

**Valedictory address to the twenty-second graduating class of the  
Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania : March 13, 1874 / by Rachel L.  
Bodley, A.M.**

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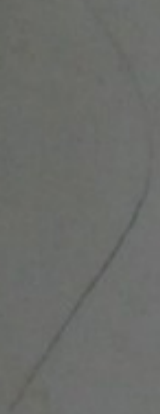
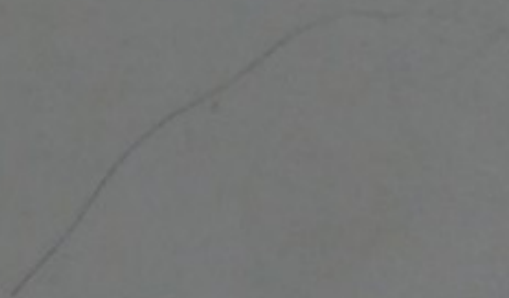
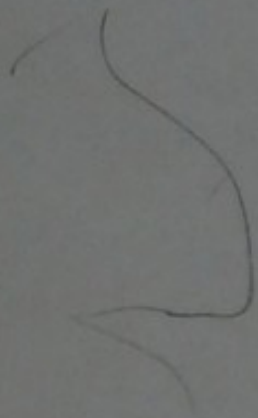
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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

TWENTY-SECOND GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania,

BY

RACHEL L. BODLEY, A. M.,

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND TOXICOLOGY.

March 13th, 1874.

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(PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.)

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1874.



# Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania,

North College Avenue and Twenty-second Street.

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THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT was held in Horticultural Hall, Philadelphia, on Friday, March 13th, 1874, at 12 M., when the Degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred by the President, T. Morris Perot, Esq., upon the following named ladies:

OLIVE DEWEY ALDRICH, N. Y.  
AMY S. BARTON, N. J.  
MARY BLEHL, Pa.  
CELESTIA A. BENEDICT, Conn.  
CHARLOTTE BLAKE BROWN, Cal.  
SARAH BROOKE, O.

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GEORGIANA C. GLENN, O.  
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MARY G. HOOD, Pa.

MARY K. HUTCHINS, N. Y.  
ELLEN A. INGERSOLL, Ill.  
ANNA B. JACKSON, Mass.  
EMMA H. PALMER, England.  
ELLA M. RIDGWAY, Pa.  
JEAN SINCLARE SAYLOR, Pa.

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Session of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania will open Thursday, October 1st, 1874.

## VALEDICTORY.

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LADIES, GRADUATES IN MÉDICINE :

In the regular rotation of duty, as the years revolve, it falls to my lot to-day to address to you the parting salutations of those, who since your connection with the College, have assisted in your preparation for your great life-work. This hour closes this relation, and we bid you at once a sorrowful yet a joyful adieu.

For obvious reasons you will not expect from me the charge usually addressed to graduates in medicine, by my honored colleagues, on occasions like the present. From this omission, however, you cannot suffer, since these same honored teachers have, in the lecture-room and out of it, by precept and example, through the years of your association with them, taught you how responsible and sacred is the work of the physician. They have instructed you carefully concerning every phase of your prospective work, adding to didactic teaching practical instruction, thorough and oft-repeated, until on this, your graduation day, you need no additional words from the Valedictorian to deepen your profound convictions of the scope and dignity of the profession upon which you have entered. Your teachers have



approved of the thesis and the examinations of each one of you, and by the impressive ceremony just witnessed, the Corporators and the Faculty of this College have cordially recommended you to the medical profession, and to society at large, as intelligent and capable physicians. Jealous still of your future reputation, the Faculty, through one of their number, have met you upon the threshold of this new life, and greeting you as peers, have presented you each with a copy of the Code of Medical Ethics, in token of the solicitude with which they follow you into the world outside the college, a solicitude regarding your practice, that it may be recognized as wise and prudent, and your conduct, that it may be governed by those rules of common morality and of christian charity which constitute the ethical code of the medical profession.

I cannot forget, neither can many of you, that there is one absent from this platform, whom we would fain have share with us the joy of to-day. Yours is the last class, any number of whose members have been instructed by Prof. Ann Preston.\* When you shall have left us, no future class can carry to their fields of labor, memories of the words and works of the brave, loving woman, who was teacher and inspirer to us all.

In lieu of words of my own, allow me to permit her again to speak to you in the parting charge which she gave to the "Class of 1870," in that memorable Valedictory which proved her last.

"Ladies," (I quote her words) "it is meet that you go forth to your labors, full indeed, of that humility which belongs to wisdom, but full, also, of faith, hope and glowing enthusiasm. And yet, I know full well, that your joy to-day

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\* Ann Preston, M. D., Professor of Physiology and Hygiene, and Dean of the College, died in Philadelphia, April 18th, 1872.



is softened and tinged with something akin to sadness. You feel indeed the beauty and greatness of your work, but mingled with this is self-distrust, a sense of responsibility, the thought of an untried future! It is true, you must encounter the trials, but if you avoid the prejudices, and keep your minds receptive and nobly ingenuous, you shall learn something from every person and circumstance about you, and be able to rejoice, day by day, in the consciousness of ever-widening knowledge, and continually increasing power for good."

\* \* \* \* \* "Go forth prudently, truthfully, trusting in the eternal strength of the ever-living God, content 'to labor and to wait,' willing to accept toil and privation, as well as ease and victory, and fear not but that a true and glorious success shall be yours—that this shall be to you the 'Commencement' of a renewed life of enlarged activity, in which, amid cares and responsibilities, you shall often be led beside still waters, and lie down in green pastures."

To lift the drapery of silent thought which these earnest words enfold about you, and irreverently ask your attention to other themes, is not a grateful task, but the broad fields upon whose wealth I wish to direct your eyes, lie *before* us, and we will not linger.

The pathway to any worthy theme must, in these days, lead through or over, one great national epoch. We should not be loyal Americans, much less worthy denizens of the goodly city in which we assemble, did we forget in this hour of congratulation, that Freedom's Bell in the old State House on Chestnut Street, is shortly to strike the Century—*One!* The medical student in 1876 can well afford to look up from her note book to listen to the glad sound, and the lecturer afford to pause in her demonstration, while the old



bell rings out joyously. This great nation is astir, and the sounds of preparation for the centennial year arise on the shores of either ocean, and are prolonged across a vast continent. Neither are the women of the nation idle. The daughters of Philadelphia have, in labors already gracefully and successfully accomplished, given an earnest of what may be expected from them when the joy bells begin their chimes, two years hence. The professional woman, absorbed as she is in her routine of daily and hourly recurring duties, is necessarily excluded from active participation in the patriotic service. But there is an offering other than her money and the hearty "God-speed" which accompanies it, which she might bring, were it possible to weave intangible material into tangible form, a centennial offering upon which the world might gaze in awed wonder!

The precious offering is no other than a clear exhibit of the progress which has been made during the century in developing the "helping power" of woman. This hand of mine knows not the cunning adequate for the portrayal of a theme so majestic; neither has the centennial year come. Since, however, I seek to explore to-day for our farewell study, that province of woman's kingdom, which lies in action rather than in book-knowledge, I am unavoidably brought face to face with this most forcible of womanly characters in life, that of the Helper.

There is an old legend said to have been current among our forefathers of the British Isles, to the effect that the Nineteenth Century was to be the Century of Woman. Idle though the words of the legend may have been upon the lips of those who doubtingly uttered them, we who in retrospective mood scan the years of the century already gone, can attest that the prophecy hastens to its fulfillment!

We go back to Eden for woman's divine commission, conferred in the title, "help-meet." But we vainly seek, in



the history of subsequent ages, for her full possession of this sacred character; here and there through the centuries gleam out solitary instances of great deliverers, or of women of superior mental accomplishments, instances which are prophetic, rather than immediately helpful to the day and generation into which these women were born.

Still, down through the ages has sounded that royal title, "help-meet," the jest and the by-word of the thoughtless, but the solemn word which the unprejudiced and honorable among men have pondered in their hearts, knowing that in its divine significance it must mean the helper of the complete man, the helper not alone of the physical, but of the intellectual and the moral being.

Upon American shores, the century of Independence opened cold and gray, as regarded educational opportunities for women, but the life which coursed impetuously through the veins of the young nation, gave itself after political freedom, to knowledge, knowledge for all. Thus it came to pass that the district school early attained the importance of a recognized department of instruction, and under the humble roof which sheltered the youthful pupils of a district, the sister and the brother were taught together, and kept pace each with the other. Next in the order of events of educational importance for women, followed the separate school of a higher grade, in which era the heroic Mary Lyon appears as leader, and the elegant and accomplished Mrs. Willard as a worthy coadjutor. Each of these ladies represented a different phase of the culture sought, and each type of instruction proved potent for good throughout the land. But the progress which was inevitable as the result of this wide dissemination of knowledge in the homes, not of privileged classes, but of the people, outgrew these seminaries, and the so-called Higher Education for Women budded into being, and good men and true, knocked at the doors of State



legislatures, asking for charters for colleges in the exclusive interests of women. The first of these, was granted in 1846 by the Legislature of Ohio.\*

The development of this third educational era has been slower than either of the preceding, as is attested by the fact, that not until fifteen years later, or until 1861, was the idea of Colleges for Women enshrined in material form worthy of the name; then, near Poughkeepsie-on-the-Hudson, arose a palatial edifice, capaciously endowed, the offering of a good man's whole fortune upon an altar which never before knew gift so costly. Through the centuries to come, let American women remember and honor the name of Matthew Vassar!

Twenty-eight years have been added to 1846, and as yet the college standard of education for young women has not permeated the masses composing American society. But in this fact the intelligent observer finds no cause for discouragement. The Indian maize germinates, attains goodly proportions, bears its fruit, and perishes, all in a single season; but the oak, which is to afford shade and shelter to generations of men, germinates with deliberation, and accomplishes but tardy growth through many a summer.

The college standard of education for women, planted twenty-eight years ago, has taken firm root, and has attained at least, respectable stature. No more propitious sign that the time of rich blossoming, with promise of fair fruitage hastens on, could be demanded, than the profound agitation which even now startles educational circles in the United States and Great Britain.

Prof. Orton, of Vassar College, has recently given to the American public a closely printed volume of 324 pages,

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\* The Act to Incorporate the "Wesleyan Female College of Cincinnati," passed the Legislature of Ohio, February 24, 1846.



being a reprint of representative articles which have lately appeared in America and England, touching the liberal education of women. Many of these papers emanate from the highest collegiate authorities acknowledged on either side of the Atlantic, and they reveal an earnest grappling with a great social problem. Rightly interpreted, all this means that in the highest walks of intellectual endeavor, woman is eventually to be acknowledged "help-meet."

During the past years, in college curriculums of study, she has been required to cling to the hand of her brother, wasting much strength in the endeavor to make the length of his steps the measure of her own. In the pursuit of physical science she has been compelled to attempt to throw stones as her brother threw them, and if the testimony of grave college presidents may be accepted, she has strangely failed in her laudable endeavor! But all criticism of this sort is now to have an end. Out of this disquiet, out of this alleged short-coming, and this unrest, are to come forth curriculums of study for women, in science, in literature and art, as thorough and comprehensive as those of Yale or Harvard, or Oxford, and yet not the same, complements of these!

It is for this wise adaptation in harmony with the facts of nature, that society now waits, nor will it wait long, and then shall be seen through the years to come, not the exceptional woman, but womanhood attaining to the dignity of co-equal helper in the realm of mind. Yet more completely in the future shall she be found doing that portion of the world's intellectual work which belongs to her, not in man's way, but in her own way, the womanly way as distinguished from the manly way, and both shall be alike honored and honorable, for they twain are one.

In professional schools for women, this word accomplished, is no longer prophecy. Your Alma Mater, the first college



in the world chartered for the education of women as physicians, has rendered valuable aid in promoting this higher and broader view touching womanly work. The women physicians graduated from this College, have in their lives, and in their professional experience, for twenty years past, been deciding what *a-priori* judgment could not decide, the particular place and the particular sphere of action which belong to the woman physician as especially befitting her. I rejoice to add that the place found has proved an honored and useful one, and the sphere of action, filled with sacred ministries, blessed alike to her who gives and to those who receive. Not only is this true of the large number whose homes are to be found throughout the chain of states and territories which span the continent, but also of that little band of our Alumnæ, who in the Orient have found medical work disputed by none, a womanly work, whose outlook suggests that the education of women physicians in America, has been no accidental circumstance in point of time, but a valuable stone in the marvelous mosaic of divine providence.

Woman's Work for Woman in Foreign Lands, as a *distinctive* movement, dates to the year 1860. While the fiery waves of a fierce intra-national conflict were surging to and fro, filling homes with sorrow, and engaging the hearts and hands of American women in hospital and sanitary service, the doors of a great work in the lands of the eastern hemisphere opened noiselessly, and lo! revealed to the gaze of bereaved and consecrated American womanhood, were possibilities which generations of earnest toilers cannot exhaust, a womanly work for woman, which woman alone can perform. As a humanitarian movement, setting aside all its high moral and spiritual aspects, this may be classed among those momentous events which



themselves constitute epochs in history. Hundreds of millions of women, sufferers in body, and utterly darkened as to all resources of the intellect and spirit, are now accessible to the willing and capable womanly worker. How effectively American women are helping these less-favored sisters is set forth by a recent writer in the following figures: "The five Women's Missionary Societies thus far organized in the United States, have in the twelve years ending April, 1873, collected and disbursed \$697,841.50. The appropriations of the last year reported, were expended in supporting one hundred and ninety missionary ladies from this country, scattered in carefully chosen centres, in India, Turkey, China, Japan, Africa, Siam, Burmah and Persia." A significant fact also stated, is, that three hundred native women had been employed during the year, as helpers, by these societies in the several stations. Taught themselves, they at once begin to teach others, and who can estimate the beneficent results from the ever-widening circle of influence so healthful?

To the ladies of Philadelphia belongs the honor of grafting upon this teaching work, the ministry of the woman physician. When, after the Commencement of this College, in 1869, a lady from the class of that year felt constrained, from her most sacred convictions of duty, to offer herself as a physician for India, two societies located in this city eagerly listened to her proposal, and since both could not employ her, the senior society gracefully yielded to the younger in point of years, and turned to the same source for like assistance. This was found in the classes which graduated from our College in 1870 and 1871. These three ladies, now located respectively in Bareilly, Calcutta and Allahabad, India, were the first medical ladies sent forth to Asia. One other, a graduate of last year's class, has followed, and through that overcoming faith, which alone could inspire



the use of instrumentality so feeble, in the presence of necessities so vast, under the patronage of the society which supports her, has opened her humble Dispensary amid the teeming population of Peking, China.

Swain, Seelye, Seward and Combs! These honored christian ladies form *our* constellation among the millions of the East! Their work has been successful from the first, and increases each year in scope and usefulness. No higher tribute to their acknowledged capability and success could be offered, than that paid by the Principal of the Church of England Mission, Delhi, India, who, when last August the directorship of the Woman's Hospital of the Mission was made vacant by death, applied for a successor, not to English homes or hospitals, but to the Alma-Mater of these ladies.

As the moment of our separation draws near, I realize that this world-wide work upon which we have been dwelling, is in its application an individual work, and that whithersoever your steps may turn, these minds and hands of yours are henceforth to be reckoned important factors in the same. We send you forth to its doing with confidence, and yet with the tenderness which love begets, we beg you to ever remember, that as you shall valiantly acquit yourselves, or ingloriously succumb to circumstances of whatever character, the great world, no less than this College, will be the richer or the poorer for your having lived.

In the character of the educated physician you will find your most coveted labors and your highest rewards, but it is not unfitting for me to remind you, that as citizens you have another, a less spoken of, but scarcely less important character to bear in the communities in which you may dwell, that of the educated woman *per se*, the leader and the inspirer, as well as the healer! Your Alma-Mater claims,



at your hands, that in this capacity you do a work for her, in the years immediately before you. The old question of woman's mental capacity, and of her fitness for the profession of medicine, having been forever settled by the worthy pioneers who have preceded you, there remains now for *you* the golden opportunity of arresting the attention, in behalf of professional study, of the younger women among your patients and associates, by the persuasive character of your unostentatious learning.

Adopt the *educo* idea, in your attempts to check the torrent of worldliness and frivolity which sweeps down like a flood upon our blooming American girls. Do not lecture them for their folly beyond the necessity which present exigencies may demand, but let your neatly furnished and attractive home, and your own cheerful life, continually repeat to them, "Come"!

The microscope will be upon your table, with its never-exhausted store of nature's charming secrets, the test-tube rack and chemical reagents, will be found in a convenient closet, ready to respond in accents of color, and of varying physical condition, to your questions concerning their marvels. Once thoroughly arouse the attention of the young graduates of our Seminaries and High Schools, by instrumentalities such as these, and you will have accomplished much towards the creation of a generous supply of students for the halls of our new college building, soon to arise! To its Alumnæ, more than to all other helps combined, must the college look for this increase of educational interest in the community, and consequent increase of students in its lecture-rooms.

Another duty incumbent upon you after the faithful ministration to the sick and afflicted, is the continued cultivation of scientific knowledge. By careful pains-taking



study, acquaint yourselves with the developments in science which the years may bring. In this way only can you keep yourselves *in* the work, and what may be better still, in the fullness of years be an integral part *of* the work, being numbered in the vanguard of original investigators, to whom the world, tardily, perhaps, but surely, does homage.

For an accomplished woman microscopist, the department of experimental science waits; and yet Prof. Frey, Professor of Comparative Anatomy and Histology, in the University of Zurich, who has instructed a number of ladies in his speciality, writes recently: "Precisely in microscopy, an important department of modern medicine, has woman a future, according to my conviction." That I should remind you that in the department of chemistry there is an unexhausted demand for research, and room for the workers also, will not surprise you. Sharing the convictions of the distinguished professor just quoted, I would assert that chemistry has a womanly side, beyond the possibilities of its kindred sciences, and there must yet arise expounders of the same. Why not upon American soil, and from among the graduates of our College?

Apropos of the pleasant hours we have spent together, in lecture-room and laboratory, let me remind you that Chemistry holds a centennial next August, beside an honored grave at the meeting of the waters of the Susquehanna, amid the picturesque scenery of interior Pennsylvania. The hand that plunged the glowing taper into the primal jar of dephlogisticated air, long since crumbled into dust beneath that simple head-stone, but science will not forget, through centuries to come, the historic receiver, burning-lens and taper, neither willingly let die the name of Priestley, who, in August 1774, discovered Oxygen.



To a still higher and nobler consecration of your powers, I would direct your thoughts in my farewell words. You enter upon your active duties at a time, when beyond the ages which have preceded it,—it is glorious for a woman to live and toil!

As we have discovered in the rapid review which we have made of the century just closing, the progress in the education of woman has been of slow growth, but it has been a natural and healthful one. From the high position which you and your compeers occupy, you cannot, therefore, be displaced. Realize the dignity of this position, and be humbled by its elevation!

The toiling throng, whether in the marts of trade or in the pathways of science, find it difficult now, as in the past, to answer Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Keeping step with these throngs, and yet privileged to move apart from them, you may, and you will, if true to your Christian faith, and your womanly nature, obtain answers which are denied those who walk by sight alone. Remember that these glimpses of truth are not your private possession, but are to be freely given to those who hunger, freely as the Father bestows His sunshine and His showers.

Thus living, rare opportunities will be yours for guiding, guarding and moulding humanity about you, and through these, humanity to be. I charge you as those who must give account, guide skillfully, guard conscientiously, mould wisely, and all this, in the interest of home, of purity, and of Heaven!









