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"MEDICAL INTOLERANCE AND LADY DOCTORS."

THE opponents of the female obstetrician movement must frequently have derived much encouragement and satisfaction from the tone and tactics adopted by its promoters and champions. The abuse with which these usually assail the Medical Profession, the charge of indelicacy they bring against Englishwomen in general, and their own assumption of pre-eminence in purity, delicacy, and refinement, hardly seem well calculated to win the support of either the Profession or the public. And we have not observed any improvement in style, though the "Ladies' Medical College" has been in existence for more than three years. Indeed, the latest specimen we have seen of the literature—if we may give it so dignified a name—of the sect is decidedly the worst. We have received No. 1 of the "Fitzroy Pamphlets," on "Medical Intolerance and Lady Doctors." The title of the production is taken, we presume, from the *locals* of the "Ladies' Medical College," and every opportunity is taken to puff that and the "Female Medical Society;" but whether there is any other connexion between them does not clearly appear. We congratulate the author on having had the modesty to remain incognito, for there is no other sign of that sorely needed grace about the pamphlet. It is made up of scoldings of more than forty-female power, declaimings about woman's rights and wrongs, against man's tyranny and stupidity, and against the iniquities of Doctors, and of rhapsodies about delicacy, and purity, and mystic chords of feelings and harmonies, that recall the outpourings of some of the "religious" sects described in Mr. Hepworth Dixon's "New America;" and the revilings, the appeals to sentiment and to passion, and the so-called arguments, are tumbled forth with a volubility and eagerness that require apparently an utter disregard for taste or style, and almost of grammar and coherence. A few extracts will suffice to show the character of the production, and to more than justify what we have said of it. Thus we are informed, at page 5, that cynics will sneer at the scruples many feel at the employment of Doctors in midwifery, and call them idle and childish; but that

"those who have learned to overcome and make light of these scruples, have impaired at the same time the brightest, the purest, the most loveable part of their natures; and with which they have lost the power to awaken in others the deepest feelings of regard and sympathy. A thousand mystic chords in the human bosom have ceased to yield their harmony, and that not because they have no power to vibrate, but because the musician's magic skill is gone. Men may have eyes perfect in their mechanism, but what avails that, if the sunlight never

reaches them? So it is when the light that irradiates our better nature is extinguished. We know not what we lose. Everything that degrades woman degrades us; for they should be the guardians of purity on earth. If their best qualities were not impaired, the natures of all would be awakened to a higher life, and many would not, as they now do, carry their most glorious susceptibilities with them latent to the tomb. But the stream of life is polluted. Its spiritual beauty in too many cases has passed away. Like a sparkling dewdrop, absorbed by the muddy waters of this earth; it can never regain its glittering existence."

Yea, even the finest and most-gifted natures—

"the few terrestrial divinities, whose presence in the world teaches us how 'little lower than the angels' humanity must have been created, are also exposed to the odious contact of this serpent's trail; to the baneful influence of a practice whose existence involves the systematic annihilation of the best and purest attributes of human nature."

If the writer had developed all this but a little further, we feel sure that she—no man could have got such superbly fine writing out of the subject—we are convinced, we say, that she could have proved that man-midwifery was somehow the cause of original sin and the fall of man. We wonder whether any of the lectures at the "Ladies' Medical College" are at all in this style? If they are, it may account for what seems to us rather curious—for the fact, namely, that apparently it is thought not at all indelicate for men to teach women midwifery and anatomy, though the practice of midwifery by men has such appalling effects. Further on in the pamphlet we read:—

"Some people have wished the system we denounce might be sent to Jericho, but I (*sic*) (a) can see no reason why Jericho should be tormented with it, and I know of no place on the habitable globe that is bad enough to receive it. If we have any faith in the doctrines of the penalties for sin, I believe the system has been the means of sending many thousands of souls to the lower regions. It is no doubt a diabolical invention that was originated in Pandemonium itself, and is now upheld by the influence of the powers of darkness. And we should hasten to consign it again to its birthplace with all possible dispatch. What are all our clergy and ministers doing? They quibble about their vestments and their tithes of mint and cumin, but they neglect the weightier matters of purity, and truth, and justice."

We cannot feel too thankful that women have not yet got generally into our pulpits. Women may, however, be taught midwifery by men, and, instead of impairing the delicacy or lowering the tone of *their* minds, they will "be the means of raising the tone of the profession itself, and of elevating the standard of taste that now pervades it." Yet Doctors are described as being so brutally selfish and bad that we should have feared that even women could scarcely touch the pitch without being defiled. The writer takes up the term "heroic Surgery," which we in the Profession use rather in a satirical than a complimentary sense, and treats of it as if we admired and encouraged it, and then she exclaims—

"How about the medical hero? His courage consists, not in disregarding his own sufferings, but in disregarding those of his patient. 'No pains spared,' is his motto, while mutilating his wretched victim. The real hero combines the courage of the lion with the gentleness of the dove. The sham hero, this medical make-believe is remarkable for nothing; but for having triumphed over the kindly instincts of human nature, and for the development of its demoniacal qualities. . . . Some eminent doctors have not time to be gentle. They have too much business on their hands, and seem to think that the sufferings of an unimportant patient are of infinitely less consequence than the inconvenience a trifling delay would be to themselves."

Even this does not satisfy our gentle author. At page 20, she ventures to charge Medical men with criminal conduct towards their female patients.

"As to the criminal charges referred to," she writes, "I have not the least doubt but that, in many cases, they might

(a) In this, as in punctuation and everything else, our quotations are scrupulously exact.

be not only insinuated, but substantiated. Scandalous circumstances enough have come to my knowledge fully to impress me with that conviction; but, like the popish priest in a nunnery, the doctor has excellent opportunities to escape the crime of being found out. They assert themselves that they are the guardians of the honour of their female patients. Fine guardians, some of them, indeed, we may as well entrust a fox with the guardianship of a poultry yard."

The truthfulness of all this is only equalled by the good taste and delicacy with which the picture is drawn!

Of course all that is said against this "cursed system," this "moral pestilence" of English midwifery practice, and the "degradation which this evil system implies," affects not the Doctors only, but also English men and women who employ them. And on this the writer remarks with her usual elegance, delicacy, and self-complacency—

"We are not ignorant of the fact that a large portion of the community appear satisfied to accept the present system as a necessity, and that among ladies themselves may be found its supporters and advocates. We could offer many reasons why it should be so, but they would, perhaps, be more truthful than agreeable. We will, therefore, pass them over, and, in their place, substitute the following well-known anecdote"—

Then follows the fable of the fox that had lost its tail, and further remarks, such as—

"Human nature despoiled of its best feelings and unconscious of its degradation is a very unlovely thing. But we do not wish to dwell on this unpleasant theme. Some may think that the above remarks contain a reflection on themselves. Perhaps they do, and if it is so, it is the truth that reflects and not I."

Our readers' patience must be nearly exhausted, but we must make one more quotation; it is really too good to be lost, and the "suggestion" made in it, though "offered with great diffidence," is so thoughtful and kindly that we dare not deprive them of the benefit of it.

"To the friendly reader then, who is under any apprehension that the admission of ladies to the profession would interfere with his pecuniary profits, I say, would it not be possible to prevail on the lady of your choice to undergo the comparatively short period of study that would be necessary to qualify a lady for those departments of medicine in which women should engage? Your income instead of being lessened would then be increased, and your wife would be a helpmeet for you in a far truer sense of the word than if you regarded her merely as a superior upper servant and manager of your domestic affairs. . . . Then, again, to have a consulting physician always at hand might possess some advantages. It might be an advantage to your patients, and it might augment your reputation."

Nothing can add to the beauty and refinement of this! The delicacy of the reasons for choosing a wife, and of the assertion of the way in which Medical men at present regard their spouses, and the suggestion that "a comparatively short period of study" fits a woman to be a consulting Physician, are inimitable.

We might easily cull many more choice passages from the pamphlet; but though its intense exaggerations and various beauties may have given our readers much amusement, they must begin to sicken of it, and we will not inflict any more upon them. It is an outrageous libel, not upon the Profession only, but upon all English men and women, from the palace to the cottage. We have said that we do not gather that it is issued by, or has any direct connexion with, the "Female Medical Society," but we cannot but observe that it puffs and advertises that body, and especially names, and exempts, of course, from its censures, the lecturers at the "Ladies' Medical College." An appendix to it also republishes complimentary notices of this College. We must add that to us it is incomprehensible how any Medical man can permit his name to be in any way connected with a sect that seeks to gain supporters by such virulent and scandalous attacks on his Profession and his countrywomen. And the gravest wrong is the wrong to the latter. For ourselves, as a

Profession, we can well afford to laugh at such writers, and then fling their publications by. Their dogmatism, verbiage, facile rant, and tedious declaimings cannot possibly hurt us, and may afford us a few moments' amusement; but that these pretenders to a superior purity and refinement, these would-be cultivators of Medicine, should so libel our countrywomen *en masse*, is a most gross and unpardonable offence.

With regard to the latest development of the tactics of the "Female Medical Society," and the correspondence now carried on in our columns between Dr. Eastlake and Dr. Edmunds, we leave them to the consideration of the Profession. They will judge on which side truth and justice lie, and on which side is seen the most of that open, honest fair play that Englishmen so value. We will make only two remarks—first, that the truth of Dr. Eastlake's charge against the midwife seems to be admitted; and secondly, that "an alliance" is formed, or is being formed—we do not clearly gather from Dr. Edmunds's letter whether the negotiations are absolutely concluded—between the "Female Medical Society" and the British Lying-in Hospital, by which the Hospital will sink to the position of a mere appendage to the Society. Supposing that the governors of the Hospital choose to accept this position for their institution, what will Dr. Eastlake's colleagues say to it? What has been their action in the matter up to the present time?

Lastly, we would warn the party who support the Female Medical Society and the Ladies' Medical College that, if they are ever to persuade the English people to cast out the accoucheur and take to their homes the female obstetrician or lady Doctor—if they hope ever to be affiliated in any way to the Medical Profession, they must thoroughly change their tactics. And, as a first step towards amendment, we would recommend some slight cultivation of the charity that "thinketh no evil."