

## FEMALE ACCOUCHEURS.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

SIR,—Will you allow me to occupy a small space in your pages, with a subject in which I have been very much interested from the commencement of my professional career. It is the practice of midwifery by females. Every enlightened physician will cheerfully favor this proposition, if females can be found properly qualified by knowledge, and well adapted by character, for the performance of the duties of a midwife. That females may be found capable of being qualified, there cannot be any doubt, at least for the management of all cases which do not require instrumental aid. Having attended the Hospitals la Maternité and la Clinique at Paris, for several weeks, I have had a good opportunity to judge of the capabilities of the *Sages Femmes*, who were connected with these institutions, and to know that they were qualified to conduct and did conduct almost every case, while I was in attendance. In this country, of course, the same facilities for instruction cannot be had by females, as are had by the midwives of Paris. But, the same facilities can be had by them here, which are possessed by most of our medical students, and indeed greater advantages for a practical knowledge of the art, which it is unnecessary to speak of especially.

If, then, it is admitted that females can be properly qualified for the performance of the duties of midwifery, the propriety of entrusting them with these duties will not be questioned. Of course, when accidents occur, or when any of the diseases arise consequent to labor, the immediate advice of a physician would be required. The occurrence of accidents, and the development of disease, however, are very rare. They are as likely to occur in a case in the charge of a physician, as in one in the charge of a midwife.

In order to have skilful, intelligent and trustworthy midwives, they should receive instruction from a physician, and have their qualifications certified by him. In our city there are many women of good intelligence and of excellent character, engaged in the duties of *nursing*. This class of women are well known to the physicians, and they, almost universally, would be pronounced by them to be capable of acquiring by study a good, practical knowledge of the art of midwifery.

To promote the great object set forth in this paper, I am confident that every physician of refinement and dignity would furnish such aid as he might be capable of giving. Motives of pecuniary gain would not be allowed to influence such men. I am proud to say, that in our city, such is the character of the gentlemen in the practice of medicine, that a class of females who should engage to qualify themselves thoroughly for the duties of midwifery, would have their cheerful aid and encouragement.

My intention in this paper being only to call the attention of the profession, especially in our city, to the subject, I will leave it for the present without further discussion. I shall take occasion soon to make some propositions to carry out the proposed plan.

G. D.

*Boston, Dec. 23, 1841.*

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