

IN MEMORIAM.

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THEOPHILUS PARVIN, M.D., LL.D.

BY WILLIAM H. PARISH, M.D.,  
*Philadelphia.*

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THEOPHILUS PARVIN was born in Buenos Ayres on January 9, 1829. His father, Rev. Theophilus Parvin, was a graduate of the Arts Department of the University of Pennsylvania, and later of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and became a missionary to the Argentine Republic.

Dr. Parvin's mother, born in Philadelphia, was the daughter of Cæsar Augustus Rodney, who was Attorney-General of the United States in the Cabinets of Presidents Jefferson and Madison, and afterward sent as Minister to the Argentine Republic. Mrs. Parvin's father was the nephew of Cæsar Rodney, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The latter was a close friend of George Washington.

Dr. Parvin's mother died when he was only about two or three weeks old. His father brought him to this country, and died when he was about seven years of age. The son subsequently lived with his guardian, Rev. Dr. Steel, at Abington, Pa., in the vicinity of Philadelphia.

Young Parvin entered the Preparatory Department of Lafayette College at the age of twelve years. He left that school while in the Freshman class and entered the State University of Indiana, from which he received the degree of A.B. in 1847.

Young Parvin then taught in the Lawrenceville High School, New Jersey, until 1850. During this period he managed to study

Hebrew at Princeton Theological Seminary. He received the degree of A.M. from the State University of Indiana in 1850. In 1852 he received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania. Then he became resident physician at the Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia.

In 1853 Dr. Parvin married the daughter of the late Amos Butler, of Hanover, Ind., a descendant of William Wallace. Mrs. Parvin is a great-great-granddaughter of James Butler, who came to America with William Penn.

In 1864 he was elected Professor of *Materia Medica* in the Ohio Medical College of Cincinnati. From this position he resigned, in 1869, to accept the professorship of Obstetrics and of the Medical and Surgical Diseases of Women in the University of Louisville. In 1876 he was elected Professor of Obstetrics and of the Diseases of Women and Children in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Indianapolis.

In 1878 he became the Professor of Obstetrics and of the Medical and Surgical Diseases of Women in the Medical College of Indiana.

In 1882 he was recalled to the Chair in the University of Louisville previously held by him, and in 1883 he accepted the professorship of Obstetrics and of the Diseases of Women and Children in the Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia.

He received the honorary degree of LL.D in 1872 from Lafayette College, and Lafayette also elected him an Honorary Alumnus.

For several years he was obstetrician to the Philadelphia Hospital.

Dr. Parvin was co-editor of the *Cincinnati Journal of Medicine*, 1866-'67; editor of *The Western Journal of Medicine*, Indianapolis, 1867-'69; and co-editor of *The American Practitioner*, Louisville, 1869-'83.

His communications to various medical journals and scientific papers and addresses submitted before different medical societies were very numerous and varied.

The text-book written by him, and entitled *The Science and Art of Obstetrics*, teemed with the characteristics of the man; it evinced the exact yet fluent writer, the painstaking and talented



investigator. It has passed through three editions and was adopted as a text-book by several colleges.

Dr. Parvin translated into most acceptable English Winckel's *Diseases of Women*, and wrote the article on "Injuries and Diseases of the Female Sexual Organs" in Ashhurst's *Encyclopedia of Surgery*. He was also a contributor to the *American Text-book of Obstetrics* and to the *American Text-book of Applied Therapeutics*.

Dr. Parvin was an ex-President of the State Medical Society of Indiana; of the American Medical Journalists' Association; of the American Medical Association; of the American Academy of Medicine; of the Philadelphia Obstetrical Society, and of the American Gynecological Society. He was Honorary Member of the Washington Obstetrical and Gynecological Society; of the State Medical Society of Virginia, and of that of Delaware. He was Honorary President of the Obstetric Section of the International Congress at Berlin, 1890, and of the International Medical Congress in Brussels, 1892. He was Honorary Fellow of the Edinburgh Obstetrical Society and of the Berlin Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; a Fellow of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia; a Member of the American Philosophical Society and of the Sons of the Revolution.

Dr. Parvin was an indefatigable worker. At one time he had a very large practice, such as only a vigorous man enamored of his profession and devoted to his patients can or will take care of. Among the patients whose regular physician he was he was truly the beloved physician.

As one familiar with the science of obstetrics he had few equals; and his acquaintance with the literature of obstetrics was probably unsurpassed by that of any of his contemporaries.

As a practical gynecologist, though meeting with good results, he was not equal to many others in our profession. Dr. Parvin was lacking in manual dexterity and that vast experience as a gynecologist which is possessed by so many operators to-day.

Dr. Parvin was essentially a brain-worker. As an intellectual man he was most highly endowed by nature and by persistent and prolonged education. He was an indefatigable reader. His library was his workshop and his pleasure ground. He loved

to work with his books and his writings, and he found pleasure with both.

Dr. Parvin can be rightly classed among the great men who have illumined the medical profession with their intellectual attainments.

But he was not only a student of medical literature; he was fond of and familiar with the writings of the historian, the poet, and the theologian.

Dr. Parvin was a thoroughly religious man and a thoroughly good one. Of an intense nature, his dislikes and his friendships were intense. He did many acts of friendship, and I believe that he never deliberately did any man a wrong.



# MASTER SURGEONS OF AMERICA

## THEOPHILUS PARVIN

**T**HEOPHILUS PARVIN, probably the most classical, philosophical contributor to the literature of obstetrics and gynecology America has ever known, was born in March, 1829, at Buenos Aires, Argentina, where his father, the Rev. Theophilus Parvin, was stationed as a missionary. His mother was the daughter of Cæsar Augustus Rodney, attorney general of the United States under President Jefferson. She died when he was two weeks old and his father brought the child back to this country. The father died, however, when young Theophilus was 7.

Parvin entered LaFayette College at 12, and finished his academy career in the University of Indiana in 1847. He studied Greek and Hebrew at Princeton, received his master's degree in 1850 at the age of 21, and the degree of doctor of medicine from the University of Pennsylvania in 1852. For 2 years he shipped as surgeon on a line of packets between Philadelphia and Liverpool. He filled successively the chairs of materia medica at Ohio Medical College 1854 to 1864; of obstetrics and diseases of women in the University of Louisville where he remained until 1869; of obstetrics and diseases of women at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, from 1883 until his death in 1898. Dr. Parvin showed his versatility in accepting the post of house surgeon of Wills Eye and Ear Hospital in Philadelphia, immediately upon his graduation.

His writings attracted attention, and he was besieged with offers of editorship of medical journals. In conjunction with Roberts Bartholow, who was with him on the faculty of Ohio Medical College at Cincinnati, Parvin edited the *Cincinnati Journal of Medicine* which is now in charge of Dr. Charles L. Bonifield. In 1866-7 and in 1868-9 he edited the *Western Journal of Medicine*; with David Yandell, of the University of Louisville, he was co-editor of the *American Practitioner* 1869-1883.

In going through the bibliography of the latter third of the 19th century, one is struck with the myriad of his contributions and the great variety of subjects upon which Parvin wrote, always with a style most entertaining and illuminating. His textbook, *The Science and Art of Obstetrics*, which ran rapidly through several editions, was marked by its accuracy and erudition and as well by the abundance of classical and modern references with which it abounded.



He translated von Winckel's *Diseases of Women*, from the German; was a contributor to Ashhurst's *Encyclopædia of Surgery*; Sajous' *Universal Medical Sciences*; the *American Textbook of Obstetrics* and the *American Textbook of Therapeutics*.

He was successively elected president of the State Medical Society of Indiana, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Medicine; he was one of the founders and an early president of the American Medical Editors Association and he was a founder and president of the American Gynecological Society, the Philadelphia Obstetrical Society, and various other medical organizations.

In 1892 he presided at the International Congress of Obstetrics in Brussels. In 1890, I first met him while he was chairman of the obstetrical section of the tenth International Medical Congress at Berlin, where he was associated with Koch, Esmarch, Playfair and Pasteur, on a most notable series of programs. A long list of honorary fellowships in foreign societies is attached to his name. The preserved contributions to the then current medical literature comprises over one hundred and fifty titles, but these do not include all his writings. He must be classed as one of the great men who have illumined the medical profession with their intellectual attainments. His vigorous well chosen English was a delight. His classical allusions were always apt. In fact he was the embodiment of the erudition which pervaded all his writings through the thirty years (1868-1898) of his active professional and teaching career.

Dr. William H. Parrish who wrote his obituary for the American Medical Association said: "Theophilus Parvin's career as the master obstetrician of America is familiar to the medical profession. During the last quarter of the 19th century he ranked undoubtedly among the greatest living authorities in medicine."

His textbook on obstetrics was received enthusiastically by students and physicians alike, and occupied the relative position in obstetrics that Samuel D. Gross' monumental work did in surgery; that Sir Thomas Watson and Trousseau did in medicine, and Roberts Bartholow's *Materia Medica* did in therapeutics.

In 1889, Dr. Parvin established the first obstetrical clinic in America; following the method of von Winckel in Munich, 34 cases were delivered without a maternal death. In making a report of this enterprise before the New York Academy of Medicine, Parvin appealed to that organization to set the light to guide the profession, making clinical obstetrics a part of the curriculum of the medical school of the country. He urged that every college which refused to take this step should be criticized by common condign condemnation.

Three philosophical essays of Parvin have come down to us, in which a third of a century ago he analyzed problems which are today of peculiar interest.



These were on "The Genius of Medicine," "The Woman and her Physician," and "The Casuistry of Medicine." The first was based on Conte's definition of a science as "Knowledge which enables us to foresee and foretell events." He said in substance: "Let any case of common disease be examined by half a dozen educated physicians, and there would be in almost every instance an exact agreement as to the nature of malady, its progress, and the means advisable to eliminate it, or to shorten its course. The natural history of disease is so like an open book to the trained physician that he can in the majority of cases foresee and foretell it."

Parvin said that the student must not forget that the foundations of our science were laid by Hippocrates, the noble Greek, and that it came not from the temple nor the gymnasium but from the laboratory of the physician.

In his oration on "Woman," Parvin says: "Beauty is the common physical characteristic of woman; age, disease, poverty, suffering, ignorance, the play of evil passions may mar or destroy the beauty, not in a single individual only, but in those deriving their origin from her. Nevertheless this gracious gift is the general possession of the sex."

To show the remarkable impression Dr. Parvin made on his auditors, by the flight of his poetic tribute to the power of the beauty in woman, I will quote the following incident. I was astonished while speaking of his life before the Louisville Obstetrical Society, in February, 1927, to hear Dr. William B. Doherty, now 85 years of age, who was on the Faculty as an instructor when Parvin taught in the University of Louisville, repeat from memory the quotation from the twenty-fourth ode of Anacreon, the Greek poet, wherein he spoke of the gifts of nature to all that breathe the air of heaven some boon; wreathed horns to the bull; the hoof of strength to the steed, speed to the timid hare. Then this apostrophe to woman.

"To man she gave in that proud hour  
The boon of intellectual power.  
Then what O woman! what for thee  
Was left in Nature's Treasury?  
She gave thee beauty—mightier far  
Than all the pomp and power of war.  
Nor steel nor fire itself hath power,  
Like woman in her conquering hour  
So be but fair, mankind adores thee,  
Smile, and a world is weak before thee!"

The motive of Parvin in this address on woman was to emphasize the peculiar type of relation between the sexes and the delicacy needed in the practice of gynecology and obstetrics as contrasted with other departments of medicine.

His greatest effort was in the essay "The Casuistry of Medicine" in which he showed the problem which dominated all philosophy, all science, and its applica-

tion to art not only in the ordinary relations of life but to us specifically through the evolution in medicine from that of Æsculapius and Hippocrates down to our own myriad of specialties—the problem of right and wrong in a debatable decision. Of course, Parvin used the definition of casuistry as in its original application by the Jesuits in solving the questions of conscience; the interpretation of ethical principles to questions of conscience and judgment. He discussed many questions which today are still matters of controversy, birth control, the induction of abortion where he quotes: “Lex, lex dura sed lex”; the right of the mother against the child if either is to be sacrificed; the question of which phase of prevarication constitutes lying in medicine which President Fairchild of Oberlin College decided in his day and Joseph Collins in ours has elucidated. Many other points will appeal to every surgeon interested in medical history because, as Parvin said, casuistry is just as much to be applied to reasoning, judgment, and philosophy today as it was in the beginning of history.

Dr. Parvin is survived by a son Dr. Noble Parvin and a daughter Mrs. James P. Baker, both living in Indianapolis. To them as well as to the successors in the chairs he graced in the various medical schools, I am indebted for much of the personal data of this tribute to one of my ideals—Theophilus Parvin.

GEORGE CLARK MOSHER.



## THEOPHILUS PARVIN

AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE IN AMERICAN OBSTETRICS AND A PIONEER IN  
CLINICAL TEACHING

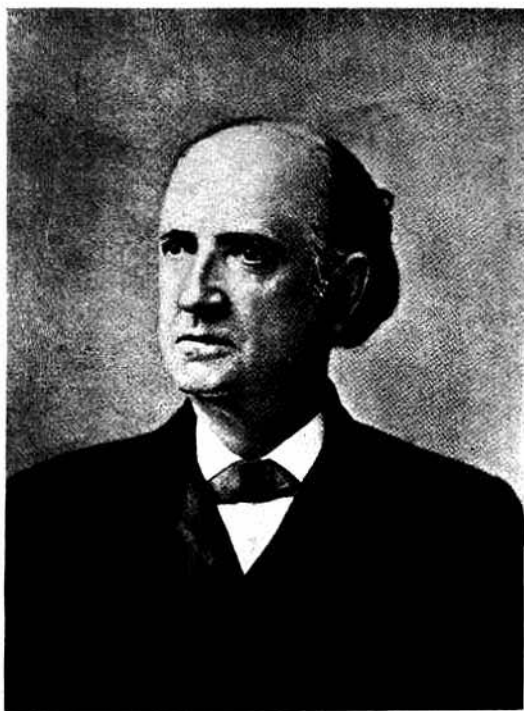
HERBERT THOMS, M.D., NEW HAVEN, CONN.

**N**O MAN in either hemisphere has been more widely recognized for his contributions to the subject of Obstetrics," says G. C. Mosher of Theophilus Parvin, whom he styles The Apostle of Casuistry in Medicine. Whether or not this statement may be debated, this author's appraisal of this important American obstetrician is stimulating and revelatory. Theophilus Parvin will be remembered in historical annals for at least two significant achievements, his authorship of an obstetric text which is remarkable for its sound doctrine and literary style, and his pioneer role in establishing in America the hospital instruction in obstetrics for medical students.

A survey of Parvin's *Science and Art of Obstetrics*, published in 1886, impresses one with the truth of a biographer who said that it "teemed with the characteristics of the man." In appraising his work, however, we are at once reminded that the author lived in a period of this country's history which in its writings and on the lecture platform was marked by a rhetorical splendor which, in spite of its extravagance, reflected a good deal of the spirit of that age. We are apt to smile at the ciceronian efforts of some of the medical orators of that day, but there is little doubt that could we have sat at the feet of a Meigs or a Parvin we would have attended with the same enthusiasm and acclaim as did our fathers. Such men as these did more than excel in the art of oratory, for they have left evidence that they were also excellent teachers of clinical medicine and possessed a knowledge of pedagogies which their medical descendants have too greatly ignored.

W. H. Parish says of Parvin that his acquaintance with the literature of obstetrics was probably unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries, and this is not difficult to believe for his writings reflect an erudition truly remarkable. His familiarity with the writings of the ancients as well as with The Bible and The Talmud are greatly in evidence. Although a profound literary stylist, his works show much original thinking which manifests itself in sound and at times prophetic doctrine. An understanding of this may be gained from noting some observations in his obstetric text. In discussing the bony pelvis he states that "in some instances the points of difference are so slight that it is very difficult to decide whether a pelvis is male or female," a point long recognized by anthropologists and forgotten by many medical writers since his time. His care of the prenatal patient sounds a familiar modern note, for he recommends that, "The obstetrician should visit the preg-

nant woman from time to time, especially during the latter weeks of pregnancy, so that he may know her condition is favorable for her approaching trial. Once a week during her last two or three months of gestation, the urine should be examined with reference to possible albuminuria." Regarding anesthesia he quotes a European authority speaking of nitrous oxide oxygen, "it can be inhaled for hours without any bad results. In most cases its results were entirely satisfactory, but in some it produced temporary violent excitement." Parvin also recommends elective cesarean section, recognizes the usefulness of episiotomy, and



*Theophilus Parvin*

was far advanced for his day in his knowledge of the etiology and treatment of puerperal sepsis. In 1885 he actually experimented with the local application of a solution of 4 per cent cocaine to effect local anesthesia. The results were negative, however.

An example of Parvin's oratorical style is seen in his tribute to O. W. Holmes in his address at the International Medical Congress in 1876. He writes, "Empedocles combined in one, poet, priest, politician and physician; and history records that he rescued a city from desolation by blocking up a mountain gorge through which pestilential winds were sweeping. In like manner an American whom the world knows as poet,



essayist and philosopher, that arrayed in these glories, crowned with these honors, we almost forget that he is a physician and medical teacher, once by his bold decisive utterances, his startling array of facts, his invincible logic, greatly contributed to destroy a pernicious doctrine taught by some of our leading obstetric authors—a doctrine which was more certainly laden with death than the foul wind that was destroying the citizens of Agrigentum."

Among the writings of Parvin we should not overlook his *Lectures on Obstetric Nursing*, a small work of less than 100 pages and a medical classic. This work was originally two lectures which the author gave for nurses at the Philadelphia Hospital. Here again his views regarding asepsis and antisepsis and the control of puerperal fever show real vision for his time. He emphasizes the value of the nurse making prenatal visits to her patient and recognizing untoward signs and symptoms so that they may be reported. Indeed, so much of Parvin's thought has not been outmoded by present-day opinion that the republication of this little volume would be a useful enterprise.

The pioneer role of Theophilus Parvin in the teaching of clinical obstetrics in hospital practice is shown in his address before the American Academy of Medicine in New York in 1888. This is entitled "The Necessity for Practical Obstetrics in the Course of Instruction Given by Medical Schools." Here he states that he was made conscious of the great deficiency in the American plan of obstetric instruction while on a visit to Munich where he had observed the teaching of Winekel. He presents a detailed account of Winekel's method as observed by J. Clifton Edgar, who for five months was resident obstetrician at the Munich Frauenklinik. This account is important aside from its historic interest because of its application to the present-day problems of clinical teaching. Speaking of the actual practice of each student before graduation in Munich he writes:

"In the first place, he is required to attend the Obstetrical Clinic two semesters (winter five months, summer four months). Supposing he is called down in this clinic every two weeks, in that case he would touch (thoroughly examine externally and internally) eighteen gravid or parturient women. This is a low estimate. At the very lowest estimate, then, the student must have examined eighteen gravid or parturient women and conducted four labor cases, and taken the operation course on the phantom for one semester. The majority of students who come up for State examination in Munich have also taken a private 'touch course.'

"In one of these courses, extending over five months (one semester), each student, at the very lowest estimate, examines both externally and internally, and each case several times, not less than forty cases. This course is not prescribed by law. My friends among the recent graduates in Munich informed me that the majority of students take one or more of these 'touch courses.'

"Many students also see and conduct more labor cases than are prescribed by the State. Thus, for example, a German friend, recently graduated, informed me that while a student he conducted ten cases of labor in the clinic, and he did not seem to think he was getting more than his share.

"Many students serve during vacation in what is known as the Polyclinic. Here they are called to abnormal cases of labor that may occur in the city, and in this way they see many additional cases."

In commenting upon these statements Parvin points out that the vast majority of American medical students are graduated without ever having witnessed, still less had charge of, a case of labor. The remedy, he states, lies in the practical teaching of obstetrics being directly associated with its scientific instruction . . . in other words there should

be a maternity belonging to every medical school in which practical obstetrics is taught. It was through the effort of Theophilus Parvin that the trustees of Jefferson Medical College in 1886 authorized the establishment of the first maternity department in any American hospital and assigned three rooms for the purpose. Work was begun in February, 1887, and at the time of his writing thirty-four women had been successfully delivered, the ward classes having been instructed by Parvin's assistant, Dr. William E. Ashton. In November, 1887, because of lack of room in the hospital, the out-patient department was established where clinical instruction was also carried out. In his peroration he states, "May the time soon come when every medical school which does not take this step, and make this necessary reform, shall perish under the common and condign, popular and professional damnation." At a later date, as President of The American Gynecological Society and speaking on the same subject, he sounded this prophetic note, "The true ideal can only be realized in a large hospital devoted to obstetrics and diseases of women, students being taught in a small number at a time."

Interesting to us in this latter address are Parvin's comments on the use of the word Gynecology, because much confusion still exists as to its correct usage.

"Let me, by an appeal to etymology," he states, "rescue gynecology from its narrow use, . . . gynecology should be regarded as a synonym for obstetrics rather than for diseases of women, and the gynecologist is primarily an obstetrician. . . . The word gynecology, both etymologically and in its essential signification, relates to reproduction in the human female, and secondarily to the diseases and disorders which interfere or prevent this function, or those which are consequent upon its exercise."

It is also important to remember Parvin's significant part in the union of obstetrics and gynecology as branches of medical instruction. In this he was ably supported by the opinions of Winckel to whom he had written for advice on the subject. Space does not permit an account of the conclusions of this eminent European teacher, but his views on the subject cannot be overlooked by those who, even today, do not favor such amalgamation in hospital practice or for purposes of clinical instruction.

Mosher refers to Parvin as "The Apostle of Casuistry," and by this he interprets "Casuistry," as did Parvin, in its original classical meaning, the application of ethical principles to questions of conscience and judgment. It is probable that no modern medical writer so concerned himself with this aspect of medicine as did Theophilus Parvin. Throughout his writings we are impressed with his sound logic concerning the difficult problems that are so often associated with the forming of medical opinion. An example of his manner is seen in his discussion of the diagnosis of pregnancy.

"Ambition to give a prompt decision," he writes, "or pride in opposing that of another, may lead to error. Rapidity is very far from proving correctness of diagnosis; here, as Lord Bacon has said of another matter, our intellects need not wings but weights of lead to moderate their course. The man of greatest knowledge least exalts his attainments, and is the most cautious and deliberate in judgment, and has respect for the opinions of others. Sloth may hinder or prevent our thorough investigation. We may be satisfied with a few facts instead of seeking all that are available."

Such excerpts from the writings of Theophilus Parvin tell us something of the man, but only in his *Science and Art of Obstetrics* do we realize the lofty spirit and broad clinical knowledge that he brought to



his subject. I know of no other text of his time which is so fraught with lessons for today or which can be more useful to the student who wishes to attain a knowledge of the fundamental background of modern obstetrics.

The facts of Parvin's life are readily available in the usual sources of biography, but it may be useful to repeat some of them here.

Theophilus Parvin was born in Buenos Aires on Jan. 9, 1829. His father, of the same name, was a missionary to the Argentine Republic, having prepared for the ministry at the University of Pennsylvania and the Princeton Theological Seminary. His mother was the daughter of Caesar Augustus Rodney, one time Attorney-General of the United States and later Minister to the Argentine Republic. Parvin's mother died when he was an infant and his father brought him to this country. At the age of seven the father died and the boy went to live with a guardian, the Rev. Dr. Steel of Abington, Pa. When twelve years of age Parvin entered the preparatory department of Lafayette College and later entered the University of Indiana from which he received his bachelor's degree in 1847. For the next three years he taught at the Lawrenceville High School at the same time studying Hebrew and Greek at the nearby Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1850 he received his master's degree from the University of Indiana and in 1852 his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He became an interne at the Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia and later a ship surgeon on a packet line sailing between Philadelphia and Liverpool. He then settled in Indianapolis where he practiced until the close of the war. In 1864 he was elected to fill the Chair of Materia Medica in the Ohio Medical College, and in 1869 he resigned to accept that of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women at the University of Louisville. In 1876 he accepted a similar chair in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Indianapolis and two years later became Professor of Obstetrics, et cetera, at the Medical College of Indiana. In 1882 he was recalled to the chair previously held by him in the University of Louisville. The next year he was called to the Chair of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia.

During his professional life many honors came to Theophilus Parvin, among which may be numbered the Presidency of The American Medical Association, of The American Gynecological Society, of The American Academy of Medicine and The Philadelphia Obstetrical Society. In addition to the writings mentioned above, he translated *Winckel's Diseases of Women* and wrote for *Ashurst's Encyclopedia of Surgery*, *The American Textbook of Obstetrics* and *The American Textbook of Applied Therapeutics*. Other of his important accomplishments could expand this all too brief outline into greater proportion, for Parvin's life was one of intense activity and fulfillment. In his obituary, which appeared shortly after his death in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, we find this note which tells its own story of affliction and personal courage:

"About eight years ago when examining a patient he inoculated his index finger with specific poison, and recognizing the nature of the affection he called the attention of the class to it on several occasions as a warning to them to be always on their guard. His health subsequently became impaired and he suffered with a severe form of chronic laryngitis which compelled him for a time to suspend his lectures; of recent years, however, this affliction had been overcome so that he not only resumed his course of lectures, but was able to accept complimentary invitations to address medical societies."

Like his distinguished contemporaries, Hodge and Meigs, Parvin's life as a physician and teacher was one of great fulfillment. To the field of obstetric science he brought a maturity of mind and keenness of vision which reflected itself in his writings and teachings. It was fortunate that the advent of scientific obstetrics in America had among its followers so great a champion as Theophilus Parvin.

" 'Tis man's worst deed  
To let the things that have been, run to waste  
And in the unmeaning Present, sink the Past."

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SERIES OF EMINENT LIVING GYNÆCOLOGISTS AND OBSTETRICIANS OF AMERICA.

THEOPHILUS PARVIN, M. D., LL. D.,

Prof. Diseases of Women and Children, Jefferson College, Philadelphia; Obstetrician Philadelphia Hospital; Consulting Obstetrician Preston Retreat, Woman's Hospital and Northern Dispensary; Honorable Fellow Edinburgh Obstetric Society, etc., etc.

LIKE another famous obstetrician biographically considered a month or two ago in this JOURNAL, the subject of our present article is not only American but of many generations of American heritage. He was born on the 9th of January, 1829, at Buena Vista, where his father, the Reverend Theophilus Parvin of New Jersey, a graduate of the Princeton Theological Seminary, was at that time residing with his family. His mother, a daughter of Cæsar A. Rodney of Delaware, died a few days after his birth, and he was shortly thereafter brought to this country by his father.

Dr. Parvin's early education was derived principally from Lafayette College, and in 1847 he took academical honors at the University of Indiana. Thence he returned to New Jersey and spent three years in teaching at the High School and in the Female Seminary of Lawrenceville in his native State. I do not know if this stepping-stone to Princeton College had then the fashionable reputation it now possesses, but it has certainly maintained its habit of attracting to its teaching corps many young men who later in life in the great Schools of Academical and Professional Science have fulfilled the early promise of the High School teacher. In 1852 he received his Medical Degree after the usual course of study from the University of Pennsylvania, and became Resident Physician to the Wills Hospital in Philadelphia. In about a year, however, he resigned this post and returned to Indiana. It is believed that this early preference for the West was not altogether a professional one, for he married there within the year. His marked abilities soon brought him in recognition among his adopted brethren, for nine years later we find him President of the State Medical Society. In 1864 he accepted the Chair of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Medical College of Ohio, and in a few years he resigned this for the newly-created Professorship of the Medical and Surgical Diseases of Women. For the next fourteen years he held consecutive professorships in the University of Louisville, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Indianapolis, and in the Medical College of Indiana after it had become consolidated with the preceding School. In 1882 he returned to the University of Louisville but one year later was elected to and accepted the Chair of Obstetrics and Diseases of

Women and Children in the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, where he has since remained.

Although Professor Parvin early identified himself with gynæcology, his reputation as an obstetrician, whether by circumstances or by inclination, has attained such overshadowing proportions that the profession at large have come to consider him a specialist *par excellence* in obstetrics rather than in the former branch of medicine. He ranks to-day, undoubtedly, among the very greatest obstetrical authorities in America, and these are necessarily few.

As a lecturer he appears to have been eminently successful. Since a man's success is, generally speaking, dependent more upon what he says and the way in which he says it than upon what he writes, especially in his own generation, Dr. Parvin's right to popular estimation is not only well but doubly earned. His personal admirers, though many, are most numerous among those whose fortune has led them to reap the fruit of the truths sown in his lectures. He has written much on obstetrics, but the cream of all his writings and the work which at once placed him in the front rank of his profession is his "*Science and Art of Obstetrics.*" This book first appeared in 1886; its worth was at once recognized and it has already passed through two editions. Not long ago he translated and placed upon the American market the work of Winckel of Munich entitled "*Diseases of Women.*"

Among the many honors he has received from his professional brethren the most conspicuous have been the Presidency of the American Medical Association, of the Philadelphia Obstetrical Society, and of the American Academy of Medicine. He was also one of the founders of the American Gynæcological Society.

It may safely be said that no one of equal eminence has more devoted and admiring friends, both among those of his own generation and high standing in the profession, as well as among those of a younger generation—"the mute inglorious Miltons"—whose turn is yet to come.

The personal traits of Dr. Parvin are striking and in some respects, unfortunately, rare. He is cordial, helpful and sympathetic to his younger brethren to whom these things mean much upon the threshold of their lives, but his finest trait, and the rarest, is a broad-minded capacity which enables him to appreciate the good work of his peers, and to acknowledge it open-heartedly.

Many will recognize the accompanying excellent portrait and the others, who only know Dr. Parvin as he reads, will doubtless be glad of this opportunity.



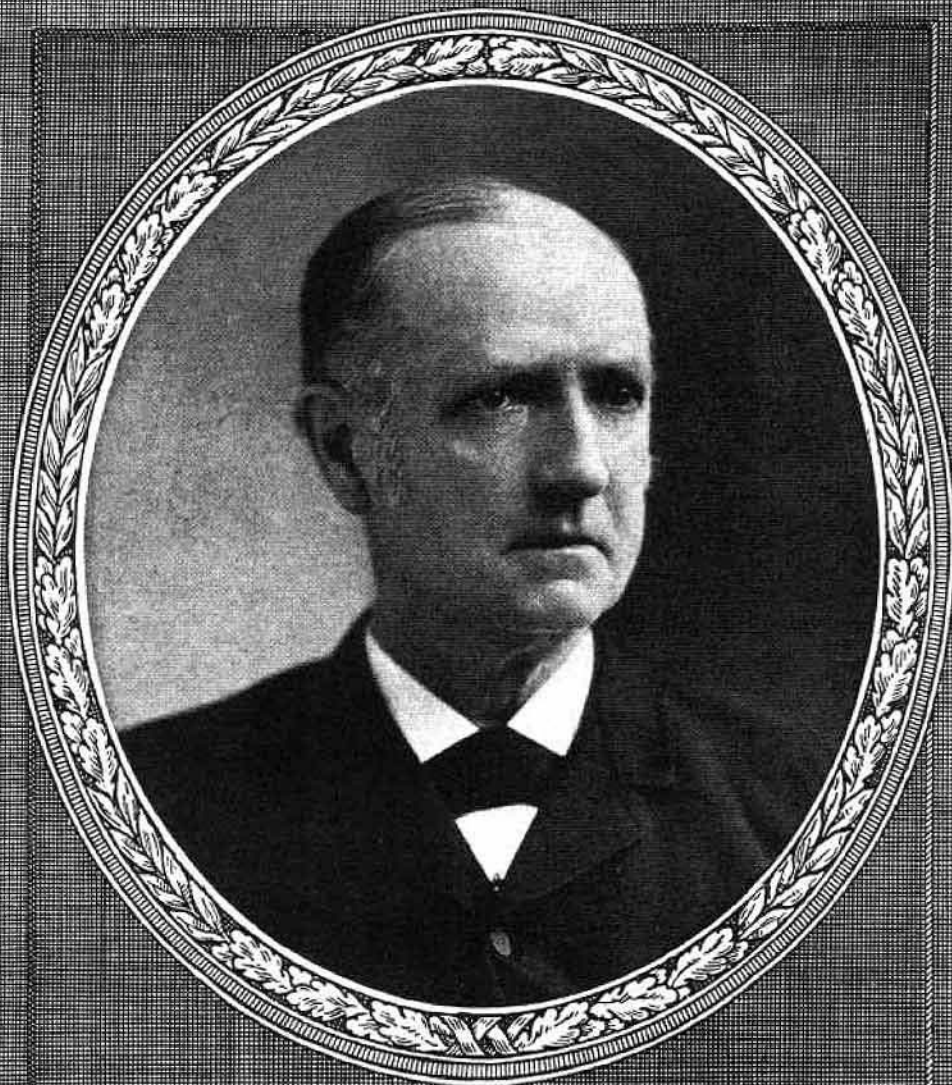


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1829-1898