

THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO THE HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL.

MR. EDITOR, — If female students of medicine are unable elsewhere to acquire a good professional education, there would seem to be ground for the medical school of Harvard to open its doors to them. It is true that every student should have the opportunity of acquiring a thorough education. That the step suggested would have a deleterious effect on the school there can be little doubt. Coeducation of the sexes in medicine has, I think, always worked badly, except where the two sexes in medical classes have been united by a common feeling of martyrdom, or been moved by a common spirit of proselytism.

Such must be the experience always, for the arguments on the question of coeducation in general cannot apply to that in which the science of the human body is taught, at least with our present social structure.

There can be no more objection to the two sexes being educated together than to their association together in any other social relation *until* their studies and exercises touch subjects on which by common consent the proprieties demand silence. When this point is reached, for the success of the students — not for the safety of their morals — the sexes should study apart.

But it is said that physicians should meet each other on a basis of high ethics and science and forget sex. This is both true in principle and possible in practice. But students are not physicians, and time is required to develop the average young man who takes up the study of our profession to this basis. Some experience with students of both sexes has impressed the writer that the woman student has attained this state by the time her resolution is formed to become a doctor. But the man student, as a rule, requires time to acquire the professional feeling.

Ten years ago a trial was made of mixed classes in the Chicago Medical College. Women were admitted on the same terms as men, and several entered and attended one course of

lectures. They attended all the exercises, including the clinics and dissections. They were very faithful and conscientious students, and seemed to find no difficulty in feeling that they were learners, instead of simply women in the presence of a concourse of men, whenever in the lectures a topic was reached that touched the sensibilities, or they entered the dissecting room, or a patient was presented at the clinic in a plight that would shock a mixed audience of lay people. Their brothers and some members of the faculty were less fortunate. Many of these pupils found difficulty in forgetting that they were men in the presence of ladies, and not learners only, and the annoyance and embarrassment were so great, and occasionally the rudeness on the part of some male students who forgot themselves became so pronounced, that at the end of the term the faculty gladly gave up the experiment.

As a consequence, a college was at once organized for the education of women exclusively, and has been in successful operation ever since. It is found that here women can acquire a better education than at either of the colleges for men, the curriculum being the same or higher, and there has been no dissatisfaction with this arrangement.

But the question is a difficult one to discuss, and one on which you are sure to be misunderstood if you oppose any demand of the woman movement. For the advocates of that movement seem unable to allow you to say that women are different from men without insisting that you mean that they are inferior.

To say that men and women should be educated in medicine separately is no disparagement to women students, nor is it opposition to the free and equal entry of women into the profession. It is simply deference to an almost universal feeling of the sexes toward each other, — a feeling with which from childhood up we are indoctrinated by the civilization of our time.

If Harvard is able to establish a woman's medical school that will give instruction of as high an order as the present school it would probably be a good thing for the institution, and the new school would take rank at once by the side of its elder brother as the first in the land. But to make a mixed school of the one you already have would add an additional load to the heavy one she is already carrying in the interest of better education and higher requirements. The woman's movement, essentially just and correct as it is, cannot afford to molest Harvard. It has most to gain by allowing the latter to work out the problem it has in hand.

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