

DOCTRESSES vs. DOCTORS.

Nothing will ever make me believe that God meant men to be the ordinary physicians of women and babies. A few masculine experts might be tolerated in special institutions, so that cases of peculiar danger and difficulty might not be left, as they are now, to the necessarily one-sided treatment of a single sex; but, in general, if ever a created being was conspicuously and intolerably out of his natural sphere, it is, in my opinion, the male doctor in the apartment of the lying-in woman; and I think our sex is really guilty, in the first place, that it ever allowed men to appear there; and, in the second, that it does not insist upon educating women of character and intelligence and social position for that post.

Indeed, common delicacy would seem to demand that all the special diseases of women should be treated principally by women; but this aside, and speaking from common sense only, men may be as scientific as they please, — it is plain that thoroughly to know the woman's organism, what is good for it and what evil, and how it can best be cured when it is disordered, one must be one's self a woman. It only proves how much unworthy passion and prejudice the great doctors allow to intrude into their adoration of "pure science" and boasted love of humanity, that, instead of being eager to enlist the feminine intuitions and investigations in this great cause, as their best chance of arriving at truth, they are actually enacting the ignoble part of churls and misers, if not of quacks. For are they not well enough aware that often their women patients are so utterly beyond them that they do not know what to do with them? The diseases of the age are nervous diseases, and women are growing more nervously high-strung and uncontrollable every day, yet the doctors stand helplessly by and cannot stop it. When, however, there shall be a school of doctresses of high culture and thorough medical education going in and out among the sex with the proper

medical authority, they will see, and will be able to prevent, much of the moral and physical neglect and imprudence which, now unchecked in school and home, make such havoc of the vital forces of the present generation.

Such a guardian of household health might have been the poor, heart-broken genius who never found her true place in the feminine community. For she bravely preached the laws of health in every family, while her presence in a sick-room was almost that of a Saviour. People sent for her for miles round, and often healing seemed to wait upon her coming, such new hope and confidence could she infuse into the patient. The very touch of her warm and skilful hand; the quickness of her sympathy and comprehension; her courage, decision, and presence of mind in cases of great danger; her observation of every minutest symptom, — all marked her out as one of Nature's great practitioners, while her enthusiasm for anatomy and physiology seemed to show that, if she could have had the opportunity, she would have been also a true and pure and tireless devotee of science. Her popularity drew her at one time into so wide an amateur practice that she found she was neglecting her home duties for it, and gave it up for the sake of her sewing. But how much more appropriate and grateful would her ministrations have been, — a mother herself, a baby nurse absolutely perfect, and with the most sensitive and at the same time the steadiest nervous organization in the world, — at the bedside of her friends and neighbors in their need, than the services of the ordinary country doctors who did officiate there!

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