

1861-62

Introductory Lecture by R. Beverly Cole, M.D.
Medical Dept. of the University of the Pacific
San Francisco CA

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

DELIVERED IN THE

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

OF THE

University of the Pacific,

AT

SAN FRANCISCO,

NOVEMBER 4TH, 1861,

BY

R. BEVERLY COLE, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF OBSTETRICS, AND DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

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1861.

Professor R. B. COLE —

Dear Sir: The Medical Class of the University of the Pacific, highly gratified with your able and interesting introductory address, hereby most respectfully request, through their Committee, a copy of the same for publication.

J. T. HARRISON, }
J. D. WHITNEY, } Committee.
J. MURPHY, }

San Francisco, Nov. 14th, 1861.

To J. T. Harrison, J. D. Whitney and J. Murphy, Committee :

GENTLEMEN:—Your flattering note of the 14th of November requesting, on behalf of my class, a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication was received, and but for a protracted indisposition would long since have been answered.

Please accept herewith my manuscript and assurances of my respectful regards.

R. BEVERLY COLE.

1121 Stockton Street.

San Francisco, Dec. 21st, 1861.

LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN:—

Although accustomed for several years to meet a class of medical students, such an occasion as the present never fails to produce in me mixed emotions; nor do I envy the teacher who can enter unmoved upon such arduous and responsible duties, as devolve upon me here. Who indeed could see congregated before him representatives from every part of this beautiful country, and even from distant and foreign lands, listening daily to his lessons, and placing their hopes of future success in life in a great degree on the instruction which he may impart to them, without feeling an overwhelming responsibility and an incentive to exertion, which may possibly be equalled in other avocations, but certainly cannot be surpassed.

Let us tarry for a moment and look back upon the past history and condition of this, our adopted home, and reflect that but twelve short years ago, this now beautiful and flourishing country was a mere barren waste, where reigned the untutored Mexican and half-civilized red man, who crept with bow and hunting knife in hand, nearer and nearer the wild beast whose spoils constituted his wealth and satisfied his necessities, and "whose very soul was filled," as Milton has expressed it, "with vain imaginations, phantasms and dreams, distempered, discontented thoughts, vain hopes, vain aims and inordinate desires;" indeed, were they sunk in gross ignorance and vice, and the darkness of night was spread over their lot and that of their race.

But lo! what a change has been wrought. In lieu of the barren waste and forest, we now have springing up in every direction, towns, cities, palaces, and the mansions of a luxurious and refined civilization; colleges and schools are being established for the education of our youth, and the stride of science is visible on every hand.

When we view these two pictures, not overdrawn, of the past and present of California, unconsciously the inquiry presents itself to our minds: how has this great change been effected, what omnipotent influences have been concerned in bringing it about? And to this inquiry, gentlemen, we answer—education and refinement.

Is it strange then, that emotions of fear and pride should possess me at this time, representing as I do the first Faculty of an Institution that is destined to play some part in the future prosperity and advancement of matters educational upon this coast; fear, from the great responsibility of the undertaking; pride, that it is the first regularly organized Medical School established in this far-off land, and which has already sent forth its first fruit to the people and the support of the Government of this glorious Republic, as well as having added its quota to the scholar class of the land—that they, in their turn, like a heaven, shall lend their influence towards the inculcation and dissemination of that refinement and education which alone is the work of the scholar.

It is indeed the scholar who has led his fellow man out of the grossness, ignorance and depravity of his natural state; it is the scholar who has broken asunder the manacles of the woman and freed her and disenthralled her from being the bond slave of the man, his beast of burden, and the mother of his child, to take her proper station as his co-equal companion.

Gentlemen, are you going to take your position amongst the scholars of this once benighted, but now enlightened and beautiful country? I trust you have so resolved. But

some of you may inquire, what constitutes scholarship? I cannot better answer than by repeating the language of my old and beloved preceptor, Prof. C. D. Meigs, viz: "Christianity, virtue and self-respect, decorum, letters, arts, science, wisdom; all that gives a man just claim to be called by the honorable name of *gentleman*—these, all these, are scholarship;" and to possess these, I pray it may be your aim.

You have much before you, much to labor for and much to accomplish. It will not be sufficient for you to content yourselves with the fact merely, that you are medical students, or that you belong to the medical class of the University of the Pacific, and presume that this position once attained you have nothing more to do. To be sure you are pupils, but let me assure you that there are many men who never attain beyond this pupil stage, and who require to be led, and upheld, and guided in all things as long as they live, *never* becoming truly independent and self-reliant; whilst there is another class who advance with a firm and steady step to the grade of the student, which is a more advanced, independent, self-guiding and elevated stage of existence, but *these* stop here and never advance one pace beyond. How many doctors of this class, could one count; their name is legion.

The term "physician" implies, etymologically, "one who makes nature his study," to prosecute which, he must be learned, therefore the true physician must of necessity belong to the scholars of the land. If, therefore, you make no progress beyond the pupilage, or stop midway in the studentship, how can you expect me to certify ("at the time that tries men's souls," at least that of the student,) upon honor, that you have attained a scholarship and have become fit to take proper rank in the scientific class of the country.

Now, though I am expected to teach you how to be useful, I am, in order to accomplish this, to induct you into a

scholarship,—for medicine is a liberal profession,—indeed the physician should be not a gentleman only, but “a gentleman and a scholar,”—an ignorant physician, I abhor; can there be anything so ignoble?

In view of this responsibility, both to you gentlemen and to society, nay, to the age in which we live; and to posterity, I would I were the most upright, the most learned, wise and eloquent of men: gladly would I endeavor to impress upon your minds some quickening sense of the beauty and beneficence of learning; its power to secure your happiness and that of others, and show you

“How charming is divine philosophy!
Not cold and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

What has brought us together to-day, gentlemen; what has induced you to assemble in this hall? It is, I hope, an innate desire and thirst for knowledge. You have this day planted your right foot upon the door-step of the temple of knowledge, look not back until you have ascended and reached the dome. You have selected the ladder of medicine by which you hope to reach the pinnacle, examine well the rounds before you trust your future happiness and prospects.

Do you appreciate properly the undertaken you have set about? Do you really know what a knowledge of the science of medicine comprises? if not, I will tell you; it includes *Anatomy, and Comparative Anatomy, Chemistry, Natural History, Geography, Topography, Dynamics, Physics, Physiology, and History*, the state of man in all ages and nations, as modifiable by laws and customs, climate and language, his arts, his literature, his sciences.

For after all, to be a *physician*, is to know the life of man, and the means of its conservation and corroboration.

Do you aim at this goal? I wish you may; *point your arrows high*, even though you fall short of your mark.

An introductory lecture ought perhaps to contain items of information or reflection, closely related to the subjects to be afterwards explained by the professor.

To introduce, therefore, the subjects connected with the chair I have the honor to fill in this institution, I might have chosen to give you a history of midwifery, but the impossibility of treating these matters properly, in the few minutes set apart for this lecture prevents me.

I could do nothing in that way, save tire you with the enumeration of a useless series of epochs or dates, or the recital of a vapid catalogue of names.

In order, therefore, to eschew the risk of such dullness in this effort, I shall avoid giving you a history of Obstetrics, or the biography of the great Obstetricians; but shall instead, beg leave for a few minutes to direct your thoughts, to some of the evil, as well as the good that is connected with the grave and most important of all the undertakings of your life.

Perhaps, if you should begin your task understandingly, it might be the better for every one of you; but if you come here *blindfold* hoping something, *fearing nothing*, it cannot but be the worse for you. There is much to hope for that you ought clearly to perceive, and a great deal to fear that ought not to be hidden from your view.

Heretofore, gentlemen, as we have once before said, you have been pupils, now you are advanced one step, you are promoted to the higher grade of the student, and I hope you may be properly imbued with the importance of the step, and that you may not have repaired here under the supposition that you are merely to enter upon some remunerating speculation, or open some new and profitable avenue of trade with a single eye to the pecuniary gains.

You should be enabled to discern that you are about to tread in the paths of a liberal profession, whose more practi-

cal utilitarian end, as to you, it is to disclose the deep-laid foundations of the world of life.

The practical results of your philosophy are the endowing you with the means of preserving man's health in natural perfection; of giving counsel as to the physical training and education of the young; and "of controlling disease, when it appears as the terrible pestilence that walketh in darkness, or as the dangerous or painful malady that invades the security, and threatens the permanency of the domestic altar."

But are you, in temper and disposition, adapted to this vocation? This question you must answer in accordance with your own conscience and judgment; but rely upon it, if you have not a natural proneness to benevolence and patience, in your choice of a profession you have made a most grievous mistake.

It is a source of great disquietude for us, that we must deal with the most selfish of mankind; but so it is, and your patience and charity will be put to the test every day of your professional life. The sick are essentially irredeemably selfish; issuing their commands from their couch, which constitutes their throne; and you, as his hireling, "his poor leech," are expected to dance attendance, and serve him, not, however, at your convenience, but at his will—now, instantly! You must do homage to his pain and distress, you must be able to foretell his fate, and obviate every danger and menace; or if, perchance, you possess not the requisite amount of wisdom for this, you are an ass, and your services are dispensed with,—an ignorant quack, perhaps, sauntering in at the door before you have had time to make your escape.

Nor is this all, gentlemen; for week-days, and nights, and Sundays besides, are you expected to be in readiness to obey his commands.

"E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath day for you."

Then, again, there are cruel disappointments and rude mortifications that, by their daily occurrence, will weary you. Often will you be disgusted with the ingratitude manifested on the part of your patient, when, perhaps, you have passed many sleepless nights in efforts to relieve him, and as the reward for your friendly zeal, your ardent sympathy, your patient watching, and persevering toil, you are misrepresented, decried, and your reputation seriously damaged,—when, perhaps, but a short time before, whilst in suffering, he may have vowed an eternal gratitude, tears filling his eyes as he pressed with a loving and faithful grasp your relieving hand. But, gentlemen,

“When the devil was sick,
The devil a saint would be;
When the devil got well,
Devil a saint was he.”

Now, these are some of the evils of the profession you have selected. What, then, is your motive in taking up these evil bonds? Is it money, social rank, with its influence; these are certainly your due, but to attain these it is indispensably necessary that you labor, *labor*, LABOR! We, as your professors, cannot do this for you; we may lead you to the fountain of knowledge that you may drink, but you must not expect us to raise the cup to your lips,—this you must do for yourselves. Yes, we can show you the way to a rich lode of auriferous deposit, but you, by your own industry, must develop the hidden treasure beneath.

We have dug, we have used the rocker. Do you likewise dig. Here, I do assure you, are *rich* diggings, and you are prospecting, (as the up-country miner would say.) Will you have it in nuggets, or in the dust? Take my advice, young gentlemen; use the rocker, save the fine grains, and having thus worked for it, when secured you will value it.

Am I asking too much? Is it too much trouble, costing

more than the yield? Is there here some modest, diffident student, who deems he has not genius for all this? Genius is industry! Have you no industry? If so, then you cannot fail to *fail*. Better, by far, stop here. If you have it, take heart, and be sure of it you will excel.

There are many students of medicine, (and perchance it may apply to some of you,) who have not enjoyed early advantages of education, and such, doubtless, will be cast down when they compare themselves and their hopes with others, who may be graced with the accomplishments of education and all the gifts of fortune. But if such a student has a genuine love of learning, a true ambition to be excellent, he may and must win the prize.

Let him take encouragement, let him struggle with himself, carrying on a perpetual warfare against idleness and fatigue, and vain enjoyments, and win a victory the most worthy over himself. "He who conquers himself, conquers the world."

By such a determination and course, your name must be handed down to posterity. God's will may cut you off from usefulness, by depriving you of health, or by consigning you to an early grave; yet your name will never die. Is Hippocrates, Harvey, or Sir Humphrey Davy dead? No! they still live; they live among men, and in every clime, and are daily seen in all lands; they can never die. Will you die? Better far were it that you had never lived.

It has been well said, by Dr. Carpenter, the distinguished Physiological observer and reasoner, that "none but those who have tried the experiment can form an estimate of the pleasure which the study of nature is capable of affording its votaries."

Oh! is there not something magnificent in the scheme of attempting to lift the veil which has for all time shrouded nature and hidden her secrets from our view. Indeed, it is through the revelations thus made that we are enabled to

appreciate properly the wondrous works of the great Architect of the universe, and are led to soliloquize:

“All that we know is, nothing can be known.”

Or to exclaim, with Childe Harold:

“Remove yon skull from out the scattered heaps:
Is that a temple where a God may dwell?
Why ev'n the worm at last disdains her shattered cell!”

“Look on its broken arch, its ruin'd wall,
Its chambers desolate, and portals foul;
Yes, this was once Ambition's airy hall,
The dome of Thought, the palace of the Soul;
Behold through each lack-lustre eyeless hole,
The gay recesses of Wisdom and of Wit
And passion's host, that never brook'd control;
Can all saint, sage, or sophist ever writ,
People this lonely tower, this tenement refit.”

In treating obstetrics, which it is my province here to teach you, gentlemen, I shall have an interesting, curious and difficult subject to deal with. I shall have re-production to treat of here, and I shall have all the diseases of the sex, as well as those of young children, to consider. Here you see is a wide range. This department is difficult because it is duplex; it comprises both a science and an art; it is my duty to teach you both, and is yours to learn them as taught. For to be accomplished in the art of midwifery we must be learned in the science of obstetrics, as in this latter is contained the whole theory of the dynamics of labor.

You thus perceive, gentlemen, that I have much to do. Will you aid me? You should; for you can, by close attention, and a resolve to unite yourselves with the scholars of this great republic.

For my part, if you will but honor me with that attention which our relations would seem to prompt, I can promise you a rich repast, not from the mode in which the viands may be placed before you, but from their own inherent excellence.

And now, in conclusion, need I add that, whatever pains I may take to instruct you, still much, very much, will depend upon yourselves. Study, diligent study, and a faithful attendance upon the lectures are essential to your success.

That there is no royal road to knowledge is equally true of obstetrics as of either of the other sciences. It is to be mastered only by persevering toil.

Your success depends, not so much upon your intellectual endowments, as upon your industry.

Determine, then, young gentlemen, to begin aright. Be not satisfied with obscure mediocrity, but, allow me to repeat, "point your arrows high," aim at the greatest proficiency, and though you may fall short of your aim, yet you will accomplish more than if you had marked out for yourselves a lower standard.

This course is not merely due to yourselves; it is demanded by your duty to your friends, to your profession, and your country.

Let Horace's aphorism be constantly before your mind's eye, and govern you through after life,—

"Absque sudore et labore nullum opis perfectum est,"