

**FOETICIDE, OR CRIMINAL ABORTION: A  
LECTURE INTRODUCTORY TO THE  
COURSE ON  
OBSTETRICS AND DISEASES OF WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN. UNIVERSITY OF  
PENNSYLVANIA, SESSION 1839-40**

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Feticide, Or Criminal Abortion: A Lecture Introductory to the Course on Obstetrics and Diseases of women and children. University of Pennsylvania, session 1839-40 by Hugh L. Hodge

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**HUGH L. HODGE**

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BY  
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## PREFACE.

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IN the year 1839, having had my attention as a professional man frequently directed to the subject of criminal abortion, I delivered an Introductory Lecture upon this subject to my class, in the University of Pennsylvania. This Lecture was printed for their benefit and that of their friends.

In 1854, deeming this subject of great importance, I reiterated the address to a new class of students. This was also printed, and numerous copies disseminated.

Through the medium of the then Attorney General of Pennsylvania, and of the Grand Jury of the city of Philadelphia, then in session, I attempted to have the subject regularly presented to the legal profession, hoping through them to procure some more severe legislative enactments against the crime of "foeticide," the guilt of which had never, in my opinion, been properly estimated by our legislators. This effort failed. Public atten-

tion, however, has been gradually awakened to the frequency and the enormity of this flagitious outrage upon the laws of humanity. The Medical Profession, as in duty bound, have taken the lead in this inquiry. In 1856 Professor Storer, of Harvard University, assisted by his son, Dr. Horatio R. Storer, so greatly interested the profession upon this subject that the American Medical Association in 1857 appointed a committee of leading physicians in different parts of the United States, to investigate the extent of this crime, and to report what legislative enactments were necessary for its repression. A very elaborate report was given by Dr. H. R. Storer, the Chairman of the Committee, to the Medical Association at its meeting in 1859, which was afterwards published in Philadelphia.\*

Since this period, nothing has been wanting on the part of the profession to illuminate the public mind on the nature of this crime, and to urge our legislative and executive officers to greater stringency in the formation and execution of legal enactments. Our medical journals have overflowed with the history of the horrors, shocking to humanity, which are daily perpetrated in every part

\* Criminal Abortion in America.



of the land, not only by the ignorant and degraded, but by those whose education and reputed moral worth and refinement had apparently raised them even above the suspicion of vicious designs. Professional attention has also been fixed upon this point by medical societies, by writers on Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children, and more especially, on Medical Jurisprudence. If, therefore, the profession in former times, from the imperfect state of their physiological knowledge, had, in any degree, undervalued the importance of foetal life, they have fully redeemed their error, and they now call upon the legislators of our land, upon the ecclesiastical profession, and upon every one whose mind and conscience are open to conviction, to stay the progress of this destructive evil of criminal abortion; that care be taken that the ignorant be instructed, that the vicious be reprov'd, and, if needs be, that they be punished for the violation of the laws of God and man.

This call has not been altogether unheeded. Something has been done by our legislative bodies and, perhaps, more strenuous efforts have been made to detect and punish those miscreants who are now actually known as "professed abortionists;" whose advertisements, under various disguises,

more or less patent, disgrace many of our public journals.

The clerical profession have also been aroused, and are endeavoring to stem this torrent of iniquity. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Boston has issued his protest upon the subject, and Archbishop Spaulding, of Baltimore, has warned his flock of the frequency and enormity of this crime. The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church, which lately convened at Mobile, has given an urgent exhortation to all their clergy and elders to exert every proper influence over the minds of their parishioners as to the nature and extent of this evil.

At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which occurred in New York in May last, the following report of its Committee was unanimously adopted:—

“That it is with great pain we are constrained to admit the increasing prevalence, in many parts of our country, of unscriptural views of the marriage relation, in consequence of which the obligations of that relation are disregarded by many, and separations of husbands and wives, and divorces for slight and unwarranted reasons are becoming more frequent every year. Nor can we shut our eyes to

the fact that the horrible crime of infanticide, especially in the form of the destruction, by parents, of their own offspring, before birth, also prevails to an alarming extent. The evils which these errors and crimes have already brought upon our country, and the worse evils which they threaten in the near future, make it imperative, as we believe, that the whole power of the ministry and Church of Jesus Christ should be put forth in maintenance of the truth, and of virtue in regard to these things. Many causes have operated to produce a corruption of the public morals so deplorable, prominent among which may be mentioned the facility with which divorces may be obtained in some of the States, constant promulgation of false ideas of marriage and its duties, by means of books, lectures, &c., and the distribution, through the mails, of impure publications. But an influence no less powerful than any of these, is the growing devotion to fashion and luxury of this age, and the idea which practically obtains to so great an extent, that pleasure, instead of the glory of God and the enjoyment of his favor, is the great object of life. It is therefore the duty of the Church of Christ to oppose, in every practical way, these

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