

**FEMALE PHYSICIANS.**

[THE following is an extract from a letter to the editor, written by a lady who has for several years been favorably known among us as a public lecturer to women on medical subjects. Whatever may be thought of

the proposed plan of educating females for medical practitioners, and of having both sexes instructed in the same schools, the reader cannot fail to admire the honest enthusiasm of the writer in advocating it.]

Women throughout the country, such I mean as *think*, and have presumed that they had the right to do so, for themselves, are resolved to have those who are to be admitted into the sanctums of their sick rooms in the hour of their deepest trials, those of their own sex. And can they be blamed for a feeling so natural and pure in itself as this? No one who reasons from his own most delicate feelings will dispute the point. Man requires man's aid in his sick room, even when the gentler offices are performed by woman. Why, then, should not woman, who from her organization intuitively understands the throes of agony that her sister endures, not be the one to administer to her the healing draught? She knows also the moan of the sick nurseling, and her heart dictates before the head has time to act.

I am prepared to speak confidently, from the experience that over four years' lecturing to women has given me, together with having given advice to over three hundred women, many of whom would have gone down to an early grave, such was the shrinking delicacy of their feelings, ere they could have spoken to a man of the nature of their sufferings.

Women *will be* physicians. The time has come for it, and neither art nor power will prevent it. Woman has never yet been foiled, when her heart was set upon a great object. If our eyes are put out, and our hands cut off, we are educating our sons and daughters, and we will teach our daughters to pray for eyes as soon as they can lisp. We do not ask or wish separate colleges, and there needs no argument to prove that in other sciences separate institutions are not needed; then why should the holiest, purest study taught to man be sexualized?

Our sons and brothers need the restraining, the purifying and elevating influence of women, when they go from home influences to the corrupting ones of the city. And it may be, that the lecturers themselves would find it salutary to have women present. A professor once said to me that he could not possibly give certain lectures if I were present. This gentleman was in no way remarkable for his delicacy. Of another professor, in the same city, I asked the privilege of attending his lectures. He assured me it was impossible; that such was the state of morals among the students, that I would not be safe from insult, and that I would need the police to protect me. Not being fond of riots or conspicuousness, I pressed the matter no farther. But I was deeply pained, for in a few months these young men would have their diplomas, and go away to their future work, and lives would be in the trust of those who were too unprincipled to see and treat a lady with civility in the classroom. Two days after, another professor in the same city invited me to attend his lectures, and I accepted his invitation to some of his lectures, and was treated with all deference—not a look or action to offend the most delicately fastidious, if I except the loathsome one of tobacco chewing. In another college, where I was invited by the president to attend some lectures, I found this last named practice carried to a very great extent; so much so, that I must needs pick my way through the aisle,

and when seated, carefully raise my dress from the floor to prevent its utter ruin. The next day I found the silent admonition had taken effect ; there was an improvement, and the students themselves expressed disgust at a practice so offensive to a lady.

I think that it is but just in me to remark, that, as an individual, I have no complaints against the medical faculty. I have ever been treated by them with a generous courtesy, that has made me feel them my friends. The museums of colleges have been opened to me, private libraries and private instruction in dissection, aid and information freely given, for which in the past I have been deeply grateful, and of which, now in my retired life, I retain a most delightful recollection. I do not, and never have wished to practise medicine ; but others do, and as a woman I enter into their sympathies, and speak earnestly for them.

Yours truly,

PAULINA WRIGHT DAVIS.

*Providence, January, 1850.*