

# The Woman's Medical Journal.

VOL. V.

MARCH, 1896.

NO. 3.

## ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

### WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO MEDICAL LITERATURE

BY ELLA M. S. MARBLE, M. D., WASHINGTON, D. C.

IN treating this subject it seems necessary to preface it with a short sketch of what women have passed through in order to contribute anything to medical literature, so I shall consider the subject under three heads, viz:

- 1st. The very brief period since women have had an opportunity to obtain a medical education.

- 2nd. The fearful obstacles which they have had to surmount.

- 3rd. What they have really contributed to medical literature.

The first woman who ever gained a diploma from a medical college was Elizabeth Blackwell, who graduated from Hobart College, Geneva, New York, in 1849. Only 56 years ago! Less than one ordinary little life time! So much for time, now as to the struggles.

In 1847 Harriet K. Hunt of Boston requested permission to attend lectures at Harvard Medical School. She was promptly refused. Encouraged by the graduation of Miss Blackwell, in 1849 she made a second application and five out of seven of the Faculty voted favorably, provided the statutes of the University presented no obstacle. The President and Board decided they did not,—and yet Miss Hunt was never allowed to take this forward step, which would have been of such inestimable value to all women. Why? Three negroes applied for admission and the students rose in rebellion declaring "against the amalgamation of *Sexes* and races", and the Faculty fearing that these uneducated, hotheaded boys would withdraw in a body to Yale, bowed their heads in submission; made right subservient to might and Miss Hunt was obliged to carry on her practice in ignorance or abandon it altogether.

Elizabeth Blackwell was not so easily discouraged. She knocked at the door of college after college and when one after another said "No, the good things here are reserved exclusively for men", she went bravely on to the next one until the *twelfth* College opened and she entered its sacred portals.

Obliged to support herself and help support her widowed mother and a large family of younger brothers and sisters by school teaching, she yet gave five years to medical study, two of which were spent in Europe in practical hospital work.

When Emily Blackwell applied at Hobart—where Elizabeth had graduated—a reaction had taken place, and she was refused admission. She then

applied at Rush College, Chicago and was received. For granting this permission the College was censured by the State Medical Society and the second term was refused her. With indomitable courage and perseverance she pressed on and was finally admitted to, and allowed to graduate from the Medical School at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1852. During her vacation she succeeded, by the aid of powerful influence brought to bear upon the authorities, in obtaining permission to visit the Bellevue Hospital. After graduating Dr. *Emily Blackwell* also went to Europe, becoming the private pupil of the noted Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh, with whom she remained a year, gaining from him and other prominent physicians, the highest testimonials as to her proficiency in literature, science and the practical details of her profession.

Dr. Marie Zakrzewska had an equally hard and discouraging experience in Germany and felt obliged to abandon her home and come to America in 1853. Pluck and perseverance carried her through her first almost penniless year, when she was fortunate enough to become the friend of Elizabeth Blackwell. This grand woman taught her English and procured her admission to the Medical School at Cleveland, from which she graduated with honor.

In 1869 several women, of whom Dr. Jex Blake was one, were allowed to matriculate at the University of Edinburg, *as an experiment*, being taught in separate classes by friendly professors.

Scholarships were to be competed for, and when examinations were passed and it was found that Miss Pechey had made the highest average of any student in the College, jealousy was aroused among the male members, and upon the claim that she was not a member of the regular class, (though she had conformed to the same rules and paid the same money as the men) the scholarship was denied her.

The women naturally rebelled and an exciting struggle ensued, in which the local press took an active part. Here, again, might made right, and the women were dismissed from the College.

In a similar manner they were excluded from the "College of Surgeons." The women were allowed by the Professors to compete for the prizes, and the men finding after a few terms that the only way to keep them from getting the same, was to get rid of them, organized their forces and inaugurated a series of dastardly riots which became so dangerous as to necessitate a body guard for the women. This consisted of a friendly professor and four fellow students and a large body of Irish students from a neighboring College, led by gallant Micky O'Halloran (an ex-trooper of the Confederate Army), who, adding to the generosity of the Irish *man* the chivalry of the southern gentleman, made a most gallant defender. But the professors, fearing that the male students (who were greatly in excess in point of numbers), would leave the College, rescinded the permission given the women and excluded them from the school.

To obtain an English registrable diploma of the very latest kind, cost Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson more time, money, patience and perseverance than would have been needed by a man to obtain the highest honors in his profession. No school in Great Britain would admit her. She was barely tolerated in hospital wards (where women were patients), and on one occasion was dismissed from a clinique because her answers to clinical questions were so much better than those of the male students, that they mutinied.

It was not until 1877, only 18 years ago, that the London University decided to throw open all its degrees to women, since which time women have graduated therefrom with great distinction, both in medicine and surgery. (Miss Helen Prideaux carrying off the gold medal; the highest possible honor). Following this, women were, by vote, excluded from the Obstetrical Society of Great Britain, then from the British Medical Association, then from the Association of German Naturalists and Doctors, to which they had gained admission by untiring perseverance in 1879. Their protest against such injustice was neither read nor replied to by the Association.

The German Doctor who urged their expulsion besought his society "to emulate the example of their English brethren who had recently *purged* the British Medical Association of the presence of women."

It is not necessary to go so far back as 1879 or as far away as the Mother Country to find similar acts of injustice. Our own beautiful Washington, the Capitol of our free nation, has recently (1892) witnessed the closing to women of the Medical Department of the Columbian University. No reason was given. In this instance—silence was golden. Women, however, gloried in the fact that at the commencement following this decree, when those women already in were allowed to graduate, a woman carried off the first prize in surgery. Poor Bruno of Calabria must have turned in his grave when that magnificent case of surgical instruments was placed in the hands of a woman—for in the 13th Century he closed his sad lament on the dreadful state into which surgery had fallen in these words: "Not only amateurs and laymen but what is yet more horrible and indecent, *vile and presumptuous females* have no usurped and abuse our art."

Fortunately for those who desire to follow in our footsteps in the schools of the National Capitol, this is not the only school open to women in Washington, but at the National Medical and Dental University a woman is cordially welcomed and royally treated by every member of the Faculty and by every *intelligent* male student. As the lectures are given the evening, students, both male and female, can take advantage of a government position to earn a good salary during the day and study for a profession at night.

There is not a woman of twenty-five years' experience who could not tell a tale of persecution, injustice and insult during her college career, and all forsooth! because of her desire to learn to care for the sick and suffering in an intelligent and scientific manner, and to care for and support others who were frequently dependant upon her, rather than sit down in idleness, or resort to employment as distasteful and uncongenial to her as sawing wood upon the street would be to any man of a brilliant intellect and high aspirations, had women decreed that that was his *Sphere*.

Is it any great wonder if, with such obstacles constantly placed in her path of progress, women has not reached the highest points of her profession, or contributed the choicest gems to its literature? The wonder is that she has contributed so much, and that of such great value, and this brings us to our third division.

I must only take time to glance backward while I remind you that in the 10th century "Trota", a woman of Salerno, wrote a still existing treatise on "Diseases of Women". In her profound writing she discussed all branches of pathology and her fame in medicine extended beyond Italy and lasted until the 13th Century. What medical authority of to-day expects his most erudite productions to be quoted 300 years from now? Will the

chariot of progress change passengers and carry women forward leaving him behind as it has heretofore carried him forward, leaving her? Let us hope not! As a Divine Intelligence saw that both sexes were necessary to a complete rounding out of His will—and therefore "male and female created He them", let us go forward *together*, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, to the glorious fulfillment of that wise design.

We find in the classic Iliad mention of women skilled in medicine, and a similar reference occurs in the Odyssey, but *modern* women interest us most so we will return to our brave pioneer Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, who has published several valuable works on the healthy bringing up of children and especially girls. One of her latest works on "The Moral Education of the Young in Relation to Sex", which has been translated into the principal European languages, is a valuable contribution to the educational literature of the day. This is but a hint to the great number of valuable articles which Dr. Blackwell has contributed to medical literature, but time will allow only a hint given in the hope that you may look the subject up yourselves.

Dr. Mary Taylor Bissell, of the Women's Medical College of New York. Infirmary has written a Manual of Hygiene which is a text book for medical colleges, also a popular book on "Physical Development" and another on "Household Hygiene". What is more needed by suffering humanity.

Dr. Anna Galbraith, of New York, has written a book on "Hygiene and Physical Culture for Women". *Time* and *space* would fail me were I to attempt to even *name* the valuable medical and scientific book and articles contributed by Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, of New York, a woman whose writing have become authority both in this country and Europe.

Dr. Mary Dixon Jones has probably written more of abdominal surgery than any other woman and has the proud distinction of being the first surgeon to perform a complete Hysterectomy in this country.

Dr. Francis Elizabeth Hoggan was a pioneer and has written many valuable works and the names of Dr. Marie E. Zakzewska of Boston, Dr. Anna Fullerton, of Philadelphia, Dr. Anna Hazen McFarland, Superintendent of the Insane Asylum of Jacksonville, Ill., are all well known in Medico-Literary circles. Dr. Elmira Roys-Gavitt, is editor of the only "*Woman's Medical Journal*" in the world, and so successful financially that some of our brethren are wondering "how they do it."

This journal marks an era in women's contribution to medical literature for it is replete with gems of scientific research and practical information.

Our list of names would be incomplete without those of Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson of Chicago, member of the Illinois State Board of Health, Dr. Eliza Root, of Chicago, Professor of Hygiene and Medical Jurisprudence in the Northwestern University Woman's Medical School, and Professor of Clinical Obstetrics at the Children's Hospital for Women and Children. Both of these women were invited to deliver papers before the famous Pan-American Medical Congress held in Washington in 1893. It was my good fortune to listen to these papers, and while my pride and delight was very great, it was even greater in the profound attention with which they were listened to and the interest and respect with which they were discussed by the army of medical gentlemen present.

It is simply impossible for me to name even the *Prominent* women physicians who are practicing and writing to-day, but if you would know their names and read their works I would refer you to the files of the "*American Journal of Obstetrics*", the "*American Journal of Pediatrics*", the "*New*"

York Medical Record", the "New York Medical Journal", "Medical News", "American Journal of Medical Sciences," "Archives of Medicine", "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal", Keating's Cyclopedia of Children's Diseases", and "Cyclopedia of Electrical Therapeutics", all of which with many many more are replete with gems of thought and wisdom born in the brains and tossed from the pens of earnest women physicians.

The wonder is not that woman has not written more, but that in the very few years in which they have had a chance to plant the seeds, they have been able to gather such an abundant harvest and give it so lavishly to those who hungered for the fruit.

In closing I must call your attention to the wonderful progress made during the last fifty years. In 1847 Elizabeth Blackwell applied at twelve colleges before she was admitted, while now, in the United States and Canada alone, there are 47 medical colleges open to both sexes and 9 for women alone. The average number of graduates each year is 800 and it is estimated there are about 15,000 women physicians practicing in this country alone.

Fifty years ago it was only by the greatest exertion that women succeeded in even *visiting* the hospital wards, on sufferance, to-day thousands of hospitals open their doors and cordially welcome the women students.

Fifty years ago women suffered and almost starved rather than abandon the meagre practice they had worked so hard to gain. To-day statistics will show the names of many women who are making five, ten, and even twenty thousand dollars a year.

And so they will go on, bravely and patiently pressing forward, though they have done much,—they will do more,—for in the quaint language of Sharpe "Women are no longer willing to have their thinking—like their washing—done out."