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WOMAN IN MEDICINE.



THE first woman practitioner of whom we have mention was Agnodice, a young Athenian woman, who lived 300 years B. C. Among the Greeks and Romans, who were opposed to the entrance of women into the medical profession a few names appear. In the middle ages we find many in Italy France, Spain, Germany and England taking doctor's degrees, writing works on medicine, and in some instances even occupying professor's chair, as at Padua and the famous University of Bologna. In 799 Maria Zega received an M. D. "In the Universities of Europe were rare and exceptional cases of women who excelled as surgeons and were highly esteemed for their skill." "Five hundred years ago the women of Europe had in their hands nearly all the genuine medical and surgical practice. The ladies of the mediæval castles and later country homes had a traditional skill in simples and surgery. The regular doctors of those times were generally quacks. Medicine passed from the women to the men chiefly through the advance made by great chemists of the rougher sex." Whether the reason first given for the disappearance of women from the fields of medicine is the correct one, or whether it was that "when instruction began to be systemized, when universities took charge of it, and legal standards of qualifications were established women were excluded because at the time no one thought of them as either able or willing to submit to the new conditions imposed", we are unable to say. As the tide of centuries has rolled on well nigh all trace of woman in leach-craft has been obliterated. It is only here and there the untiring searcher among the records of bygone days has brought to light the story of some female Aesculapius. Then in so turning back the pages of history we learn that woman's presence in the medical profession is not as many imagine a modern invention, not an outcome of the restless spirit of the age, rather is it "a restoration of the lost arts". And now to-day the queen is coming to her own again, for it certainly does appear

that man has usurped woman's place in the sick room, rather than the reverse.

For the enlightenment of the ignorant and also that those who have had the courage to employ a woman physician may have a reason to give for the help that is in them, let us glance at woman's work in the medical field during the past forty years.

On the European continent women study at the Universities of Paris, Upsala, Zurich, Berne and Leyden and can obtain good hospital instruction at Vienna and Dresden. There have also been, we believe, some concessions made to them in Norway, Sweden and Russia.

In Great Britain, Dr. Jex Blake after 25 years succeeded in November, 1894, in getting the University of Edinburgh opened to women. In October of that same year there were "some 200 women entered on the British Register as then practising. Of these one-quarter were in India, five in China, five in Australia and three in Canada. Some medical women have already passed away leaving memories as fragrant as those of Miss Helen Prideau, gold medalist in Anatomy of London University". (Miss Prideau was the first student of either sex, who was considered to have earned the medal.) "and Fanny Butler the brave medical missionary who died at Sprinagar in 1889, 'the thin spun life' of each cut off at the beginning of a career of rare promise. In 1894 two women doctors were appointed to children's hospitals, one to a country asylum, one to a church army dispensary and two to the Cana Hospital, Bombay."

When I was in London in 1883-4 there was a woman physician to look after the health of the female employees of the General Post Office. All this must be very encouraging to Dr. Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson one of the pioneers in the medical education of women. During her student life a writer in a medical magazine alluded to "the honorable tho' we fear mistaken career of Miss Garrett". This lady's eminent success in her chosen profession has proved how groundless were that writer's fears. Through Dr. Anderson's influence a well equipped hospital has been established where suffering women can be skillfully cared for by physicians of their own sex. (Was told recently by a friend this hospital is doing splendid work.) In Canada the medical movement among women has not made much progress. The

degrees of M. D. from Bishop's College, Lennoxville, and Dalhousie College, Halifax, are now available. We understand that students of the Ontario Medical College for women, Toronto, Ontario, receive degrees from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Toronto, The University of Toronto and the University of Ontario.

In the United States there are nine Medical Colleges exclusively for women and forty-seven open to both sexes. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell a graduate of Geneva College, New York, 1849, was allowed to register in 1858. She was soon joined by her sister Emily. So great was the prejudice against women doctors, no one would rent them a house, they were obliged to buy.

They opened an Infirmary and Dispensary for women and children in New York and in 1865 obtained a charter for a college in that city. To-day "The New York Infirmary for Women and Children" and "The Woman's Medical College of the New York Infirmary," own a splendid property on the corner of Livingston Place and E. 15th street. The new operating room, though small, is as perfect in its appointments as the heart of a surgeon could desire. Over six hundred patients were treated last year in the hospital and maternity. About two years ago the operation of "Cæsarean Section," with recovery of mother and saving of child, was performed by the women surgeons. The total number of patients treated last year in the dispensary in connection with the hospital was 13,640, 1,319 families were visited in the Out Practice Department and 9,819 visits made by Dr. Annie S. Daniel and her assistants. A nurse assists in the Out Practice, going as directed to the different cases and caring for them as only a trained nurse can.

In a letter received a few days since, from Dr. E. M. Cushier, senior visiting surgeon, she says, "I think the number of major operations which I have done would amount to about seventy-five. This includes abdominal laparotomies for extra-uterine gestations, tumors, pio-salpin and abdominal and vaginal hysterectomies. This number would be larger were I not more conservative than some of my confreres. The results have been good, some extremely bad cases resulting most favorable.

In one case of extra-uterine pregnancy, the abdomen was re-opened for secondary haemorrhage and normal salt

solution injected into a vein. The patient, though pulseless at time of this operation, recovered. This was done by Dr. Eleanor Kilham before I reached the infirmary. (Dr. Kilham is not a surgeon.) The operation of Caeserean Section, before referred to was performed by Dr. Cushier.

In Roxbury, Boston, Lennox street, the New England Hospital for women and children, stands proudly forth to show what women doctors can do. The property is valued at \$140,000. Nearly six hundred medical, surgical and maternity, last year, September 30th, 1895 to September 30th, 1896, passed through its wards. The number of operations performed by the women surgeons numbered 236, thirty-seven of these being abdominal sections for pipo-salpins, chronic ovaritis and salpingite, ovarian, cystoma, hydrosalpinx, extra-uterine pregnancy, inguinal and omental hernia, etc.

In the heart of busy Boston at 29 Fayette street, has stood for more than 30 years the dispensary in connection with the N. E. D. for women and children. From September 30th, 1895, to September 30th, 1896. The Dispensary enrolled upon its register 14,327 names. The highest number seen on any one day was 79, the daily average being 47. In the Out Practice department 4,774 visits were made upon 1,467 patients. Here a nurse also accompanies the physician, making 2,012 visits. In January, 1896, Colonel Albert A. Pope, of the Pope Manufacturing Co., expressed a wish to do something for the New England Hospital Dispensary in recognition of its valuable and far-reaching charitable work, and of the long and faithful services of his sisters, Doctors Augusta and Emily F. Pope. This generous offer was at once accepted and upon the site of the old dispensary is reared the new at a cost of \$25,000. Entirely, be it noted, to enable the women physicians of Boston to carry on their work among the poor more effectual.

The Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia, is a fine building six stories high, where the doctors begin work at five o'clock in the morning. The report for 1896 gives the following information, 905 patients were admitted during the year; 5,722 were treated in the different clinics in the dispensary service. Children's, Gynaecological medical, skin, surgical, eye, ear, nose and throat, dental and electrical clinics. Number of operations performed in the hospital was 734. In the

clinics 199, making a total of 933. Of these 57 were abdominal sections, 14 of the 57 being hysterectomies for uterine fibroid, 14 for chronic salpingiti's and ovaritis, one removal of appendix for appendicitis, with recovery, one operation for ruptured tubal pregnancy with recovery.

Chicago has a fine college and hospital for educating and training its women physicians. Among the women surgeons of this city are Dr. Marie Mergler, secretary and treasurer of the Northwestern University Woman's Medical College, Professor Gynaecology, Chicago P. G. Medical College, on the staff of the Wesley Hospital and Woman's Hospital. Dr. Lucy Waite who a few months ago was appointed head physician and surgeon to the Mary Thompson Hospital for women and children, at which institution she does much surgical gynaecology. She is at present in Moscow a delegate to the International Medical Congress. Dr. Bertha Van Hoesen who did her first major operation four years ago last May. She is doing annually about 30 major operations and many minor ones. During the last three years she has had no death from operations. The cases include many cases in a wretched condition. Appendicitis, two of ruptured extra-uterine pregnancy, several cases of large and adhereit pyosalpinx. Dr. Rosa Engleman is professor of Paediatrics in Post Graduate Medical College.

The record of abdominal sections performed by the women in connection only with these four hospitals should forever silence Dr. Van der Walker and those of his kind who say, "We have yet to see the female ovariologist."

Many good and conscientious persons, can see a perfect propriety, nay a necessity for women doctors in the evangelization in heathen lands, who can see neither, rather a manifest impropriety in their suggestion for civilized countries. To understand the need there is for women doctors out of India let us hear what a clergyman's wife has to say about it. "What occupation more seemly than that of healer to an afflicted sisterhood? The cleverest doctor cannot understand all the sensations of a female set of nerves. There are strings in the instrument that he cannot learn about, he can but touch them according to blind precedent, and let him touch them ever so gently they jar. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind. Have our medical faculty any idea of the number of young girls who become chronic invalids or even

sink into early graves rather than put themselves under medical advice. Remonstrate with them and the reply is, 'I would rather be torn in pieces.' In the name of that shrinking delicacy that we all admire in our young girls and that we should guard as we would the white bloom on the petals of a lily let us give them physicians of their own sex." Strong word yet true.

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell is said to have entered upon her medical studies at the earnest solicitation of an invalid friend. We are constantly hearing from our patients. "What a comfort it is to talk to a *woman* doctor." "I never was able to tell a man what I am telling you." "Oh, if I had only known before there was a woman doctor in the place." A woman 75 years old who required a serious surgical operation came to the N. E. H. and said, in substance, "I want the women doctors to do what they can for me. If they are unable to help me, I shall go to no one else." The women surgeons performed the operation, saving the patient a little longer to her family.

A young physician in Edinboro busily canvassing against Dr. Jex Blake was rather indignant at the refusals of an old practitioner to join in the attempt to annihilate her. "Surely" said he "*you* would not want a woman doctor to attend *you*". "No I should not and for that very reason I object to forcing men doctors upon women."

"Oh who is this who casts her rose of youth
Beneath the feet of praise, nor fancieth,
The life of her ladyhood in sooth
Too white to bloom beside the couch of death.
"It is the woman healer, here who stands
With tender touch upon the cruel knife;
With thought eugraven brow and skillful hands
And yearning heart, to save the house of life.
"Bless her O woman for it was your call—
The agonizing cry of your distress
That urged her outward from the cloister
To make the burden of your misery less."

But does not the practice of medicine and particularly of surgery, bedraggle the "sweet garb of femininity" in which sentimentalists of both sexes would fain bedeck woman. One of the most home-like homes I ever visited, was that of Dr. Zakrzewska, pioneer woman physician of Boston and founder of the N. E. Hospital and Dispensary.

Three medical students studying together in N. J. had a call one evening from a young gentleman friend, "How do you girls manage to make your room so home like," was his first remark. Some of the loveliest women both in person and character, whom it has been my privilege to meet were women physicians and surgeons. There is no grander more unselfish woman on the face of the earth than the female medical missionary. She stands unrivalled and without a peer.

A physician whose views of Providence were bounded by the narrow horizon of his own ideas said, "God never intended woman to study medicine." Can it be possible that such a large body of women as are represented in the medical profession from Japan on the east to California on the west, should have been making the same mistake for more than forty years! The majority of them are christian women, fully believing they have been directed in the choice of a vocation. Can their lives, so full of comfort and help to the sick and suffering, be one huge blunder? The thought is a monstrous absurdity, a travesty upon Divine justice, a libel upon our belief in an overruling Providence, who has said, "The very hairs of your head are numbered." Some one else has hazarded the opinion that back of originality, militates against women as medical practitioners. Granted, she has no originality, the deficiency (?) is more than compensated for by an immense amount of adaptability, ingenuity and fertility in expedients. Note well what she can do with a hairpin. Bah, Burdette says, he knows a woman who could pin a glass knob to a door with a hairpin. However, be all this as it may, woman's capacity for the medical profession is best measured by her success. That success is by no means meagre, in whatever light it is considered. Those not having the desire or opportunity to watch women in their profession, little know what they accomplish. They make *original* researches, publishing the results of their investigations in leading medical journals. They invent apparatus, which I have known to be appropriated by men. The name of Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi is nearly as well known in medical literature as that of her famous husband Dr. Abraham Jacobi. In this connection might be mentioned Dr. Grace Peckham Murray, Dr. Sara Pash, Dr. Sarah McNutt, and a host of others. Women physicians are ap-

pointed as the result of competition examinations to many hospitals in the United States, Cook County Hospital, Penn., is one of these. Dr. Josephine Walter, in 1883, won a position as assistant physician in Int. Sinai Hospital, N. Y., over nineteen male competitors. Four or five years ago Dr. Anna Williams was appointed a member of the Acteriological department of the New York City Board of Health. Many insane asylums in the United States also have women on their staff of physicians. In Nova Scotia a step in the right direction has been taken by the town of New Glasgow, a step that might well be imitated elsewhere. Dr. Katherine McKay was appointed one of the visiting physicians to the new "Aberdeen Hospital" in that enterprising little town. So we might go on indefinitely.

In the majority of cases women can hold their own with the male practitioners, meet with no more difficulties or discouragements than men and make no more blunders either in diagnosis, pugnosis or treatment, probably fewer for their natural cautiousness and conscientiousness come to the rescue, aided by quicker perceptions and finer sensibility, plus *educated intuition*. Pecuniary results are also good. Only a few fail to make a comfortable living, and many beginning practice with empty pockets. Some even in debt, are after a few years able to provide themselves with all desirable luxuries. Dr. Elizabeth Kellar of Jamaica Plains, Boston, a magnificent specimen of womanhood and twice married, was said to have an income from her practice of \$20,000 a year.

It is scarcely worth while discussing whether woman's physical strength is equal to the strain of the medical profession. It is only the novel which arouses suspicion. What always has been is never questioned. So no one thinks of woman as unable to endure the wear of raising a large family to whom she has to be mother, day and night nurse, cook, housemaid, laundress, seamstress, tailoress, and so on, as too feeble to spend day after day bending over wash-tub and ironing-board, as too feeble to stand the grinding toil of teaching, or sewing, or even worn out by the demands of fashionable life, and above and beyond all, no one ever dreams of her as too weak to wear the clothing in which so many women see fit to array themselves. The boots alone

are enough to wreck the finest physique! The extreme delicacy of woman's constitution is only fully realized when attempting something her sex has never or but rarely attempted before. The farther that something is from her beaten track, the more intensely fragile she becomes. Especially if there is any more money in the new path for her.

Women physicians often meet with such expressions as these: "How did you ever come to study medicine?" "I cannot imagine how you have the *nerve!*" "I do not approve of women doctors!" Charity compels the supposition that the persons making these remarks are quite unaware of their real impertinence. It is all very sweet and pretty to talk of sheltering the weaker sex from the storms of time, and the oak and ivy ideal has its fascinations. What does either amount too when brought face to face with the stern realities of life, when confronted with the overwhelming "what is" in place of the millennial "what ought to be". There are hundreds of thousands of women in our civilized countries who must work or starve. Old maids, young girls and widows form the bulk of this mass. Many have parents, sisters, brothers or children depending on their efforts. Is it just that their method of earning a livelihood should be dictated to them? The necessity for exertion being upon them, are not they the proper persons to say in what direction that exertion shall tend? Why should not a woman, as well as a man, have the right to earn her daily bread in any way she prefers as long as it is an honest way. Woman's lot is hard enough in the nature of things, so hard all hearts should go out in tenderest sympathy and held to every girl child born into this cruel world. Instead her lot is made worse by senseless twaddle about "woman's sphere" and trying to keep her in paths whose sole recommendation is their sanction by long ages of custom. Does any one for a moment imagine earning our bread and butter is so entertaining we would do it if we did not have to. Is a "fair field and no favor" then too much to ask? Would-be prophets foretell that as woman has once before disappeared from the arena of medicine, so she will in like manner again disappear, that it is only a question of time. If the theory that "history repeats itself" be true, we must fain accept this prophecy. Reason, common sense and facts alike protest against it. The thought is not to be entertained for a moment by any one who believes we are going onward and upward unto the perfect day. Yes women physicians shall be until the "New Heaven" and the "New Earth," where "shall be no more death," "neither shall there be any more pain," the "former things have passed away."

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