

## FEMALE MEDICAL GRADUATES.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—It will be a cause of the utmost consternation to the vast majority of the medical graduates of the University of London that the Senate of that university have resolved, by a majority of fourteen votes to eight, to admit women to the medical as well as other degrees of the university. I, as one of the medical graduates, having been put to much expense and trouble to procure my degree, consider that it is an extremely dishonourable thing that my degree should be by that vote rendered to me practically valueless. I feel sure that most of the medical graduates will agree with me in this opinion.

This measure has been brought about, not by the medical graduates, but by the influence of graduates in arts and law, who by their want of knowledge in medical matters, are totally incapable of coming to a correct judgment on such subjects. I do most sincerely hope that the medical graduates of the university, together with other members of the medical profession, will form themselves into a compact association, in order to oppose, as far as they can, any such innovation. I believe there is much to be done even

at this the eleventh hour, but only by means of united action.

Very much has been done during the last few years to improve and elevate the medical profession, but the introduction of women into that profession will tend in a great measure to lower it in the eyes of the world, and will have great influence in deterring the best class of men from taking it up as a source of livelihood.

I trust that you will allow me space in your columns to urge upon the medical graduates of the University of London to meet together and see whether nothing can be done to prevent, even now, the introduction of women to the medical degrees. I, for my part, shall be happy to do what I can, and shall be happy to receive any suggestions from other medical graduates, and to enter into some concerted action with them.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

HENRY F. WINSLOW, M D. Lond.

Sussex House, Hammersmith, March 14th, 1877.

THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO THE  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Some explanation seems necessary on the part of those graduates of the University of London who, having already consented to the free admission of women to its degrees and honours, are now strongly opposed to their receiving medical degrees only, under the enabling Act of Mr. Russell Gurney. These graduates have been guilty of no inconsistency, but, on the contrary, have been acting in complete uniformity with their convictions, as the votes for the two objects have rested on totally different principles.

With very few exceptions, medical men and others conversant with the laws of physiology are of opinion that women are unfitted for the professions, and least of all for that of medicine. They are assured of this from a consideration of woman's nature, and are confirmed in their conviction by the attitude of their opponents, who offer no answer to their objections, but simply restate the proposition, of which they assume the correctness—the perfect equality of the sexes for any calling in life. They ignore a natural law by styling it artificial, and replace it by another of their own framing, the truth of which has yet to be proved.

When, however, the advocates of women throw back upon the objectors that women have never been allowed a trial in the race, that their incapacities cannot be shown until their powers have been tested, this reason for affording them the opportunity seems so cogent, that I and some others have said, "Try; we will offer you no hindrance." This argument that women cannot be judged, as they have been debarred from all opportunity of manifesting their capacities, has found its chief exponent in John Stuart Mill. He seems to imply, in his "Subjection of Women," that by an artificial process founded on the laws of natural selection, woman has become the lovely creature so dear to the heart of man, but by some other process of education and training some other and superior being might be developed. One cannot argue against the possibility of this, but it is curious to remark how some people forget that a girl inherits from her father as well as a boy, and she again may transmit her good qualities to her son. Put the argument as you may, it means that women are asking for fair play and no favour; and I reply, "I for one will not deny it you." Sir W. Gull has said no more than this, and therefore it is somewhat unfair for him to be brought into Lord Granville's speech as an advocate for women entering the medical profession; he merely submitted to the justice-argument enforced by much external pressure, at the same time expressing his opinion strongly, as he has always done, against the fitness of women for medicine.

The present proposition to admit women rests on a totally different principle; it depends on the supposed especial aptitude of women for the practice of our profession, whilst the other is founded simply on the general law of justice and of equal rights for all. The two reasons were confounded together by the proposers of the resolution, and appeared to be represented in unequal degrees in the minds of Lord Granville and Mr. Lowe. The former, judging by his tone, was contemplating the special fitness of women for medicine, whilst the latter was advocating their admission to all degrees. The latter question is evidently not yet ripe for an answer by the Legislature, or a new charter would ere this have been obtained, and this is confirmed by the failure of the attempt to throw open the University of Edinburgh to women. In lieu of this, the case of medical degrees for women came before Parliament last year, and was

argued on the special ground of the fitness of women for the practice of our profession. Woman's peculiar capabilities were dwelt upon, based on her female qualities, no allusion being made as to her capacity for acquiring scientific knowledge by a single debater. First of all, it may be remarked that women are quite equal to men in all the qualities necessary for a professional life, and this argument failing, their advocates do not object to the inconsistency of supporting their claims on their special sexual merits. The Bill based on so large principles was carried, is now endorsed by the Senate, and is attempted to be thrust on the University in spite of the vast majority of the medical graduates being opposed to it. There is, therefore, no contradiction in voting for the admission of women on the broad principles of equality and opposing oneself to such an arbitrary and limited measure as this. I vote for giving women a trial on general grounds, not believing in their fitness for the different professions which they wish to practise. The attempt is not made, and I am then asked to vote for their admission to our profession for reasons based on their especial aptitude for it. To this I object.

It is well known that the objections used by medical graduates are founded on physiological laws, whilst the advocates of women base their arguments on social and political laws—of liberty, equality, and justice. In holding this position they ignore the rights of nature, and are assuming that their laws are applicable as between men and women, which is the very question at issue. There seems to be an absolute blindness to the consequences of women entering the profession, when we see their advocates urging upon those who are devoted to the principles of freedom to join with them in the effort to bring about a state of things which will necessitate the most odious and unbearable legislation. They will scatter natural laws to the winds and replace them by any number of artificial ones. Legislation will have to be carried on about questions of place, preferment, and sex, causing irritation, injustice, and rivalries to an infinitely greater extent than is said now to affect our infinitesimally small number of the community.

If the professions are thrown open, the law must be put in operation as to the advisability of medical women holding posts of trust, such as parish appointments, in which they will have to attend inquests, make post-mortem examinations on men, &c., and require an occasional absence from office for maternal duties. The advocates of freedom could not of course feel these objections, but would insist on any woman being allowed to compete with man for such an appointment. If women are to practise at the Bar legal enactments will again be required, first of all as to whether she may rise to the Bench, and if so, it must follow that no married woman can hope to succeed to this elevation. What heartburnings this will bring to the married childless woman who has been the favourite leader in court! I assume of course that no amount of sentimentality will allow the High Courts of Judicature to stand still whilst the judge goes home to be confined. As to the Church, the difficulties of women entering that will perhaps be not so great and need no efforts of legislation. There appears to be no natural impediment to a woman preaching or conducting a religious service, nor I apprehend to her being raised to the bench of bishops. There may perhaps be a difficulty unknown to me in the transmission of apostolic authority or influence through a female, unless the question has already been determined by the case of Pope Joan. At all events, it is clear that on the principle of the rights of all, independent of sex, the natural and instinctive laws which have hitherto regulated society are to be put aside, and any number of petty legal enactments will have to be framed in their stead, at every step a woman takes forward in the exercise of her profession. To lead her on in the path of success and then arrest her because she is a woman, will be inconsequential and gross injustice. Yet it must inevitably be done. How any man of liberal tendencies, as most graduates of the University of London are supposed to be, can contemplate with equanimity the necessary result of the mixing of the sexes in professional rivalry, it is difficult to conceive. Parliament will be fully occupied in the most odious legislation. The only explanation I can offer for the remarkable phenomenon is that graduates in arts do not believe the statement of doctors, that women bear babies, or if they do know it they trust that by some new mode of training and culture (the philosophers say the *zeitgeist*) a new order of things may perhaps come about. In this view perhaps some agreement might be found between us all.

It might be thought, with such opinions as I have ex-

pressed, that I hold my vote for the admission of women to the rights of the University upon the slenderest tenure. I confess to this, being aware that it is only by blinding one's eyes to the consequences and yielding to the force of an argument, false as I believe the premisses are, that I grant their request. I feel it quite possible that I have no right to grant this, and ought rather to know that the rule of equality between men and women does not apply when the facts of nature stare me in the face and give it the lie. It is a serious matter to assist in an undertaking which may tend to shake the foundations of society, which now rest on instinctive laws of nature; to break down barriers which cause obstruction to an infinitesimally small number; to raise a number of others; to cause annoyances and irritations which society will not be able to bear. If the reader smiles at all this, and says it will and can never occur, then the answer is obvious. Why upset the whole machinery of colleges and universities for the sake of a few amateur doctors, fancy lawyers, and job parsons? Surely the play is not worth the candle.

I know of no one who is more wedded to Liberal principles than myself (my friends even call me a Radical), but I maintain that all social and human laws must have a basis in nature. I hold that "no favour and fair play" is not applicable as between man and woman, that the social laws apply only to the *genus homo*, which is made up of two beings whose characteristics supplement one another. The advocates of the rights of women assume that a large political doctrine can be used as between the sexes, which is the very point for discussion and fair argument. For my own part, I like freedom and equality, and hate repressive laws of any kind, and therefore, arguing on the largest political principles, I prefer the present system rather than one which will necessitate legislation of the most odious kind. When I speak of laws of nature I am fully aware that there is no analogy between them and laws of man's construction; the former cannot be broken, although we may come in collision with them to our own discomfiture.

In conclusion, I cannot forbear from expressing my feelings as to the sadness of the spectacle of graduates of a learned University throwing out suggestions that low and sordid motives actuate the medical faculty in its opinion as to the unfitness of women for its profession. These graduates will not, or perhaps cannot, see the physiological arguments, but this does not compel them to judge others by their own narrowness. The kind of advocacy they have used has already borne its fruits in strengthening the phalanx of their opponents, and assisting in producing the well-marked majority of votes, as seen in the division of Tuesday.

Grosvenor-street, May 12, 1877.

Your obedient servant,  
SAMUEL WILKS.

## THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Owing to some criticisms which have been offered me upon the letter I wrote to you on the inadvisability of women being admitted to the practice of medicine, I should like, with your permission, to now add a few remarks in order to show the real and most important reason which has produced so complete a division between the medical and other graduates of the University of London. The difference of opinion is so very decided and remarkable that nothing but a trades-union principle can be thought of by some to be the propelling motive lying deep in the breast of the medical faculty. This accusation is not worthy of notice, and therefore it is the duty of the non-medical graduates to search for the reason elsewhere, knowing, as they do, that amongst their fellows they can number some of the *élite* of the profession. In my last letter, I was merely replying to the argument of "fair play and no favour," and to the words of the circular addressed to the Senate, "regarding it as an act of justice in giving to women the same reward of persevering industry, and the same recognition of success, as men now enjoy." I said there were natural differences between the sexes which made the doctrine totally untenable, and which would necessitate special legislation between men and women productive in the end of tenfold more hardship, by the adoption of invidious and positively oppressive measures, than now affect women by simply leaving them alone in their natural sphere. Indeed, the odious and unjust enactments have already begun to be framed in depriving women of all rights in the management of the institutions to which they will lawfully belong; at least, this is so as regards the University of London and the College of Surgeons. Here we witness an instalment of the invidious kind of legislation which will of necessity have to be continually created in order to go hand-in-hand with so false a principle as the equality of the sexes in the public business of life.

The reason, however, why our profession is almost unanimous in its feeling against the admission of women to medicine, and why the graduates in arts and a large number of the public are in favour of it, is not far to seek. It is simply due to the fact that none but those who have studied medicine know what its requirements are, and therefore the two opponents are regarding it from different points of view. It may not be necessary that the public should know, but it seems to me they would be using a right discretion to submit to those who do. Of a very necessity medical men look upon their profession with a different eye than those whom they treat. The public employ the doctor to relieve them of their bodily ailments; their relation to him has reference only to treatment; they know not and care not how the doctor's knowledge has been obtained; it is of no apparent advantage to them to hear a discourse on the pathology or chemistry of their complaint. All they know of medicine and doctors has relation to treatment, and therefore it is that all the varieties of quackery have been invented for the public wants. The art of medicine began by treatment, as witness the incantations of the savage over his sick brother; the present swallowing of pills recommended by the most ignorant artisans; the doling out of physic in bottles and gallipots to the hordes who daily surround our hospitals, down to the refined methods of treatment by qualified charlatans amongst the better classes of society. Do the public know or care to know that the art of medicine should have a scientific basis? Whether they do or not, it is the aim of those engaged in the process of medical education, the teachers at the schools, the examiners at the colleges, and the members of the Medical Council, to see that the medical practitioner has a sound and scientific training. They are now endeavouring to exact from him an efficient knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, and a scientific groundwork of medicine and surgery.

Whilst the teachers are thus striving hard to render all that relates to our profession more certain, we are met by a strong advocacy outside demanding the admission of women into our ranks, for reasons totally opposed to and subversive of those I have mentioned. Women's supporters, in the House of Commons and elsewhere, have dwelt on the peculiar fitness of women for the medical profession, not for the good reasons just named, but on account of their peculiar feminine qualities. I do not remember in the speeches of Lord Granville, Mr. Cowper Temple, Mr. Jacob Bright, Mr. Stansfeld, and others a single expression indicating that these gentlemen had the slightest knowledge of what our present aim is in the education of the student. They all alluded to the peculiar excellences of women in the treatment of the sick, or, in the words of the Lord Chief Justice at the Royal Free Hospital dinner, "that so far as regarded the administration of medical solace and relief, the hand of woman was much more fitting than the hand of man." This is equivalent to saying that women make excellent nurses, and is the gist of all the speeches made by their advocates. Can it, therefore, be wondered at that those engaged in the education of the medical student (and it must be remembered how many graduates of the University of London are thus employed) should be at utter variance with those who are asking for the admission of women into their profession on these terms? Of course a ready answer may be found by a denial that this is wanted, and that women will enter the profession of medicine by the same portals as men. This might be true as regards the very few candidates for the degree of the University of London, but the sanction of this institution will influence other colleges, and, therefore, women may find themselves soon becoming doctors on the principles advocated by the supporters of Russell Gurney's Act. Even should they be admitted by the different licensing bodies on the same easy terms as other medical students, it will not put them on a par with men as regards their mode of practice.

It is very evident that there is much untruth in the reason constantly advanced by women's supporters in this matter—the equal rights of women to the positions and privileges of men. There is really no strong feeling or impulse in the country urging them on to this purpose, and, therefore, what they are practically seeking is for the admission of women into the medical profession as one peculiarly suited for them. We, on the contrary, maintain that it is the last of all callings which women are fitted for, regarding it both from a physical and intellectual point of view. Therefore the difference of opinion between medical and non-medical graduates.

Your obedient servant,

Grosvenor-street, May 26th, 1877.

SAMUEL WILKS.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND MEDICAL WOMEN.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In your article on “The University of London and Medical Women” you state that “on a former occasion Mr Fowler voted in the majority, on Wednesday in the minority.” As you have done me the honour to refer to my vote, will you permit me to explain it. When on the previous occasion to which you refer the question was raised, I had not the opportunity of considering the position in which the University was placed. Mr. Goldsmid moved an amendment which seemed to me to prejudge the question of the admission of women to degrees in Arts. Having on all previous divisions opposed this, I felt bound in consistency to continue to do so. The motion of Mr. Osler for their admission to medical degrees was then put, and in that division I took no part. My reason for not voting was that it had been strongly urged by an eminent medical man present, who himself expressed in eloquent terms his abhorrence of the change, that the Act of last session left us no option but to acquiesce in it. This argument I wished to have time to consider. In the interval between the two meetings of the Senate I gave the question my anxious consideration, and arrived at the conclusion that it was clearly my duty to support the views of Sir W. Jenner. As an elected member of the Senate I felt that I ought to pay great deference to the vote of Convocation, especially as on this question the medical faculty was nearly unanimous. I further believe that the views of that faculty were, in the main, sound. It may be very true that the action of Parliament places the University in a difficult position, but this seemed to me to be no reason why we should sanction a measure of pernicious tendency. It may be, and I believe

it is, very desirable that women should acquire such medical knowledge as would fit them to make improved nurses, and even to practise in the zenanas of the East, but that was not the proposition we had to discuss. The proposal was to place women on a perfect equality with men as medical practitioners. The evils of this proposal have often been ably pointed out by members of the profession; but, speaking as an outsider, I venture to trouble you with the reasons which weigh with me. The evil effects of the change will not be witnessed in the present generation, but I fear the next will have occasion to rue the innovation which we are now inaugurating. I fear the idea will grow up among ladies, particularly among young ladies, that there is something indelicate in their consulting a gentleman; and should such an idea arise, it will be full of misery to the comfort of families. It will be a most serious evil if, when a young lady is asked by her parents and friends to consult some eminent physician, she takes it into her head that some lady doctor will do equally well. I know the trial of having relatives who have preferred to consult homoeopaths and hydropaths, and whom I have lost, with the feeling that they had not received proper treatment. I fear these "medical women" will entail a similar trial on many in the next generation.

Apologising for troubling you,

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Carlton Club, June 25th, 1877.

R. N. FOWLER.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND MEDICAL  
WOMEN.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—As the first paragraph of your leader of Saturday last seems to have been written under a grave misapprehension of the intentions of the Senate in regard to the conditions under which they have resolved to admit women to degrees in medicine, I must request your permission to be allowed to give a correct statement of the case.

The Senate, in adopting the report to which you refer,

<sup>3</sup> See THE LANCET of January, 1876, and of April and May, 1877.



committed itself absolutely to the principle that the existing regulations in regard to medical degrees shall apply without distinction of sex, in accordance with the power conferred by the Act 39 and 40 Viet., cap. 41. You, on the other hand, impute it to the Senate that it is their intention to modify these regulations in the case of women; such modification having reference in the first place to the admission of certificates of study in foreign medical schools; and, secondly, to the admission of women who are already in practice, or who commenced their medical studies before January, 1875, under less stringent conditions than those who may hereafter enter.

The existing regulations (Calendar, p. 138) provide that every candidate for the M.B. degree shall have studied during four years at one or more of the medical institutions or schools recognised by the University; one year, at least, of the four to be spent in one or more of the recognised institutions or schools in the United Kingdom. This regulation, allowing every male candidate to spend *three* of his *four* years of medical study in a foreign school, has existed from the very commencement of the University. And though no list of recognised foreign schools has ever been published, it has always been understood that certificates would be accepted from Paris, Berlin, or Vienna, the only foreign schools from which, in my twenty-one years' experience, such certificates have ever been presented.

Thinking it not unlikely, however, that female candidates might present certificates from other foreign schools, and not wishing to take upon myself the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting such certificates, I suggested to the committee by which the report was framed the desirability of framing a list of medical schools from which certificates should be received; and this proposition has been adopted by the Senate. Any such list of recognised schools will be equally applicable to all candidates, and will be perfectly in harmony with the existing regulations.

So, again, the admission of the two classes of female candidates already referred to, under such remissions of the regulations as the Senate may deem fit, in regard to "places, order, and modes of study, and exemption from the matriculation examination" (not, be it observed, from any of the proper *medical* examinations), is strictly in accordance with the previous practice of the University in regard to male candidates. I send you the regulations which still remain in force (though they have practically died out), in regard to those candidates for the medical degrees of the University who were either (1) in practice prior to 1840, or (2) had commenced their medical studies in or before January, 1839. Each of these classes of candidates was exempted from the matriculation examination, and the conditions in regard to "places, order, and modes of study" were very considerably relaxed.

Dr. Storrar (the chairman of Convocation) came in under the first of these categories; Sir Wm. Gull and Sir Wm. Jenner under the second. Several such candidates were admitted to examination for the medical degrees during the earlier years of my registrarship.

It is obvious that women are now in the same position as regards the medical degrees of the University as men were when those degrees were first instituted in 1840.

Exemptions of a kind more or less similar were granted by the Senate when degrees in science were first instituted, and when the law degrees were placed on a new basis.

The determination of the Senate that no modification whatever shall be made in the regulations on account of sex is shown by its non-acceptance of the proposition to which reference is made in the second paragraph of your leader, the large majority of its members agreeing with you in opinion that "no one should become a possessor of a London University degree in medicine unless he or she has received an all-round medical education."

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM B. CARPENTER.

University of London, July 16th, 1877.

\* \* \* We have few comments to make on Dr. Carpenter's letter. Every statement in the first paragraph of the leader to which he alludes was derived from the report of the committee. Dr. Carpenter's letter shows that important modifications are to be made in favour of those women by whose agitation the dissension between the Senate and Convocation has been brought about. One inaccuracy occurs

in Dr. Carpenter's letter. He quotes Dr. Storrar's name as an instance of those who were exempted from matriculation because they were in practice prior to 1840, and then says that degrees were first instituted in 1840. Dr. Storrar became a graduate of the University in 1839.—ED. L.

examined in the same. Why not? It is as monstrous as it is foolish to suppose that these women in their future routine practice will not have to treat diseases begotten of immorality in their own sex. If women choose, of their own and their responsible advisers' deliberate action, to practise our profession, why should they not be equally prepared to grapple with the "arcana" as with the other ailments to which our flesh is heir? Sir Jas. Paget and those who agree with him will inaugurate a vicious policy, if they launch into the professional world those who have not by the test of public examination been declared and guaranteed to possess a sufficient knowledge in all branches of medical and surgical practice. May not women assist as much hereafter in stamping out a disease, which, as Providence has so dispensated, may descend to the third and fourth generation? May they not have greater influence for good among their own sex than we have? It is to be hoped that the Senate will not listen to any mischievous half-measure policy, and it will be a source of sincere gratification to many practitioners in this country to learn that the innovation of women doctors will convey the full impression that, in scattered populations, they may be qualified to practise their profession as becomes every general practitioner. I had hoped to see the crusade against specialism stern, uncompromising, and exclusive. Make one exception and you will have many.

I may be pardoned for raising my voice against a half-measure policy which, I trust, will be properly settled long before I see this short note in print. I enclose my card.

Yours faithfully,

Simla, India, Aug. 8th, 1877.

SURGEON-MAJOR.

P.S. You will observe that I have not entered into the question of the propriety of admitting women into the ranks of our profession. This would now be useless and unproductive of any good.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND MEDICAL WOMEN.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I observe in your leading article in *THE LANCET* of July 14th, that you comment upon the positions which Sir William Gull and Sir James Paget have assumed in the discussion which has lately taken place in regard to the admission of women to degrees in medicine in the University of London. I may be pardoned, I hope, in stating my opinion of Sir James Paget's policy. If he has yielded to the despotism of a majority, why does he not lodge a protest and insist upon its being recorded? I do not agree with you in your condemnation of Sir William Gull's suggestion, that women should be examined on all subjects. As they should be taught in all subjects so should they be