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FELLOWS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS: Under the very auspicious circumstances which have attended this meeting, I esteem it a high honor to have been made its presiding officer, and I feel it incumbent upon me to express my sense of obligation to you for placing me in this position; at the same time, I must say that I appreciate the great responsibility and have felt the need of your generous consideration in my efforts to discharge its duties.

On the assembling of this Association for the first time, it may be very proper to demand a reason for its existence. The daily round of professional experience impresses the practitioner of medicine with the incompleteness of his knowledge, and to the man who sees in his avocation something more than a mere source of pecuniary profit, there must arise the desire to know the yet unknown. No argument is needed to prove the assertion that the united effort of many is more fruitful than the inharmonious working of individuals, hence the propriety of coöperation, organization. In the words of an eloquent member of another profession, "It seems very certain that the world is to grow better and richer in the future, not by the magnificent achievements of the highly gifted few, but by the patient faithfulness of the one-talented many."

It may be admitted that the motive of our Association is, first, our own advancement; yet it cannot be considered undue self-adulation if we believe that from such combined effort good must come to the profession at large, and necessarily through the profession to those who, above all others, are interested in the perfection of our knowledge and skill,—our clients.

The activity of the past decade has given us so many important

facts that it would scarcely be hyperbole to say that a new practice of obstetrics and gynecology has been created in that time, and no words of mine can in any full degree express the wonderful benefactions of the recent advances thus made; but the very fact that there has been such progress, and that so much that but a few years ago was impracticable or even unknown, is now feasible and well known, only stimulates us to better work and further advance; and with the vast range of study and the diversity of subjects now comprehended by the science of medicine, it is clear beyond controversy that advance can be made only by men directing their efforts to a limited field of work.

Such, gentlemen, I believe, are sufficient reasons for our presence here to-day, as the American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; and never in the history of our profession have the auguries been so auspicious for the accomplishment of the purposes set before us, as evinced by the cosmopolitan harmony and close association of our profession in all parts of the world, in the facilities for the speedy transmission of every item of interest, of every discovery, and every suggestion, and, more important than all else, by the number of devoted workers who, animated by no unworthy craving for worldly honor or love of gain, are delving into the mysteries of the human frame, scrutinizing every group of asserted facts, as the slave does his handful of earth for the diamond; and what matter if the enthusiast does cry out in exultation over what may prove not to be a gem! yet the precious stones of truth that are found abundantly pay for the toil.

While I have felt the great honor of my position, I have also realized the great difficulty of bringing anything before you worthy of your attention or that may, even in a small degree, contribute to the success of our organization. The past work of our branch of practice is so recent and so entirely familiar to you that it would be altogether inappropriate to take any time in presenting it; a glance at the programme laid before us will convince you that the various practical topics which are so important, are to constitute much of the subject-matter for discussion here, and therefore it is inexpedient for me to dwell upon them now, great as is the temptation so to do. The proper indications for abdominal section; the true position which electricity shall occupy in gynecology; the propriety of hysterectomy; the value of Alexander's operation and its newly

devised congener, abdominal fixation, for retro-deviations of the uterus; the relative merits of craniotomy, Cæsarean section, and induced labor; the best method of dealing with extra-uterine pregnancy; the proper means of securing antisepsis: are all questions fraught with great interest, and merit the most thorough study; and so confident am I that before this meeting closes much light will be shed upon many or all of them by your deliberations, that I shall pass them by without further consideration. Having remitted to your care those topics which undoubtedly claim most of your attention and awaken most of your interest, I am constrained to bring before you subjects which may seem of little import, but you will at once agree with me that, in the daily routine with most of us, the less important subjects are those which most constantly demand our thoughts, and assuredly nothing which contributes to the welfare of those who require our care can be too trivial for our study.

Let me now direct your attention to what, in my opinion, are subjects worthy of our earnest thought, premising my remarks with the statement that the Association must not be held responsible for the opinions of any individual, and especially can there be no *ex cathedra* utterances promulgated, but each member must be held accountable for his own sentiments.

So grand have been the results of abdominal section for diseases of women, in the hands of skilled men in our own land and abroad, that only words of highest commendation are appropriate.

These achievements which challenge our admiration, and demand the grateful acknowledgment of all who are interested in the mitigation of suffering, are the results of years of toil and conscientious study; but unhappily the success is seen while the steps which led to it are overlooked: as a consequence, men without the professional or moral qualifications for such responsible services have been drawn into this line of work, till I am sure I am justified in the assertion that to-day laparotomy is done too often, and with insufficient grounds for so serious a procedure. Dr. Parvin has recently said: "It cannot be denied that there is a growing belief in the professional mind that these operations are too frequently resorted to, and, therefore, their indications ought to be clearly established, and the presence of the latter conclusively demonstrated before a woman is subjected to what otherwise is an odious mutilation. The results of the opera-

tion have been so satisfactory, is there not danger of its being too frequently performed? Nay, is there not danger that men without experience, deceived by the glamour of brilliant statistics, and ambitious of fame as operators, will decide upon and perform these operations when there is no necessity for them, and no benefit follows them, or they are fatal?" That such complaints are well grounded, unfortunately, cannot be denied, but this admission by no means implies that the operation is to be condemned; through all history great advances in every sphere of life have had unworthy advocates, whose existence only serves to establish the value of the cause they champion. And in our own profession, have not vaccination, and anæsthesia, and ovariectomy been subject to such animadversion and misinterpretation, and yet have vindicated their claim to the position of benefactions to the human race? So shall it be with laparotomy, and surely it is well within the province of this Association to establish more clearly the propriety of the operation, remove unreasonable objections, and seek to prevent its undue performance.

An opinion has large credence among the laity, and is endorsed by some members of our profession, that *intentional abortion* is a common crime, and statisticians and social scientists see in the decreasing fecundity of American women clear evidence of the truth of this charge; that some women are guilty admits of no doubt, but that it is so universal an evil as sensational literature, especially of non-professional origin, would indicate, I do not believe. Permit me to direct your attention to a more demonstrable cause for diminishing fertility.

I need but remind you of the deleterious influence of social habits and circumstances over the functions and physique of women, and, consequently, how many fashionably educated girls are incapable of completing the process of maternity, or, if they do pass through it, how seriously they are damaged thereby. Those who are fond of charging American women with the crime referred to, cite us to the rich, the educated, the refined, as guilty, while their sisters who are less favored financially, and are humbler socially, bear their due proportion of children. Now, is it not a truthful statement, that the first class are the physically feeble, the enervated, and, *therefore*, incapable of carrying the process of reproduction to its ultimate perfection? To corroborate this view, Dr. W. W. Johnson has

recently said that "the confirmed ill-health so common after the establishment of the marriage relation and childbirth among American women, in a large number of cases, is dependent upon diseases and alterations of the genitalia," which, probably, are the more intense because of the original debility of the subject; and Dr. J. C. Hoag says "That a lack of fecundity on the part of a woman is often due to endometritis, and is overcome by the cure of the diseased condition, is a matter of frequent clinical experience;" and Kleinwächter has shown that, of ninety cases of sterility after the birth of one child, nearly one-half were subject to inflammatory processes of the genitalia. Accept these statements as true, and a rational explanation of the asserted evil is not only found, but it is at once transferred from the domain of ethics and morals to within the pale of our professional care, and at the same time vindicates those whom we look upon as the purest and best from the indiscriminate charge of murder of their unborn children.

I believe the influence of the genitalia over the general system, especially in its nervous manifestations, has been greatly exaggerated. The idea expressed in classic language that "Woman is, because of the uterus," or, more correctly, "because of the ovaries," though in some respects true, has led to false deductions and erroneous practices.

J. Matthews Duncan has recently said, "The influence of disease of the ovaries is not so potent or important as that of the liver, on the health of the individual," and the careful study of Dr. Grace Peckham is strong testimony against the disproportionate influence of morbid conditions of the organs of generation. Uherek thinks that entirely too much attention has been paid to the genital organs in connection with neuroses, even if there are lesions which have resulted from parturition; the general condition should receive a large share of attention; and observations on the results of operations for nervous diseases confirm these views. Our associate, Dr. W. H. Wathen, has recently said, "The removal of healthy ovaries or tubes to cure epilepsy or vague nervous diseases not due to irritation of the pelvic organs, was not more consistent than the castration of a man for similar purposes;" and our associate, Dr. A. Vanderveer's, experience regarding hystero-epilepsy, was that it had not been cured by removal of the appendages; and Parvin, quoting Reverdin, says that among all the cases of castration for nervous diseases in

Paris, very many have not resulted favorably. Now, with such testimony, is it not incumbent on us at least to utter an admonition against the removal of the normal ovaries for lesions of the nervous system?

A subject of practical importance, urgently demanding attention from the obstetrical section of our Association, is the constantly increasing inability of women who should be "nursing mothers" to furnish milk for their infants; no words from me are needed to impress upon you the fact that many women who have borne children are incapable of nourishing them; but perhaps you have not appreciated the fact of the very large proportion who are thus defective, probably about forty per cent. with us, and according to the investigations of Escherich and others, in Bavaria, fifty-nine per cent. of mothers become incapable from physical causes of nursing their children within two months after delivery. The incapacity to perform this function, upon which more than any other the well-being of the child depends, is in large degree the result of habits tending to impair the integrity of the mammary gland, as vicious modes of dress, disregard of maternal duty, and even sometimes the voluntary suppression of the developing gland—conditions of great gravity in their immediate effect upon the offspring; but, multiplied and extended in their influence for evil, for, as shown by Altman, they may lead to inherited atrophy of the secreting structure of the mamma. May we not hope, by applying the laws of evolution, to bring about a better secreting organ, as is so successfully done in inferior animals?

Another topic well worthy of our most careful thought is, What can be done to mitigate the pains of labor? We all, probably, have adopted the custom of lessening the intensity of suffering in the latter part of the second stage by the use of anæsthetics, and almost as common is the use of chloral at an early period; but my impression is that with the great majority of obstetricians but little is done to lessen pain during a large part of the process of delivery.

With the abundant therapeutic resource of the present day, we ought surely to divest this ordeal of the intensity of its pain. I trust, by another meeting, to report upon some experiments I am now making in this direction.

Our highest conception of a benefactor is one who prevents evil, rather than one who mitigates or seeks to cure the evil after its

development. While the duties of the physician are to a very great degree limited to the removal of existing disease, and in such office he must gain his most *obvious* triumphs, yet all will concur with me that our whole duty will not be done unless we seek to *prevent* many of the ills we so often are called upon to cure; and herewith I feel that I offer you one of the most difficult problems to solve. In adopting a new remedy or advocating a new procedure in surgery we address men whose training qualifies them to judge carefully and appreciate the means and the end in view; but to advocate hygienic or preventive measures we appeal at once to the laity, and invoke the coöperation of those who are little disposed to make the effort demanded.

But this indifference is neither the sole reason nor the most potent cause for the imperfect results accruing from labor in this direction. History plainly teaches us that physical degeneracy has been an invariable sequence of national success and financial prosperity. I need only remind you of the fact that the most learned and prosperous nation in each age of the world has succumbed to a less civilized race; to borrow from a recent writer, "It is the old, old story of riches, luxury, and effeminacy, and a horde of athletic savages. Once let the conventionalities and artificial restrictions of a so-called civilization interfere with the healthful simplicity of Nature, and decay is certain." Must we not admit the essential truth of this statement? How fragile are many of the women with whom we have to deal! Time forbids that I should go into details, but you are well aware that the methods of culture—physical, intellectual, and social—to which a girl is subjected, not only do not conduce to physical vigor, but lead to positive deterioration and serve to magnify the defects of constitution which may have been derived from ancestry, and as the struggle for bread-winning grows sharper, the girls of the humbler classes are subjected to hardships which impair their powers and retard healthful development; it has been clearly shown that the anæmia of puberty is much more common among girls who pursue sedentary occupations and in cities than in the country. Recognizing the existence of these influences inimical to the health of women, it becomes especially a duty of men in our section of the profession to strive to effect their removal.

While presenting these topics to you as worthy the consideration of an assemblage so competent to investigate all that pertains to the

science and practice of obstetrics and gynecology, I have been much impressed with the value of a carefully prepared system of collective investigation by which the experience of so large a number of active workers might be collated, and made to contribute largely to the decision of mooted points of practice.

The beneficent result of comparative study of a given topic is remarkably demonstrated in the modifications of Lister's methods of disinfection. With what alacrity did nearly all operators adopt his suggestions, how speedily did they learn that much of his method was superfluous, and how little now remains of the original system! and yet we will all bear glad testimony to the soundness of his principle and to the glorious fruit it has borne.

So, too, the Cæsarean section upon which have been grafted so many modifications, nearly all of which have been submitted to the criticism of practical experience and have been cast aside as harmful or at least needless; with such examples no further argument is required to establish the value of a carefully devised system of case-taking and reporting under our supervision.

But one thought more, and I have done. Grand as *has* been the success of our profession, we are not to rest here. We can appeal to our past experience and realize the instability of much that may have cost us great toil. Slightly to change a remark of Dr. Alexander Simpson, "Doctrines and practices in favor at this Congress are sure to be modified and may be even superseded at the next; the lapse of five years takes the bloom off the best text-books, and in ten years they are discarded or have to be well-nigh rewritten."

Science knows no sentiment, and we can cherish the achievements of the past only so far as they aid us for the future; and what is our future? That the rapidly changing character of our population, due to the influx of so many of diverse nationalities, shall influence the morbidity of our people, admits of no doubt, and as the various districts of country, differing in climate, in soil, and in production, become more thickly settled, it is reasonable to believe that we shall find particular forms of disease in particular localities; and probably racial peculiarities will also be influential in determining the character of disease. As the population of our cities increases, as a result of poverty and defective hygiene, deformed pelves will become more frequent, and therefore the capital operations of obstet-

rics shall be oftener necessary; for similar reasons we may anticipate more surgery of gynecology.

It has been said that, as civilization progresses, the tendency of all human diseases has been to assume the neurotic type, and also that diseases become more complex in their manifestations. On the other hand, the recent advances in antisepsis allow the hope that some day we may eradicate the septic diseases of childbed, and our grand improvements in surgery shall qualify us to cope successfully with what a few years ago would have been considered a helpless and hopeless condition.

Dr. E. M. Moore recently said: "It is difficult at the present moment to define the possibilities of modern surgery. It is a fit representative of the time we live in, a combination of science and action." Accepting that as expressive of our present status, I shall add, and as in other departments of applied science almost every day brings a new surprise, so we may confidently anticipate advances and successes which shall as far surpass our present attainments as these do those of the past generation. And happy may we count ourselves that this Association, so auspiciously established, shall contribute to these magnificent and beneficent attainments.