History of Veterinary Science

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To appreciate and understand the past history of the science is often difficult, obscured as this history is in the veil of ignorance and superstition. However, as it is beneficial to every one to review his past life and retrace his steps, as it stimulates him onward in the path of rectitude and causes him to abandon his erroneous ideas; so it is in reviewing the steps of any science. We can see those that lead forward to success, and those that point back to decay, and thus be able to judge of the state in which it now is, and from a more correct idea of its future progress.

The early history of medicine, whether human or veterinary, is involved in considerable obscurity. In the infant state of society, the patient of the patriarchs were calculated by the number of their flocks and herds.

We constantly read in ancient history of cattle, sheep, camels and asses. The horse is spoken of as existing in Egypt, though used principally for the Chase and War. Animals, how and now have been subject to disease, and it is impossible to think but that various means will be studied and known by which these maladies could be alleviated.
History of Veterinary Science

As a good or bad man is known by his works and fruits, so is a science distinguished by what it puts forth, and more especially by its connection of its products with the welfare of mankind. Hence such a science originating in the desire to mitigate the suffering of living beings, which are subject to various diseases, putting forth its roots into anatomical and physiological truths sprung the trunk of medicine. At first there was but a single stem; but after years rolled on it grew in strength and importance until, at length, it shot forth two branches or rather stems; the one designed for the use and benefit of the human race, the other for the brute creation.

To follow out the continuous growth of these two branches would be an instructive task; but we will leave the one to follow its course, as it has already done - ornamental in itself and a blessing to humanity - while we take up the other, in which we are more directly interested, namely

Veterinary Science.
The Chinese claim to have possession of much valuable information on the treatment of diseases of both man and animals, over four thousand five hundred years ago, and some of their works on the subject are said to be in existence yet and considered by them as undoubted authority.

Of another country, being with China in antiquity, i.e. Egypt, we read of horses and chariots, most numerous and valuable. The preservation of the health of these animals would not be neglected, for medicine was then practiced as a science, and for many a century before the history of Greece had begun, the horsemen, herdsman, and shepherds are particularly spoken of in Egypt; and an important article in all the most ancient laws linked to the humane treatment, comfort, and care of their quadruplets.

The duties of these times were supposed to take upon themselves the care of domestic animals, and this would go far to secure every attention and kindness to them and medical care among the rest.

By and by Greece began to be peopled, and the inhabitants to be civilized.

Twelve hundred years before Christ, China lived.
The force his management and love of the horse was practically said to be half man and half horse. He practiced also the medical art, and we may be sure that his favorite animals would not be neglected. Homer, three hundred years afterward describes the management of the horse by the Trojans and Greeks. Sir Edmund and others

superseded the physician, wrote on animals, veterinary medicine, and at the same period Zenophen, the warrior and historian, composed his admirable treatise on the training and general management of the horse. Veterinary science might now be said to be triumphantly established, as it was practiced by philosophers, statesmen, and agriculturists.

The Romans must have assumed a prominent position among the nations of antiquity and the veterinary art was studied and brought to a greater degree of perfection than ever before. Cato the Censor, practiced and taught the general treatment of the diseases of horses and cattle. Virgil, the poet, was devoted to one art, and a great portion of one of his Georgics is in a manner devoted to it.

Consolation of the diseases of domestic animals, and in the stable of the emperor Augustus he practiced what he taught in his beautiful poem.
Shortly after Livie Columella and then, with an interval of more than three thousand years, Cornutus, the first work of Vegetius, which contained all that was previously known of the art, as well as his close knowledge of the sciences. Previously there had been several useful treatises composed on the management of the diseases of the horse; but the splendid book Vegetius surpassed them all.

There came a long period of ignorance and barbarism, and with better sciences and arts, that which was connected with the medical treatment of domestic animals disappeared. A thousand years past by and every interesting and valuable record relating to this subject seemed to have vanished.

It was not till in the sixteenth century that knowledge began to revive, and several other branches of science and literature had made considerable advances before the medical art, either human or veterinary, began to reappear. The seventeenth century had opened wide the practice of human medicine was placed on its proper footing, and it is impossible to say how long it would have been before veterinary science would have
began to rise from its degraded state, had it not been for the epizootic commencing among the cattle and extending to the horse, that laid waste every country in Europe. It was bidding defiance to all the means that were employed to arrest its progress, when at length, it was suggested that in order to be better enabled to combat the evil a school should be established under the guidance of those who seemed to know most about the matter, for the instruction of educated young men in the study of anatomy and the diseases of the domestic animals.

A Seminary of this kind was established at Lyons, France, in 1761 under the direction of the celebrated Bonnevie. The veterinary knowledge of the professor was well known, and his works, especially those on the anatomy of the horse and sheep, were in high repute. Four years later another college, intended to be the principal one of France, was founded at Sèvres, now Paris. Another school has since been opened in France at Nîmes, chief being paid to cattle which are much more numerous and more employed in that part of the country. These schools have prospered, and to-day the French stand at the head of veterinary science.
With the example of France before them, the other Continental countries were not slow in taking up the science, and to-day we find veterinary schools in every little state.

The Germans at an early period paid a great deal of attention to the veterinary art. We find they have six governmental schools established viz: Berlin, Dresden, Giessen, Hanover, Munich and Stuttgart.

In Italy every university has its veterinary department connected with it, having a faculty and apparatus sufficient to make it a good veterinary college.

We will again turn our attention to Egypt, where we found the science in its infancy. It died out with the rest of the arts of antiquity in that universal despotism that overspread the world for a long period of time, and it did not reappear again until in 1828, when Mehmet Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, perceived the high importance of veterinary medicine, and formed the project of encouraging in that Country, that science which had been recognized as indispensable to the prosperity of every European state. It was to M. Hamont and M. Pratot, veterinary surgeons from the school of St. Etien, that he confided this difficult task.
They found a great many obstacles opposing their enterprise, which rendered it extremely difficult to conduct their enterprise to a successful termination. On their arrival in Egypt they encountered an epidemic which was raging in the lower part of that Country.

This they treated very successfully, which made the government still more anxious to found a school like those in France.

This was first established at Rosetta, but soon after Petrie died, thus leaving Sanmartin all the work, which he carried out. In a short time the school was proved to be successful and united with the medical school of that place. This Sanmartin was not favorable to, for he saw that it put veterinary science subordinate and inferior to human medicine.

This he fought until he finally got an independent College in 1833. From that date it has continued to improve to the present time, and is now one of the principal government schools.

In England towards the close of the Eighteenth century, from seeing the great advantages of Veterinary Science
in the Countries of the Continent, there was quite a need felt for the science there; and the Odense agricultural Society desired to send their young men to the Alfort school; but their journey was prevented by the arrival of Mr. Lainbert who had distinguished himself at Lyons and Alfort by his knowledge of the external accommodative of the horse. So they secured him as lecturer and founded the Royal Veterinary school in 1791, but the first public lectures were not given until January 1792. As his knowledge was only of the horse, his instruction was confined to that alone.

He only lived until 1794, when Messrs. Coleman and Moorcraft were appointed to succeed him. In a short time Moorcraft resigned, leaving Coleman alone as teacher. He remained about forty-five years, but, like Lainbert, paid no attention to anything but the horse. In this line his students became very proficient, but this did not meet the wants of the country or accomplish the aim of the founders, whose intention was that the instruction should be given in the treatment of all animals indiscriminately.
This continued to be complained of, and the reform urged until in 1842 when J.S. Simonds was appointed Prof. of Cattle Pathology. From that time, all the diseases of domestic animals have received due attention from the veterinary schools of England. We find there was also a sister college established in Edinburgh about 1825 by Professor Dick, who gave his first course of lectures in the Freemasons' hall, and really laid the foundation of the present Royal Veterinary College at that place.

At first Prof. Dick had no recognition from the authorities, but as he had a great love for animals he pressed on, and through his zeal in a few years was recognized by the authorities of Edinburgh and throughout all Scotland. This school continued to grow in popularity until in 1838 the English Government recognized it, and allowed its students the same privileges as those of the Royal College of London.

There are also two other Colleges in Great Britain; one at Glasgow and the other, the new Edinburgh College, founded in 1873, by Professor Williams.
From these there graduates a large number of well-educated men every year who are able to keep down the ravages of disease among the great herds of the empire; and we find them as well educated and refined, honest and as much respected, as the men of any other profession.

In the United States we find that there was not a veterinary school established until the fall of 1864. Though it is true that in Boston and Philadelphia a few pre-fab men, previous to this, procured charters from the state legislatures granting them the privilege of founding such schools; but there were no anything like a regular course of lectures delivered.

In fact there was no resemblance to a teaching school in either city; although diplomas or certificates were issued by these supposed schools for $50 and $100 each.

In 1857 another attempt was made in New York but this was also a failure. The charter then granted, having been altered and amended, another attempt was made in 1861 but no lectures were given until the fall of 1864.
This school seems to have been more fortunate than the others.

Its faculty first consisted of four members, two of whom were veterinary surgeons.

Laddard, the dean, is a graduate of Alfort. It continued, doing very well until in 1874, when some difference of difficulty arose between the trustees and faculty and the latter, seeing their work of about ten years about to be dashed to the ground, resigned in a body, secured a new charter and really went on with the old school under more auspicious circumstances.

They now have a faculty of seven members. This is the only veterinary school in the United States. There are a few schools connected with State agricultural Universities, but these, with one exception have one teacher only. And the student generally, as in our own college, gets this branch, as one of three studies, and in only three terms, which is not really equal to one term of three months if the time be devoted wholly to this.

About all the student knows when he gets through with these three terms is that there is such a thing as veterinary science,
that he knows nothing about it sufficient to enable him to practice.

This is no fault of the Professors in charge for they are both energetic and efficient, but the idea of one man "running" a medical college and then only having the student for one third of the time during nine months is preposterous.

It is somewhat strange that our government has so neglected this science, and that in this respect we should have so nearly followed the example set by England; having seen the preventable destruction that disease has brought on their flocks and herds, owing to their utter indifference.

And we know also, that they have been instrumental in conveying some of these scourges to almost every part of the world, increasing in violence and destructive effects as they spread. Our government must have seen all this. She is conscious that at least one of these maladies has been carried from England into our herds of cattle and is slowly spreading, only waiting for favorable circumstances, when it will blaze rapidly over each state. Not only this but every year other animal plagues, exotic or native, are becoming more serious and extended.
One of these alone, the swine plague threatens to destroy our sacred tribe.

From the custom that is now practiced of shipping all hogs, as soon as they begin to come to die, this disorder will eventually lead to a considerable diminishing, if not a suppression of our home and export trade in live flesh. Pleuro-pneumonia, in our cattle, last fall caused no considerable loss, and even almost ruined our export trade in cattle for a short time.

And it was the same with sheep.

One great objection and justly too, that foreign nations urged against receiving our live stock was, that we had no veterinary surgeons to inspect the shipments. See what our English writer says of the condition of the veterinary art in this Country: "In the United States we should certainly have expected something better than it at present holds." She has the painful experience and the bitter lessons of this country before her, and she has shewed that in other matters she could profit by such example."

With all this experience and all this evidence our
government has really given our attention to the veterinary art. It present the whole country is the very paradise of grackers and impostors of every kind, and nothing is done by the government to encourage the study of the diseases of animals by competent and well-educated men. Such neglect is not only something of a national disgrace, but must lead, as it has often led in other countries, to a national disaster, not once but many times. With our enterprise, our well-known advanced views as to education and general science, and the high position human medicine is already assuming in our country it would indeed be a matter of serious regret and censure if our government longer delays the establishing of well organized veterinary schools; and fostering a science which none but governments utterly blind to their own national interests now ignore.

With our immense and rapidly increasing animal wealth so necessary for our present and future progress, it is not reasonable to believe it will be long before the government will take some action in this line.