medical charge of a hospital. Says Martial:

> "Percurrit agili corpus arte tractatrix,
> Manumque doctam spargit omnibus membris,"

thus showing that massage was known and practised at that time. Pliny, in his "Epistles," refers gratefully to the services of iatraleptæ—friction-doctors.

When European civilization melted away before the fierce attacks of the Northern barbarians, all was for a time black darkness. The little remnant of medicine found refuge among

the monks in the monasteries. "The human mind neglected, uncultivated and depressed, continued in the most profound ignorance." The first ray that illuminated the horizon came from the south of Italy and the School of Salernum. This school began to be known about the end of the seventh century, and reached its acme in the eleventh. It was for a time the medical centre of Europe, the "Fountain of Medicine," as Petrarch calls it, supplying, but feebly in comparison, the place of Alexandria. In connection with the subject of medical women, it is especially interesting because of the great privileges it permitted the sex, and the eminence which they acquired there. They became not only writers, but professors and lecturers, and old Antonio Mazza—"Doctor ac Civis Salernitanus"—enumerates the names and writings of the most famous of them in his quaint quarto—"Urbis Salernitanæ, Historia et Antiquitates, etc." Instruction was given at Salernum in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Saracenic, and the women seem to have been chiefly of the two latter nationalities. Among the subjects upon which they wrote were atrabilis, the nature of woman, crises, pestilential fever, the cure of wounds, ointments, urines, the embryo, etc In concluding the notice, it may be of interest to add that the School of Salernum enjoyed extensive rights and privileges, which it transmitted to its graduates; it obtained the distinction of being known as the "Collegium Hippocraticum."

Simultaneously with the School of Salernum flourished the Arab School, which arose out of the ashes of the Alexandrine. The works of the Greek and Latin physicians were translated and eagerly read. Schools of medicine were established, and for a time the East became the home of art and science. We have no records of the writings of any of the Saracenic midwives during this period, although they had the monopoly of their department, as we have already said.

About the close of the fifteenth century Europe began to awake from her slumber, and men's minds freed themselves from the bonds by which they had been so long fettered. In Italy, liberal sentiments early prevailed as to the study of medicine by women. The University of Bologna was especially considerate to them. One of the most celebrated of its graduates was Madame Anna Morandi Manzolini, who married a Professor of Anatomy in the University, and, on his death, herself became Professor. She was famous for her models of the human body in wax. Few examples of eminent women appear in other countries except France.*

*An Irishwoman is credited with performing the Cæsarian section.

The Lecturer then sketched the history of several of the noted sages-femmes, who by their lives and writings have helped to give French midwifery that prestige which it has always possessed. Many of these attained their distinction whilst in charge of the Lying-in Department of the Hotel Dieu Hospital, or of the Maternité. It is not to be inferred that these women were like many of the midwives of to-day. They were learned women, of high scientific attainments, and their authority in matters relating to their department was fully accorded.

The first woman who wrote a work on midwifery in France was Louyse Bourgeois, midwife to Marie de' Medici, Queen of Henry IV., whose memory Professor Goodell has embalmed by a graceful and exquisitely written sketch, read before the Philadelphia Co. Med. Society, June 5th, 1876. She was born in 1563. She was the wife of a surgeon, who had been a pupil of Paré, and began her studies with the ponderous tomes of that great surgeon. Her volume—"Observations Diuerses sur la Sterilité, etc.," is full of interesting details upon the inner court life of the period, interspersed with the observations of a shrewd midwife. This work has literary and historical value apart from its obstetrics, which was closely modeled after that of Paré. It was about the beginning of the seventeenth century that men began to attend in cases of confinement in France. Commencing with ladies of quality, the custom gradually descended to the middle and lower classes. M. Honoré, "that man of Paris who delivers women," was one of the first men accoucheurs, and was an eye-sore to Louyse. Another, probably M. Guillemeau, the successor of Paré, she charges with having treated a lady of rank for a dropsy which was suddenly dispelled after five and a half months by the birth of a lusty child. She relates this case, she says, "to serve as a warning to those who undertake to treat disorders of which they know nothing: every-one should stick to one's trade." Some time after the physicians retaliated by laying the blame of the death of the Duchess d' Orleans upon a fragment of retained placenta, but she so conclusively proved that what they had been tugging away at with their finger-nails was but the placental site, that they were silenced. The work above referred to underwent four editions, and was translated into Latin, German and Dutch.

Marie Louise Dugès Lachapelle was born in Paris in 1769, her father being an humble officier de Santé, her mother midwife-in-chief of Hotel Dieu. At the age of twenty-three she married, but became a widow three years afterwards. The celebrated Maternité was established by her advice, and she became its first directress. In the school for mid-

wives she had charge of the clinical instruction, Prof. Baudeloque being her associate. The graduates of this school have been noted for their solid attainments and practical skill. Madame L. was a person of rare powers of observation, and perhaps had a larger obstetrical experience than any one who has ever lived. She died in 1822. Her writings were collected and published in three volumes by her nephew, Professor Dugès, of Montpelier, in 1821, under the title, "The Practice of Obstetrics, or Select Memoirs and Observations upon the Most Important Points of the Art."

Contemporaneous with Lachapelle was the even more distinguished Madame Marie Anne Victoire Gillain Boivin, born 1773. She early obtained some knowledge of anatomy and midwifery in a village hospital. In 1797 she married, but a year afterwards found herself a widow with one child. Necessity thus compelled her to look out for her own support, and she turned her attention to medicine. She entered la Maternité as a sage-femme. A close intimacy at once sprang up between her and Madame Lachapelle, which was encouraged by similarity of age, tastes, and misfortunes. It was through her efforts that the school of midwifery, founded by Chaptal was instituted. In 1812 appeared her first work—which went through four editions—"Memorial de l'Art des Accouchements," in two volumes, 8vo., with 143 plates. She also wrote six other works, upon various obstetrical subjects, the last and most celebrated, in the composition of which Professor Dugès, of the Faculty of Montpelier, was associated with her, being entitled "Traité Pratique des Maladies de l'Uterus et de ses Annexes," two volumes, 8vo., with atlas. She also translated the works of English writers. On the death of Lachapelle she was offered the charge of La Maternité, but declined. In 1814 the King of Prussia conferred upon her the order of civil merit; the University of Marburg gave her the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Her name was proposed before the Academie de Mèdicine, but the prejudice against the admission of a woman was too great, and she was defeated. Towards the close of her life she received a small annuity, which was almost her sole support up to her death in 1841. Madame Boivin was the most prolific female medical writer who ever lived, and her writings were all of the first order.

The Lecturer next sketched the changes that have taken place in recent years in connection with the medical education of women, and claimed that a great revolution had been going on both in sentiment and in realization. Whilst this was partly due to the more liberal views of the age in which we live, it was in great part to be ascribed to the indomitable pluck and perseverance of woman herself, who would be content with nothing less than equal privileges and advantages with men. The Lecturer then proceeded to show that in many countries the doors of the Universities had been opened to women: this was the case for instance in Switzerland, Italy, France, Finland, Holland, Denmark, Sweeden, Australia, India and America. They had also taken diplomas in Russia, and had been admitted, with some restrictions, to the lectures of some of the German and Austrian schools.

The establishment of separate colleges for women had, however, done more than anything else to advance the movement, and seemed to solve many of the difficulties surrounding it. Public sentiment was unquestionably averse, and probably always would be, to the indiscriminate sharing of the studies and duties of medical students by young persons of different sexes, and both nature and association offered strong grounds in support of this view. But this was a consideration of less importance at present than formerly, since the special schools now offer advantages not inferior to those obtainable in the others. Four such schools are now in successful operation in this country: that in Philadelphia, established 1850, that in New York, established 1865, the Chicago school, founded in 1870, and this institution, now in its second year.

The Lecturer then continued as follows: In the remarks which have preceded I have sought not so much to present a complete historical resumé of the entire share which your sex have taken in the medical history of the past and of their work in the present, as to show you what they *can* do, and above all to bring before your minds some illustrious examples which may serve during your student-life both as models for your imitation and as incentives to your emulation. To tell what *has been done* is one of the best ways of showing what *ought to be done*. I trust that my recital will also not merely lead you to strive to equal those who have preceded you, but to surpass them. You have no right to content yourselves with equality; for consider your and their relative advantages. Most of them had obstacles to overcome which only their courage and perseverance enabled them to surmount. Many had to contend against the prejudices of ignorance and bigotry. And not only were their means of instruction limited, but the actual amount of knowledge which was to be gained was limited also. To you on the other hand the freest privileges are accorded. The accumulated wisdom of two thousand years is yours, and you have but to partake of the feast of learning so bountifully spread before you.

Of the proper utilization of your advantages I hope you have already formed some just ideas. No one should venture upon any important work without some definite plan of action. Nevertheless a suggestion or two, in conclusion, from one more experienced than yourselves, may prove of use to you. It is of the first importance that you should always bear in mind the object for which you have come here: that it is not for pleasure, or curiosity, or merely to while away the time. You are here for study—to train your minds in the principles and details of a great and difficult science, which will require the full exercise of your best faculties. It is a work which offers an ample field for the greatest human intellect. It then behooves you to waste no time, but to settle down at once to the student-life which is before you, and steadfastly to persevere until its end. Remember that you are here laying the foundation of an education which will continue throughout your lives, and that the edifice will be durable and secure according to the depth and solidity of the base upon which it rests. In some respects you possess advantages over the other sex. You are free from many of the sources of distraction to which men are liable. It is not necessary for instance, to caution you as them against the charms of

"Rosaline's bright eyes,
—her high forehead and her scarlet lip."

Whether there is any Adonis of the other sex who will occupy the mind's eye of some of you to the exclusion of your books, I will not venture to say; but if so, you must pluck the offending member, and that at once. If you wish to succeed in your studies and make the most of your opportunities, you must banish from your thoughts everything that comes between you and your legitimate work.

Again, I would urge you to be thorough. Do not be satisfied with a half-performance of your tasks. If you do not understand a subject persevere with it until you do. Repetition is not only an aid to the memory but it also aids the understanding. "Learn not many things but much" is an old adage, which means that it is better to know a few things well than to get a smattering of many things. In your reading adopt the rule never to let a word pass of which you do not know the meaning. Hence your dictionary should be your constant companion. Let your thoroughness extend to your habits—and especially let it include punctuality. Industry, system, thoroughness—these constitute the elements of success in student-life. *Sic itur ad astra.*