

THE INTRODUCTION OF CLINICAL TEACHING OF OBSTETRICS IN THE UNITED STATES.¹

BY

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A FEW months ago at a gathering of a number of prominent gynecologists from various parts of the country, some one inquired what contributions Dr. James P. White, of Buffalo, had made to medicine to justify placing his bust in a prominent situation in the New York Academy of Medicine. With the exception of Dr. Matthew D. Mann, his successor at the University of Buffalo, no one present knew much about Dr. White or his work. I have therefore thought that it might be both interesting and profitable to recall to you how greatly medical students in this country are indebted to him for the introduction of more rational and effective methods of instruction in obstetrics.

James P. White was born in Columbia County, New York, 1811, and settled in Buffalo after graduating in medicine, 1846, in association with Austin Flint and others, he organized the Medical Department of the University of Buffalo, in which he was appointed Professor of Obstetrics, a position which he held until his retirement from active work, shortly before his death in 1882.

He had, no doubt, given very satisfactory courses in obstetrics.

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in previous years, but on January 18th, 1850, he introduced a decided innovation by delivering an Irish girl before the graduating class, which, as far as I can learn, was the first attempt of the kind in America. The patient, Mary Watson, who had already had one normal labor, was induced by Dr. White to enter the family of the janitor of the Medical School ten days before the expected date of confinement. The apartments of the janitor were in the cellar of the college building, and his wife promised to act as nurse for the woman during and after her confinement. During this period, Dr. White, on separate occasions, allowed each of the twenty members of the graduating class to see the woman and to auscultate the fetal heart sounds by means of the stethoscope. Owing to the fact that they were best heard far back in the right flank, a diagnosis of a right occipito-posterior position was made.

At the time of labor the students were brought into the room by one and afforded an opportunity to examine the patient under the guidance of the professor, while at the end of the second stage, the entire class was called, when the patient was placed upon her left side, the bed clothes drawn back so as to expose the genitalia and buttocks and the child delivered by Professor White in their presence.

The course of labor confirmed the diagnosis as to the position of the child, as it was born with the occiput posterior. The woman made an excellent recovery and left the janitor's home very well pleased with her treatment, which she stated was far better than she could have received under other circumstances.

As will appear, this was regarded as a startling innovation and soon became a topic of general conversation in Buffalo, both the public and the medical profession being divided as to its advisability and even as to its morality. The feeling concerning it soon became so strong that the students felt called upon to pass a series of resolutions thanking Professor White for what he had done. These, along with a short editorial by Austin Flint, were published in the *Buffalo Medical Journal* for February, 1850, under the title of "Demonstrative Midwifery," as follows:

"DEMONSTRATIVE MIDWIFERY.—The subjoined correspondence, occasioned by the introduction of clinical or demonstrative midwifery, in connection with the lectures on that branch of medicine in the Medical College of Buffalo, has been handed to us by the Chairman of the meeting, with a request that it be

inserted in this *Journal*. We take pleasure in complying with this request.

"The illustration of labor with the living subject is, doubtless, a novelty in this country. We are not aware that it has ever before been attempted. It enters, however, into the instruction of some foreign schools, constituting one of the features in which the latter are supposed to possess advantages over our domestic institutions. Whatever may be the sentiments on the subject entertained by a portion of the community at large (were it to be submitted to them), the plan must, we think, commend itself to the cordial approbation of the medical profession; and, indeed, as it seems to us, the more intelligent members of any community, not excepting the female portion, must appreciate not alone the motives and the object, but its propriety in view of better preparing those soon to become practitioners of medicine, for the responsible duties of the accoucheur. It should be stated that during the demonstration, every regard was had for the delicacy of the patient being entirely concealed from observation, except in so far as was requisite for the illustration. The privilege of being present was restricted to candidates for graduation, and medical gentlemen in attendance on the course of lectures; all of whom exhibited that degree of decorum so proper to the occasion."

The following is the correspondence referred to:

"University of Buffalo, Buffalo,

"Medical Department, Jan. 21, 1850."

"The candidates for graduation having met pursuant to adjournment, W. B. Williams was appointed Chairman, C. C. Jewett Secretary. The report of the Committee was then called for. Whereupon the Committee offered the following Preamble and Resolutions, which were adopted:

"The Committee appointed at a meeting of the candidates of the class of 1848-50, for the purpose of expressing to F. F. White their sense of obligation for his recent and unusual efforts in our behalf, and to tender him their thanks for extending to them advantages unprecedented in this country, would respectfully offer the following Resolutions:

"Resolved, 1st. That in the recent successful endeavor of Prof. White to establish clinical teaching in connection with the instruction of his department, we have an invaluable addition to our already extended and liberal advantages from the Course of Obstetrics.

"2nd. That we feel no ordinary degree of pride and congratulation in claiming for the Medical Department of the University Buffalo the honor of being the first and, at present, the only among the American Schools of Medicine, where Clinical Instruction in Midwifery is rendered within the walls of the institution.

"3rd. That we tender to Prof. White our sincere thanks for his indefatigable efforts in rendering the subject of Obstetrics simple and plain, and especially in lately presenting for our instruction a case of *natural labor*.

"C. C. Van Anden,
Jas. S. Hawley,
John Root,
"Committee.

"The Secretary and Chairman were instructed to present to Prof. White a copy of the proceedings of this meeting; and also to furnish a copy for publication in the *Buffalo Medical Journal*.

"W. B. WILLIAMS, Chairman.

"CHARLES C. JEWETT, Secretary."

"The following reply of Prof. White to the Committee has been handed to us, with a request from the Committee, that it be inserted in connection with the foregoing resolutions:

"University of Buffalo,
"Jan. 25, 1850.

"GENTLEMEN:—Your note containing a copy of the resolutions passed by the graduating class of the University of Buffalo, is at received.

"Permit me to express my sense of obligation to yourselves and associates for the very flattering notice you have been pleased to take of the recent successful effort to demonstrate to them a case of *natural labor*. Your approbation affords me sincere pleasure.

"Though conceded by all to be a great desideratum, it was nevertheless an innovation, and likely to be opposed by popular prejudice, and without *your co-operation* it could not have been satisfactorily accomplished in the present instance, nor the hope of its repetition indulged.

"Be assured, therefore, that if any permanent progress has been made in the facilities for instruction in the important department of which I have the honor to guide your investigations, it is mainly attributable to the serious decorum and the gentleman-

like deportment which were scrupulously observed by every member of the class on that occasion.

"In the confident belief that with such an auspicious commencement there will be little difficulty in furnishing the same much needed opportunity for observation to those who may succeed you, I remain with sentiments of great regard, your friend and truly humble servant,

"JAMES P. WHITE.

"To Messrs. W. B. Williams,
"Charles C. Jewett, &c., &c."

This, the first publication concerning the case, still further accentuated the bitter feelings existing in Buffalo. The sentiment against Dr. White, which we regret to state was fostered by certain physicians, who were apparently jealous of the success of the Medical College, soon became so pronounced that the students of the graduating class who had witnessed the demonstration, felt called upon to publish in the March number of the *Buffalo Medical Journal* a refutation of the charges which had been made.

"Buffalo Medical College,
"Feb. 15, 1855

"Whereas, the circumstances attending the recent case of Demonstrative Midwifery, at the Buffalo Medical College, have been industriously and entirely misrepresented, and the truth perverted by the undersigned graduates of the College, for the session of 1849-50, and who are personally conversant with the facts,—anxious to disabuse the public of erroneous impressions, however induced, can but emphatically pronounce the allegation that a rule of propriety was violated on that occasion, gratuitous and untrue. That everything was conducted in strict accordance with decency, humanity and decorum, we unhesitatingly affirm. And it was the object of the Professor to exhibit the *best manner* of conducting a case of midwifery, no motive, whatever, could exist for any violation of the proprieties suitable to the occasion.

"If personal testimony to the courtesy and discretion of our preceptor in admitting the members of the class, for brief periods only, and for the most part singly to the parturient chamber, as well as enjoining the most scrupulous regard to delicacy and order throughout, avail anything—it is earnestly submitted, either to discourage censure, or correct misapprehension.

"Having been severally present on the occasion referred to, and

being on the eve of a final separation, we feel impelled, from a sense of regard to truth, to our preceptor, and the interests of science, to render our testimony to the facts, and our tribute of approval and gratitude, for this means of improvement in obstetrical knowledge; and to insist on its merited immunity from misrepresentation.

“(Signed) Charles E. Van Anden, Auburn,
 Samuel E. Brinkerhoff, Auburn,
 Thomas Burns, Illinois,
 Hugh B. Van Deventer, Buffalo,
 John A. Morse, Constantine, Mich.,
 Alfred H. Robbins, Logansport, Ia.,
 John E. Ware, C. W.,
 Clinton Colegrove, Sardinia,
 James S. Hawley, Camillus,
 John Root, Sweden, N. Y.,
 William Thorne, Sinclearville,
 Charles C. Jewett, Moravia,
 Hugh McKennon, Middleport,
 L. F. Hillman, Parma,
 Peter B. Brown, Somerset,
 George A. Hewson, Penn Yan,
 Edwin G. Bly, Buffalo,
 William Hyser, Buffalo,
 J. V. B. Williams, Hallsburg, Pa.,
 Matthew F. Haney, St. Johns, C. W.”

A few days later, February 19th, 1850, an editorial appeared in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, taking Prof. White's side, in which it was stated: "We learn from the patient that everything was perfectly satisfactory. In fact the character of the Faculty of the College is a sufficient guarantee of this, and that nothing but the desire to subserve the cause of Science and of humanity in the most effective way, would have constrained them to favor the introduction of Clinical or Demonstrative Midwifery into the Institution in face of the strong prejudice which exists, growing out of the fact that we in this country have not been accustomed to consider its importance and its necessity to enable the student to acquire a practical knowledge of this branch of the profession."

This attempt to justify Dr. White's innovation to the community at large was not successful, and only served to increase the

bitterness of the discussion, as it was followed a day or two later by a scathing editorial in the *Buffalo Courier*, signed "L," which was so venomous that Dr. White felt impelled to invoke the protection of the law by instituting a libel suit against Dr. Horat N. Loomis, of Buffalo, its supposed author.

The editorial read as follows:

"MESSRS. EDITORS:—A writer in the *Commercial Advertiser* this city, has attempted to defend a *gross outrage* upon public decency, and I claim the right to reply to him, although the subject is one of so delicate a nature as hardly to be susceptible of much handling.

"I speak of the article, in the *Commercial* of Tuesday, which refers to the recent 'clinical' exhibition at the 'University Buffalo—Medical Department;' an article which was evidently intended to foil public opinion, already setting strongly against the perpetrators of the indecency, and, through the respectability of the print in which it appeared, to give that sentiment another direction.

"Without stopping to inquire the authorship of the article, though I would willingly believe that the responsible editor not to be charged with it, let us for a moment glance at the arguments advanced in it, with a view to placing the matter upon a footing consistent with 'even-handed justice' and a proper regard for the proprieties of life.

"An open demonstration of obstetrical practice has been made before a class of students. The demonstration consumed nearly or quite *eight hours*, during a part, at least, of which the professor of that branch of medical instruction was present. Delicacy forbids me to touch upon the manner in which those hours were passed—suffice it to say that the tedium was relieved by such methods as a congregation of *boys* would know well how to employ.

"Thus stand the facts. The argument in defence is, that such things are allowed in foreign schools, and the palliation that such instruction is necessary to the student.

"The article was written, or dictated, by one who knew better than to use such an argument, or urge such a palliation.

"No school on the face of the earth ever tolerated a like exhibition, save the 'Medical Department of the University of Buffalo.' In those Continental Hospitals for Lying-in Females

which are open to the students of Medical Schools, the utmost propriety is observed, and so far from exposing a suffering woman to the unrestricted gaze of an entire class, the managers are careful that but one or two students shall ever be admitted to a single ward, and these are always accompanied by their own private instructor.

"As to the necessity or usefulness of the indecorous show, let any physician answer. How strongly is the rule inculcated in all books, and how enjoined upon their pupils by all respectable physicians, that in this branch of practice the eye is to be blinded? The ear may listen to the plaintive appeals of the suffering patient—the voice may utter words of hopefulness, to sustain her through her trial, but the eye is closed to the scene. What possible good then can accrue from an undisguised exposure like this?

"I look upon the whole thing as an attempt to build up, for *some one*, a reputation, on a basis entirely unworthy the sacred cause of science. The patient was a woman in humble circumstances, whose poverty, perhaps, overruled her natural modesty. What mattered it then, if a score of scarcely adolescent youths satisfied their *meretricious curiosity* at her expense? The professor had enjoyed his 'clinique' and his class their *salacious tate*, and, under the specious plea of scientific advancement, a precedent had been set for outrage indiscriminate. God forbid that it should be followed in our time. Long may the men who have established it, continue to stand as solitary and splendid examples of scientific innovators, in advance of the age. L."

After the appearance of this editorial, the discussion became still more bitter and the public interest so aroused that the Faculty of the Medical Department of the University of Buffalo adopted the following resolutions, which were published in the daily papers:

"At a meeting of the Faculty of the Medical Department of the University of Buffalo, held February 26, 1850, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, and their publication ordered:

"Whereas, It appears that grossly exaggerated and erroneous statements relative to instruction in Midwifery at the Medical College of Buffalo, have been industriously circulated, calculated if not designed, to excite prejudice toward the Institution, or to some one or more of the individuals therewith connected, therefore—

"Resolved, That the mode of clinical instruction pursued by the Professor of Midwifery in this College was adopted with the approbation of the Medical Faculty of the Institution, and was conducted in a manner to receive their approval.

"Resolved, That in all the methods of instruction pursued in the department of Midwifery, as in all the branches taught in the Institution, the only objects recognized are the interests of the students in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and thereby the interests of medical science and humanity.

"Resolved, That in the opinion of the Faculty, a correct knowledge of the facts appertaining to the mode of clinical or demonstrative Midwifery, recently practised at the Medical College of Buffalo, will, it is believed, satisfy all intelligent and unprejudiced persons of its entire propriety and usefulness.

"Resolved, That the Faculty believe this method of instruction is pursued by distinguished European teachers, and they have never before heard its propriety called in question.

"AUSTIN FLINT, *Dean.*

"GEO. HADLEY, *Registrar.*"

Even this action of the Faculty, however, did not have the desired effect, for in the *Buffalo Medical Journal* for March there appeared a letter, signed by 17 out of the 40 physicians of Buffalo, strongly protesting against the repetition of such a procedure. This letter was extremely bitter, and, at the present day, cannot be regarded otherwise than as a literary curiosity.

"TO DR. AUSTIN FLINT, EDITOR, &c.,

"Sir:—The undersigned, members of the Medical Profession, have noticed with regret, in the February number of your journal, the Editorial article, and the correspondence to which it refers, called 'Demonstrative Midwifery.'

"The propriety of the exhibition with the living subject, before the graduating class at the College, as we understand it, does not, in our view, admit of a public discussion; and our only object in this communication is to say that the practice does not 'commend itself to the cordial approbation of the medical profession' of Buffalo; but on the contrary, merits a severe rebuke; because we deem it wholly unnecessary for the purpose of teaching, unprofessional in manner, and grossly offensive alike to morality and common decency. For the credit of the medical profession

e hope this 'innovation' will not be repeated in this, or any civilized community.

"BUFFALO, Feb. 21, 1850.

"John Hauenstein,
John S. Trowbridge,
E. F. Gray,
J. D. Hill,
H. D. Garvin,
Geo. N. Burwell,
C. C. Wyckoff,
William Ring,

J. Trowbridge,
B. Burwell,
M. Bristol,
A. S. Sprague,
Josiah Barnes,
H. H. Bissell,
Joseph Peabody,
G. F. Pratt,

S. Barrett."

This letter was copied by the *Buffalo Courier* and the *Christian Advocate*, and was accompanied by such a severe editorial in the latter publication that Dr. White felt called upon to take steps to have its editor indicted for criminal libel.

After this, the entire question passed beyond the bounds of Buffalo and became a matter of general interest, so that within a short time nearly every medical journal in the country devoted an editorial to it, and in the vast majority of cases commended the innovation.

That the medical profession throughout the country did not share the feelings of the 17 physicians of Buffalo, who signed the above letter, was shown by the action of the physicians of Lockport, N. Y., and Racine, Wis.

All the physicians of the former town, with the exception of one who was temporarily absent, united in the preparation of the following letter endorsing Dr. White's conduct, which was published in the *Buffalo Medical Journal* for April, 1850:

"Lockport, April 2, 1850.

DR. FLINT,

"Sir:—The undersigned have read the editorial article, the correspondence and resolutions of the class, and the letter of seventeen medical gentlemen of the City of Buffalo, contained in the February and March numbers of the *Buffalo Medical Journal* on the subject of 'Demonstrative Midwifery,' and have also conversed with a member of the class, and are happy to say that the plan commends itself to our most cordial approbation.

"Caleb Hill, M.D., D. S. Fossett,
Daniel Morse, W. B. Gould,
J. S. Shuler, James C. May,
B. L. Delano, J. K. Skinner,

Wm. M'Collum."

One month later, similar action was taken by 10 physicians of Racine, Wis., whose communication was published in the *Buffalo Medical Journal* for June, 1850.

"Racine, Wis.,
"May 10, 1850

"PROFESSOR J. P. WHITE,

"Dear Sir:—The undersigned, practising physicians in this city having perused the correspondence relative to the introduction of Demonstrative Midwifery in the University of Buffalo, take pleasure in expressing to you their unqualified approbation of the course pursued in the Department of Obstetrics.

"Allow us, Sir, to hope and expect that the work so begun shall be prosecuted until the medical student shall have had time to qualify himself in all the studies of his profession.

"Signed by

"William Watkins,	P. Laurence Page,
Aug. H. Hatchett,	Samuel W. Wilson,
B. B. Carey,	E. Jamison,
Joseph B. Talcott,	Edward Everitt,
W. Wadsworth,	S. H. Graves."

As has already been mentioned, it was supposed that the editorial which appeared in the *Buffalo Courier*, signed "L," had been written by Dr. Horatio N. Loomis, and for this reason, and particularly because he was very industrious in criticising the demonstration at the University of Buffalo and arousing public sentiment against it, Dr. White felt called upon to sue him for criminal libel.

At the trial, which began June 24th, 1850, and lasted for several days, the fact was brought out that Dr. Loomis had not written the article himself, but had been so pleased with it that he went to the newspaper office to procure a supply of papers containing it, and, upon finding that the edition was exhausted and the type already distributed, paid for having the article set up again and ordered one hundred copies of the article stricken off, which were distributed among his friends in Buffalo and other places.

The case was of very considerable interest and was hotly contested by both sides. Dr. Loomis called in his defense three of the medical students who had seen the demonstration, and four physicians of Buffalo, who had signed the protest referred to above. The testimony of the latter was quite similar, as they all agreed that exposure of the patient was absolutely unnecessary for purposes of instruction and could only do harm by lowering the

al tone of the community. At the same time, none of them cted to vaginal examinations, provided they were made under eet and without exposing the patient; though several thought even such instruction might be advantageously deferred until r graduation, when the young practitioner could gain the ssary knowledge from his first patients.

ome idea of the character of testimony offered for the defend- may be gained from the stenographic report of the trial—The ple vs. Dr. Horatio N. Loomis, for libel. Tried at the Erie nty Court of oyer and terminer, June 24, 1850. Buffalo, mas & Co., '50 pp.

hus, on page 13, Dr. Bryant Burwell testified as follows: "He been a practising physician and surgeon between thirty-three thirty-five years—graduated at the Fairfield Medical School. ards teaching Obstetrics demonstratively as neither necessary proper. Thinks that a student in Midwifery can be taught h better by the hearing and the touch than by the eye. If he ught by the eye and practices in the ordinary way, thinks it ld not be as well."

ross Examined.—"It is not necessary, in any one case that he ws of, to make an ocular demonstration. The student can n the distention of the perineum properly, only by the sense ouch. The external parts can as well be seen upon plates as ular demonstration. Considers exhibition upon *papier maché* els of all the different parts, as perfectly proper, and does think that there is anything indelicate in them. He thinks a student can get nearly as good an idea of Midwifery by study of *Comparative Anatomy from the parts of inferior nals, as from the human subject*—they do not essentially dif—the distention of the soft parts being very similar. He does know how Obstetrics has been taught in France and Ger- ry—that the leading schools are in Paris, London, Dublin, and Germany. Does not consider that teaching by ocular demon- tion would obviate the necessity of learning by the touch, and a student would not be competent to practice it, if taught sight alone. Has never made Midwifery his particular object teaching, except to his students in his private practice—has wed them to make vaginal examinations, and has occasionally en them charge of the labor; and sometimes when called in the ht, he has sent them alone to take charge of the patient—thinks re is nothing improper in that. Has known Dr. White hteen years; knows that he still continues to practice as a

physician in the city—he is Professor of Obstetrics in the Buffalo Medical College—does not know that he directs his attention more to Midwifery than to Medicine. He is a general practitioner."

The testimony of Dr. Gorham F. Pratt was of the same character, page 14: "I have practised medicine 17 years. I am a licentiate of the Fairfield Medical School at Herkimer. I had considerable practice in Midwifery. Do not think deplorable the demonstration by actual exposure of the parts necessary to teach anatomy and physiology. I think that mode unnecessary and improper. I do not approve of it. I think it offensive to the moral sense of the community—calculated to lower the respect of the medical profession. It is a part of medical ethics to do no act calculated to produce that effect upon the community.

"I think all that is necessary to be learned in regard to the dilatation of the uterus, might be learned from plates; as far as sight is concerned, I can't conceive that anything can be learned by it, but the gratification of an idle curiosity. It could not supply the advantages of the sense of touch."

Cross Examined.—"The anatomy and mechanism of the female pelvis would be better understood from plates, than by looking at the natural surface of the woman. It is important to see plates of the external parts. I should think the natural parts might be more useful to be seen than the plates. Don't know that the information got from plates, would be got quicker from the living subject. I think it shocks the moral sense of the community. Would not oppose an operation for the stone, which young men should be permitted to see. Not shocking to moral sense, perfectly proper. Ocular demonstration shocks the moral sense of the community, because it is not necessary. Never saw anything introduced in medical science. Don't remember when the stethoscope was introduced. Don't know there was any objection to it."

The prosecution called a large number of witnesses, some from Buffalo and the neighboring towns, and others from a considerable distance. Among the latter were Dr. C. R. Gilman, Professor of Obstetrics in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York; Dr. H. A. Ackley, Professor of Surgery in the Western Reserve University, Cleveland; Dr. Charles B. Coventry, University of New York, Professor of Obstetrics in the Geneva College; Dr. Charles A. Lee, of New York. In addition to these experts a large number of physicians who had been educated in Eu-

ified, and they all agreed that such methods of instruction were commonly employed in the European hospitals and were entirely needed in this country.

Dr. Gilman expressed himself as regretting that his own students did not enjoy similar advantages, but felt that he had not the moral courage to introduce such an innovation in the face of protests to which it would probably give rise.

Dr. White's attorney, the Hon. H. K. Smith, made a brilliant and earnest plea for the conviction of the defendant, stating that almost everyone who had introduced an innovation in the methods of practice or teaching medicine either in this country or abroad, had been the subject of misunderstanding and opprobrium. He referred very sarcastically to the testimony of Dr. Bryant Burwell, in a manner which seems worthy of quotation (Report, p. 40): "One of the defendant's witnesses has placed himself in the front rank of investigating minds. He says that quite as accurate a conception of the distention of a woman's perineum in labor can be procured from comparative anatomy as from the living subject! And we of course are bound to yield to the superior knowledge of this erudite witness. To support the perineum properly, all concede to be most important; but all a physician has to do, is to take his student in the spring of the year to the barn door and have him witness the parturition of a calf—and is prepared to take his Diploma in Midwifery. He knows then how to support the perineum. Or, if he be somewhat obtuse, why, let him observe with attention the distention of the perineum when the hen lays her egg; and then he is complete in his studies by the rule of comparative anatomy. Let no man file his caveat in the Patent Office at Washington. This discovery belongs solely to Dr. Bryant Burwell."

The trial ended in the acquittal of Dr. Loomis. As far as I have been able to learn the indictment against the editor of the *Medical Advocate* was not followed up.

Dr. Loomis' acquittal, however, did not end the matter, as, after the appearance of the stenographic report of the trial, it was once more taken up by the medical journals, most of which, following the lead of the *Buffalo Medical Journal*, endorsed Dr. White's innovation, but several disapproved strongly of it.

One of the most adverse criticisms, signed "C. M.," was contained in the July number of the *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, (1850, N. S. XX, 445-51). At first its author was believed to be Charles Meigs, Professor of Obstetrics in the Jeffer-

son College, of Philadelphia, but later it was discovered Caspar Morris was responsible for it. The first part of the editorial was devoted to general considerations. Further on, White was severely criticised for claiming anything original in determining the presentation of the child by means of the stethoscope, but particularly for allowing it to remain in its posterior position, instead of converting it into an anterior one; since failing to do so he subjected the child to more and the mother to less danger. Before making these criticisms, the writer says: "Some months since we heard references to the excitement which had been created among the people of Buffalo by an attempt on the part of the Medical College established in that city to introduce 'Demonstrative Midwifery' into their course of instruction. Having ourselves enjoyed the benefit of such instruction while a pupil, knowing that it was still afforded to students of this city, and accustomed to esteem it as highly important, we were not a little surprised to find it considered a novelty anywhere, and yet more to understand how it could be made the subject of popular odium. When, however, we came to be apprised that the improvement consisted in subjecting the process of parturition to ocular inspection in one of its stages, our surprise at the extent of the excitement yielded to astonishment that any teacher of the obstetrical art should suppose it could be made the subject of the same indignation, and mortification that the medical profession should have been placed in a position so well characterized to array public feeling in hostility to it. We have never understood the full details of the case until we read the report of the trial and the testimony of the witnesses, etc."

In the latter part of the article the writer inveighed strongly against such a practice, and said that were students to become accustomed to ocular instruction, they would lose to a great extent their delicacy of touch.

In the following number of the same Journal (1851, N. S. 270), a second editorial appeared upon the subject, in which it was stated that having received a letter from Professor White in reference to his supposed neglect of the patient, the editor willingly retracted everything which reflected upon Professor White's practical treatment of the case and admitted "that the language of the reviewer was too strong," but after having made these admissions, he concluded:

"These we consider, however, as points of secondary interest of importance only that injustice may not be done to individ-

they leave the main question, the propriety and advantage of 'Demonstrative Midwifery' as practised in Buffalo, unaffected. Respecting this, we must concur with the reviewer in all that is said of it, both as a means of furnishing instruction and on the score of expediency and propriety. And these sentiments are not confined, as is supposed by some, to a small minority of the profession. We have yet to meet with a single respectable physician in Philadelphia who does not concur with it; indeed it is, so far as we have been able to learn, the unanimous sentiment of the profession of this city, and if we may judge from the sources of information, that of a large majority of the profession in the United States."

It is interesting to note the supposed unanimity of the profession of Philadelphia against the innovation, and it affords another illustration of the fact that the profession of that city adopted nearly all the improvements which were suggested about the same time for the improvement of obstetrical work. In this connection it is only necessary to refer to the vigorous opposition of Meigs, Hodge and their followers to the acceptance of the contagious nature of childbed fever and to the use of anesthesia in parturition.

The discussion, however, did not end with mere newspaper comment and editorials in the medical press, since the matter was referred to the Committee on Education of the Medical Association, whose members were W. Hooker, Norwich, Conn.; T. A. Blatchford, Troy, N. Y.; James A. Wood, New York, and Noah H. Davis, Chicago.

This committee made its report at the Charleston, S. C., meeting of the Association in May, 1851. (*Trans. Am. Med. Assn.*, 1, 436-444: "Report of the Committee on Medical Education in relation to Demonstrative Midwifery.") After stating that the morality or immorality of any procedure in medicine depends entirely upon its necessity and the advantages which may accrue to the patient from it, the Committee held that the practice under consideration was not really immoral or wrong, but was entirely unnecessary for purposes of instruction. Their point of view cannot be appreciated from their own words:

"The simple question then to be decided is, whether the mode of instruction developed in the case before us, and styled by its advocates demonstrative midwifery, is necessary in the preparation of students for practice. To decide this question, let us look at

the advantages which have been claimed to belong to this of instruction.

"It cannot be pretended, and we believe is not by anyone, anything can be learned by the sight up to the moment of completion of the labor. All before that must necessarily be learned by the touch alone.

"There are four advantages claimed to attend an exposure to the sight of the conclusion of the process of labor. We will refer to each of these separately:

"1st. The student sees the manner in which the head of a child, or whatever part presents, emerges from the os exterum. All that is of practical use in regard to this can be so well learned from description and plates, and from exhibitions on the maculae commonly used in the lecture room, that there is clearly no need of an exhibition of the living subject to prepare the student for this point for practice. And whatever he does not learn in regard to it by these means, can be learned by the touch in the first case upon which he is called to attend. No practitioner had any desire to see the presenting part emerge under the arch of the pubis for any additional knowledge that might be gained by such an exposure.

"2nd. By the exposure of the parts to the sight at the conclusion of the labor, the student is impressed with the importance of supporting the perineum. On this point we simply remark that if any student cannot be properly impressed with the importance of this act by the teachings of his preceptor without a demonstration, he has too dull an appreciation of truth and responsibility to take upon himself the office of a physician.

"3rd. The exposure contended for shows the student the manner in which the perineum should be supported. In learning how to do a manual operation, which, when learned, is to be done without the guidance of sight, the use of sight is not needed even when the operation is a difficult or complicated one. That supporting the perineum is an operation of this character, cannot be pretended. It is about as simple an act as can be conceived, and the student who needs the aid of his eyes to learn how to do it had better retire at once to some occupation which requires tact and talent than the practice of medicine. In the case before us, the accoucheur used a napkin, which, unless it was adroitly managed, must have prevented the twenty spectators from seeing very distinctly the exact manner in which he supported the perineum.

th. This exposure verified, to the satisfaction of the students, diagnosis of the professor in regard to the position of the l. But a resort to such evidence for this purpose is certainly necessary. The diagnosis can be verified by touch on the part the student during the progress of the labor; or it can be n at the word of the professor, which ought to be satisfactory. Granting all that can be claimed with any plausibility for advantages mentioned, they are not of sufficient value to make oper that woman in the hour of her extremity should be made subject of a public exhibition.

But we not only object to the mode of instruction, adopted in plan at Buffalo, as unnecessary, but we object to it, also, as g utterly incompetent to give the student that knowledge h he needs in the practice of obstetrics. It cannot take the : at all of what may properly be termed Clinical Instruc- in Midwifery. A single hasty examination by the touch in course of the labor, and a view of the conclusion of the pro- can supply the student with but a very small part of that tical knowledge which he needs when he comes to take charge atients upon his own responsibility alone. This knowledge an obtain effectually only by taking the care of cases of wifery during his pupilage under the supervision of his pre- or. A single case, thus managed, will teach him more than altitude of such exposures as that which was made in the alo Medical College possibly could do."

is interesting to note, however, that all the objections urged ast this method of teaching were without avail, as the gen- sentiment of the profession was that it was advantageous e student and without harm to the woman, and accordingly me to be more and more extensively employed, so that in t years it has come into general use in every Lying-in Hos- in the country; though it is rare where material is abundant a patient to be exposed before a large body of students, the ber admitted to each case being usually limited.

Moreover, the widespread opposition of many otherwise well rmed medical men, to the conduct of labor under the guid- of the eye would seem to offer a satisfactory explanation for low grade of obstetrical technique which for so long a period acterized American medicine. Thus, the delivery of the pa- : by the sense of touch under a sheet, necessarily precluded the ction of all but the most extensive perineal tears, and enables

one to understand how a physician could conscientiously state in an experience extending over several thousand cases of labor he had only rarely encountered such an accident.

Likewise, the fact that any exposure of the patient was considered improper, naturally caused the physician to regard the practice of obstetrics as a somewhat demeaning occupation, thus led to its being carried out in a perfunctory manner, without the interest and accurate observation which are absolutely essential to the advancement of knowledge.

At the present time, it is perhaps difficult for us to understand how such an apparently simple procedure could have given rise to so much indignation and discussion, but if we recall the conditions then existing, its possibility can easily be understood; it had only been within a comparatively recent period that it had been considered respectable for women in labor to be attended by a man, the practice of obstetrics having previously been in the hands of ignorant midwives, physicians being called upon only when some grave and exceptional complication arose.

Moreover, it is a matter of history that the early obstetric practice was subjected to grave criticism and the entire subject of obstetrics was markedly neglected in the Medical Schools. Although William Shippen introduced the teaching of midwifery in Philadelphia in 1765, it was not until nearly 50 years later that his successor, Thomas C. James, became full Professor of that branch of Medicine, and its study was made obligatory upon all students.

Moreover, just prior to the introduction of "Demonstrations in Midwifery," a vigorous crusade had been instituted, particularly in the New England States, against the employment of physicians in obstetric work, and in favor of the education and employment of midwives.

Some idea of the virulence of the agitation may be gained from the pamphlet written by Samuel Gregory, of Boston, in 1848, entitled "Man Midwifery Exposed and Corrected, or the Employment of men to attend women in childbirth and other delicate circumstances, shown to be a modern innovation, unnecessary, unnatural, and injurious to the physical welfare of the community; and the whole proved by numerous facts, and the testimony of the most eminent physicians in Boston and other places; the education and employment of midwives recommended, together with remarks on the use and abuse of ether and Dr. Cline's 'Cases of Inhalation of Ether in Labor.'"

That the pamphlet did not merely represent the ravings of an enthusiast is shown by the fact that its teachings were commended by editorials in the *New York Tribune*, the *Boston Traveller* and other newspapers.