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AN APPEAL

IN BEHALF OF

THE

MEDICAL EDUCATION

OF

WOMEN.

NEW YORK:

1856.

AN APPEAL

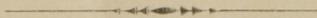
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The entrance of women into the Medical Profession, receiving from those who employ them, an equal amount of respect and confidence with their professional brethren, is no longer a matter of speculation, but a well established fact.

Nine years ago the first woman was admitted as a regular student to a medical college, and graduated with the usual honors, after the fulfilment of the prescribed course of study. This unusual proceeding was discussed by the newspaper press throughout this country, and commented on also, in England, France, and Germany. Since then the work has had to contend with every sort of opposition and difficulty. The result, however, has been a triumphant vindication of the idea. The press supports it; public opinion has steadily grown in its favor; and women employ women as physicians.

A few facts, in relation to the medical schools for women, will show the growth of this reform.

In 1850 a charter was obtained from the Philadelphia legislature, for the organization of a regular medical college for women in Philadelphia. An influential board of Trustees, and a full faculty of physicians were appointed. About 180 students have entered this college, of whom 29 have graduated as physicians. Public interest in this institution has steadily increased; twenty-five persons have recently subscribed \$50 annually for three years towards its support, and its prospects have never been as encouraging as at present. In connexion with this college a society has been formed, for the purpose of giving a course of medical in-

struction to young women, who have devoted themselves to missionary labor.

In 1848 a medical school for women was established in Boston. A large number of the leading citizens endorsed the new idea by subscriptions to the funds of this college. The legislature has granted a large sum to its support. 120 students have entered this institution, of whom 8 are now practising in Boston, as physicians.

In 1850 the Rochester Eclectic School opened its doors to women, and, when merged in the Syracuse school, still extended the same privilege to them. About 20 women have graduated at these schools.

The large Eclectic medical college of Cincinnati was one of the first to welcome women as students, and many of them have left it to enter into practice as physicians. In Cleveland, Ohio, the Regular and Homœopathic colleges have each received and sent forth women as physicians, and the Chicago medical college has also received them.

In all these places public opinion has expressed itself as heartily in favor of the action of the colleges. The majority of the female graduates have entered upon the practice of their profession, and many of them have already formed a large and highly respectable practice. The intense prejudice which at first met the idea of a female doctor, is rapidly melting away, and a strong desire to employ women in this capacity, is now contending with the doubt which most persons feel as to the proper qualifications of the present class of female practitioners. If further evidence were needed of the vitality of the new idea and its adaptation to a real want in the community, it might be found in the character of the practice which has come to those physicians now most firmly established. Intelligent, thoughtful women, of calm good sense, who appreciate the wide bearing of this reform, and foresee its important practical influence, have been the first to employ the new class of physicians in their families, and encourage them with their cordial approbation.

The young form also a large portion of present practice, and there is no woman physician who has not felt her heart swell with satisfaction in the perception of the truly womanly nature of her work, when ministering to the necessities of delicate young womanhood.

It being then an incontestible fact that women have become a part of the medical profession, and that they are needed to meet a want long felt

in our society, it becomes a very important matter that they should be thoroughly qualified to meet the responsibilities of their position worthily, and render good service to those who place themselves under their care. The disposition to consult female physicians is increasing so rapidly, that a few years more will see a large amount of most important practice in their hands, and the result would be disastrous if this practice should fall into ignorant or unworthy hands.

It is not the legal qualification of M. D. only, which makes a good physician, for degrees are conferred with altogether too much ease, and it is unhappily true that the title of a Doctor does not necessarily guarantee either good acquirements, good character, or good sense.

Women have to contend with peculiar difficulties in the attempt to study medicine. They are generally poor; they not only have to suffer physical privations, but are unable to buy the books and instruments which constitute the physician's stock in trade. The more knowledge they acquire, the more keenly this want is felt, for it is then seen more clearly, how much is lost in every branch, by the inability to follow out the hints given in lectures, to verify assertions, repeat experiments, and appropriate by individual efforts the information which remains vague and confused when simply listened to. The course of study is necessarily hurried and imperfect, and the student's aim is to get through the expensive preparation and enter into practice in the shortest possible time.

The preliminary education of women is such as to render an eminently practical medical education even more necessary to them than to men. They have usually been less drilled in the branches of a thorough education, and have not been so generally obliged to form practical and business-like habits in every-day life. The special education for their profession should afford them the opportunity of supplying these deficiencies, and for this purpose the mere attendances on courses of scientific lectures, even if fully illustrated by cases, &c., is altogether insufficient.

Women also lack the proper guidance in medical studies which the young man finds in his preceptor, and in a long established system of education. They do not know what they need themselves, for they have little idea of what is implied in a medical education, and know not to whom to apply for direction. The ordinary physician does not at all realize

the position and wants of the female student, and if he did he would be quite unable to supply them. There are many inconveniences in receiving such students in his office, and no one is willing to suffer inconvenience for any length of time, when there is no personal interest to be advanced by so doing. They are therefore left to their own resources ; enter the first college that will receive them, and in due time obtain the permission to practise as best they can.

The absence of professional sympathy, is another great evil in the medical career of women. When they enter upon practice they have to encounter much that is painful to a refined nature, in the prejudice, suspicion and hostility of individuals with whom they are brought in contact ; and in the long waiting which always marks the early part of a medical career, there is no relief afforded by the encouraging companionship of those advanced in medicine ; no opportunity for seeing their practice, joining their investigations, or sharing their aspirations. They occupy an anomalous position, standing alone in medicine, often opposed or ignored by the profession, not acknowledged by society, and separated from usual pursuits and interests of women. The formation of a medical centre, with the associations which grow out of it will alone supply this want, and furnish to women the professional assistance they need.

But the most serious difficulty to be overcome by women students, is the closure of all avenues of practical instruction to them. There are many colleges open, as we have seen, where they may listen to lectures with more or less profit, and in due time receive a legal permission to practise—but the hospitals, where alone they can become really acquainted with disease, and learn how to treat it, are all closed to them, and they pursue their medical studies without any adequate opportunity for becoming acquainted with the most important part of medicine—the practical—which should be the foundation and constant accompaniment of the theoretical.

They cannot learn from words the characteristics of disease, which must be appreciated by all the senses. The physician deals with physical symptoms, and those can only be studied by the bedside ; and not in a few scattered cases, but by the examination of hundreds and thousands of individuals, before varieties can be distinguished, and delicate but important shades of difference thoroughly known.

In Europe, the education even of the common midwives is eminently practical ; they reside in a hospital for one or two years, having all the

ordinary cases of their specialty in their own hands, under the supervision of superiors ; they assist in the medical and surgical treatment of extraordinary cases ; their powers of observation are cultivated by detailed records of cases, which they are required to make, day by day, at the bedside ; their hand is carefully trained to the delicacy of touch, indispensable in this department of medicine, and through the whole period of instruction they go from the lecture-room to the bedside, receiving at every hour of the day practical illustration of the subject discussed by their professors. If such thorough training is considered necessary for a class of practitioners whose position in medicine, is a limited and subordinate one, how much more is it necessary to the wider duties and higher responsibilities of the physician, and how great is the folly and wrong, when individuals are licensed to practise medicine and surgery, of excluding them at the same time from the hospitals, where alone the students can rely upon gaining the essential knowledge of disease.

The chief difficulty experienced in admitting women to hospital instruction, arises from the injurious plan of throwing open the hospital wards to an indiscriminate mass of students. From the nature of clinical instruction only a few students can derive full benefit from the physician's examination of a case, and in the rush of students that always follows a popular professor, crowding and elbowing one another for the best place, peering over each other's shoulders in the effort to see as well as hear what is going on, courtesy necessarily gives place to scientific interest or curiosity. It would not be just to expect the young man to yield his place to the young woman, to his own serious disadvantage, and an indiscriminate mingling of students will always be to the disadvantage of the shorter sex. This injurious custom of throwing hospitals open to a crowd of students, will prevent women obtaining the practical opportunities they need, so long as the system continues.

Another objection to the free admission of women to hospitals, is found in the very general feeling of physicians themselves. They are not willing to receive mixed classes, and they feel no interest in instructing women. This feeling is simply a habit or prejudice which in time must pass away, and when the true plan of small selected classes is adopted, women will undoubtedly attend the general hospitals, but at present the existence of this prejudice is a serious barrier to them ; their admission depends upon the changeful feeling or caprice of the attending physician. A liberal physician may admit a lady to attend the male wards while his compeer

excludes her from the female wards ; the next month the physicians have changed, and she is excluded from all the wards ; meanwhile the liberal physician may have conversed with his professional brethren who oppose the idea of a woman's studying medicine, and may have changed his opinion too, or he may fear offending his male students, who would rather not have a female student amongst them ; if his sense of justice, and kindly feeling lead him to continue his liberal reception, he cannot avoid the consciousness of the singularity of his position and the ill-concealed opposition which exists around him ; he is necessarily embarrassed, and no lady will consent to be a cause of embarrassment to one who has generously endeavored to assist her ; she quietly withdraws from the hospital, and prefers to suffer the anxiety and disappointment which the inability to pursue a cherished idea, causes her. She must endeavor then, alone and unaided, by patient industry and intelligent observation of every case that comes to her, to gain gradually that knowledge and experience which might have been so greatly aided by a generous reception from her professional brethren. Such has been the invariable experience of those women students who have succeeded in gaining admission to American hospitals. They long to study thoroughly ; they are compelled to waste the valuable time which should be given to earnest study in seeking opportunities for such study, and when with endless trouble they think they have gained these opportunities, they find themselves cheated of their reward by invincible small hostilities, which render the permission granted of little avail. It is hard work to carry on studies without a centre, without companionship, and with opposition instead of support. But so intrinsically right does this work seem to those who are engaged in carrying it forward, that no amount of difficulty will cause them to hesitate for one moment in the life long work they have undertaken. The daily blessing of suffering women is their constant encouragement, and strengthened by the ever-growing sympathy of their own sex, they now appeal to all to support them in their work, and help in founding those institutions which shall remove the difficulties they have to contend with, and enable them thoroughly and speedily to accomplish their end.

To meet the great want, which women now feel, in relation to the study and practice of medicine, a very different method of education *from anything yet attempted, is necessary.* A few short courses of lectures are quite insufficient to fit any one for the responsibilities of a physician's life,

and yet this is the chief part of the college system. The true method of education is the practical one. The Hospital is the central school, the foundation of a medical education. College lectures should be attached to, and grow out of Hospital practice, and not be, as at present, an independent and principal establishment.

The great need of women now, is a large Woman's hospital, which shall form a centre for all women who wish to pursue a thorough medical education.

In 1854 a charter was obtained for the organization of the New York Infirmary and Dispensary for women and children. Under this charter a Dispensary has been organized in one of the most destitute sections of the city. This has been opened for the visits of those needing medical advice and medicine. It has been gratuitously attended by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Drs. Parker, Cammann, Kissam and Taylor, acting as consulting Physicians. More than three hundred poor women have received assistance from this institution, and instruction as to healthy habits of life, and friendly counsel, has been often added to the medical advice and medicine.

The time has now arrived for the extension of this charity so as to make it the foundation of the Institution so urgently needed, and it is proposed to do this, by the enlargement of the out patient department, and the organization of the Hospital department, as contemplated in the charter.

All classes of non infectious disease will be admitted, and there will be very full provision made for midwifery and the diseases of women, branches in which, from their very nature, it is particularly difficult for women as students in general hospitals to obtain satisfactory instruction, although they form necessarily so large a part of their practice, and in which, among the poor, the aid of educated women physicians would be so valuable.

Students attending the hospital will be divided into small classes for practical instruction, and will serve by turn in each department, among the out patients, and in the maternity charity. These classes will be small, so as to keep them completely under the supervision of the professor, to enable him to acquire a full acquaintance with the ability and needs of each individual student, and to allow the latter to obtain that special aid of which the want is so much felt by those who have been members of a

large hospital class. This will also enable the physicians to save the feelings and ensure the welfare of the patients, and avoid their being ever injured by the indiscriminate admission of crowds of students. As soon as possible a laboratory and good anatomical rooms will be added to the hospital, which shall afford thorough practical facilities to students. The Institution must be endowed. The length of time requisite for a complete course of study renders it more expensive than the means of most women allow. They have generally more time than money, yet it is extremely important that every inducement to study thoroughly should be held out to them. The fees for the course must therefore be very low, and as the highest talent must be engaged in the service of the Institution, and the fullest illustration in all departments must be provided, a large endowment is indispensable.

In this way, by organizing a large and well arranged out patient department, and a Hospital department, small at first, but to be increased as rapidly as the funds collected will justify, the great want now felt by women engaged in the study of medicine, and by those engaged in their instruction, will be met, and a system of medical education provided which will afford women proper opportunities for study, and ensure to the community the services of a class of capable women physicians.

Another object which it is hoped will be accomplished by this Institution, is that of raising the standard of the education and training of nurses. The want so strongly felt by all those who have anything to do with medicine, a body of thoroughly trained nurses, filled with a high sense of the moral responsibility of their profession, will never be fully met until woman's true position in medicine is recognized and granted. The reform, in this respect, which Florence Nightingale is so bravely endeavoring to effect in England, will, it is hoped, grow out of the proposed Woman's Hospital here. Particular attention will be paid to training nurses for the supply of families.

It will not be forgotten that a hospital is not merely a scientific school, that, though the promotion of science and scientific education is a most legitimate object, it should never encroach on the physical and moral welfare of the patients. It will be remembered that the poor who resort to a hospital, ignorant, degraded, even vicious, as they too often may be, are, nevertheless, not beyond the possibility of moral as well as material aid—that to such a class of women, the practical advice and counsel of educated

women might be invaluable in spreading among the poor some wiser views with reference to their own health and life, and the rearing of their children, that they should leave the Institution, if possible, better in every respect than they entered, and that, for this reason, the character of the nurses who are constantly with them is of the highest possible importance, and, while every influence that could even most remotely be held to be of a sectarian character, will be sedulously avoided, an effort will be made to secure the assistance, as nurses, of women not only of respectable character and intelligence, but also of a truly religious spirit, so that the Institution, while the usual rules adopted in general hospitals for securing absolute freedom from any sectarian influence whatever, will be strictly observed, shall fulfill, as far as possible, the highest idea of a hospital, that of a Christian charity for the poor.

If the Institution can be made what is desired in this respect, it is believed that it may be so arranged as to receive young ladies also, who desire to obtain practical knowledge in relation to sickness and health.

It would be a blessing to the race if young persons could find an opportunity, through such an hospital, of acquiring presence of mind, skill in tending the sick, acquaintance with the proper management of infancy, a knowledge of the difference between real and fancied ailments, and learn to guard their own health, and the health of those dependent on them. This could only be *effectually accomplished* in a hospital, but a hospital may be rendered attractive instead of repulsive; and the relations which might spring up between the rich and the poor, when brought together in a truly christian union, would be of lasting service to both.

A department of this Institution will be arranged for the reception of patients, whose means are too limited to obtain proper medical and other care, at their own homes. By the payment of a small weekly sum, their sense of independence will be preserved, while they are, at the same time, surrounded with every care which their condition requires.

It is a Woman's Hospital, founded on these principles, and striving to accomplish these ends, that is now needed. In such an hospital women students would feel at home; it would be their medical centre, and give them support throughout their professional career.

In order to accomplish its purpose, it must enlist the sympathies of the whole community, and be truly the Union Hospital for women. It is

simply on account of its central position, and great facilities for medical study that New York is chosen as the seat of this Institution. The city, as the great immigrating port of the United States, contains a larger number of sick poor than any other city in the Union. The statistics of immigration for the last five years stands as follows :—

1851	-	262,590
1852	-	255,897
1853	-	284,947
1854	-	319,223
1855	-	136,233

Making a total of 1,258,888 immigrants landing in New York during the last five years.

Large as the number of public charities in New York is, it by no means meets the wants of the needy population ; and an unrivalled opportunity is presented for establishing a hospital, affording that wide range of observation necessary to the medical student.

The hospital will be commenced as soon as the sum of \$5000 is collected, with the prospect of future support. This will allow of a practical demonstration of the advantages of the proposed plan on a small scale, at first, but one capable of indefinite extension.

In order to obtain this sum an appeal is now made to all who are interested in helping woman forward in a career of great usefulness, but also of very great difficulty, to all those who feel that the great field of medicine is a position in which women may be eminently useful, and in which their aid is urgently needed. The appeal is not only to simple benevolence, calling forth the ready response of social charity ; it is addressed also to a deeper feeling, to the sympathy of all, who, believing that women are needed in the career upon which they are entering, are willing to aid them in their efforts to fill it worthily, and, thereby, to perform more efficiently their part in social life.

The undertaking for which we ask support, is founded on principles in accordance with the highest laws of social progress, and all those who, with a firm faith in Providence, look deeper than the material surface and transitory phenomena of life, will rejoice in the privilege of helping on true work.

The present Executive Committee consists of the following members :

STACY B. COLLINS, President, 155 Bleecker street.

ROBT. HAYDOCK, Treasurer, 46 Broadway.

DR. ELIZABETH BLACKWELL. 79 East 15th Street.

“ MARIA E. ZAKRZEWSKA

“ EMILY BLACKWELL.

Donations may be sent to the executive Committee, or to either of the following friends of the Institution :

MRS. PENDLETON, No. 4, West 22nd St., New York City.

MISS EMILY HOWLAND, 78 Tenth St. “ “

MRS. C. M. KIRKLAND, Lexington Avenue.

MRS. R. S. BEATTY, 809 Greenwich St.

CYRUS H. FIELD, Esq., 11 Cliff St.

HENRY J. RAYMOND, 13th St.

CHAS. BUTLER, 13 Fourteenth St.

MARCUS SPRING, 22 Broad St.

HORACE GREELEY, 35 West 19th St.

MRS. F. SHAW, Staten Island.

MISS CATHERINE SEDGWICK, Lennox, Mass.

MRS. J. F. CLARK, Boston.

DR. HARRIET K. HUNT, Boston.

DR. ANN PRESTON, Philadelphia, Pa.

“ WILLIAM ELDER, “ “

HORACE MANN, Esq., Yellow Springs, Ohio.

APPENDIX.

In view of the great importance of the undertaking and the appeal made to the confidence of the public in raising the funds necessary for its support, it is considered right to subjoin the following statement and testimonials in relation to the qualifications of the physicians most actively engaged in establishing the proposed hospital.

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, after graduating at Geneva Medical College, N. Y., studied medicine for three years at the great Hospitals of England, France and Germany, bringing testimonials from Dubois, Burrows, Paget,

and other distinguished physicians, with whom she studied. She has been a successful practitioner of medicine during the last five years in New York City.

Dr. Marie Elizabeth Zakrzewska, graduate of the Cleveland Medical College, Ohio, had previously received a Diploma as accoucheuse in Berlin (Prussia.) She was Chief-Accoucheuse in the Royal Hospital Charité at Berlin, and assistant to the Drs. Joseph Schmidt, Ebert and Müller, She has testimonials of her qualifications as practitioner, lecturer and manager in the lying-in department, and that of diseases of women, as is to be seen by the following letter of the Hon. Theo. S. Fay :

The undersigned, Secretary of Legation of the United States of America, certifies that Miss Maria Elizabeth Zakrzewska has exhibited to him very strong recommendations from the highest professional authorities of Prussia, as a scientific, practical, experienced accoucheuse of unusual talent and skill. She has been Chief-Accoucheuse in the Royal Hospital, Berlin, and possesses a certificate of her superiority from the Board of Directors of that Institution. She has not only manifested great talent as a practitioner, but also as a teacher of obstetries, and enjoys the advantage of a moral and irreproachable private character. She has attained this high rank over many female competitors in the same branch, there being more than a hundred in the city of Berlin, who threaten, by their acknowledged excellency, to monopolize the obstetric art.

Legation United States,
Berlin, January 26th, 1853.

THEO. S. FAY.

Dr. Emily Blackwell, Graduate of the Cleveland Medical College, and formerly student at Paris, London and Edinburgh, where she resided for some time in the Lying-in Hospitals of Paris and Edinburgh. besides certificates of study from them, and from the General Hospitals of London and Paris, has made special medical studies under distinguished European physicians, as certified by the following testimonials :

FROM JAMES Y. SIMPSON, M. D., PROFESSOR OF MIDWIFERY, IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

My dear Miss Blackwell ; I do think that you have assumed a position for which you are excellently qualified, and where you may, as a teacher, do a great amount of good.

As this movement progresses it is evidently a matter of the utmost im-

portance that female physicians should be most fully and perfectly educated ; and I firmly believe that it would be difficult or impossible to find, for that purpose, any one better qualified than yourself.

After you were introduced to me by Professor Sharpey of London, I had the fairest and best opportunity of testing the extent of your medical acquirements during the period of eight months when you studied here with me, and I can have no hesitation in stating to you—what I have often stated to others—that I have rarely met with a young physician who was better acquainted with the ancient and modern languages, or more learned in the literature, science and practical details of his profession. Permit me to add that in your relation to patients, and in your kindly care and treatment of them, I ever found you a “most womanly woman.” Believe me, with very kindest wishes for your success.

Yours, very respectfully,

JAMES Y. SIMPSON.

FROM M. HUGUIER, PARIS.

I, the undersigned, member of the Imperial Academy of Medicine, Professor of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, Surgeon of the Beaujoin Hospital, &c., certify that Miss Emily Blackwell, Doctor of Medicine, has followed, with zeal and exactitude, my clinical course on the diseases of Women. I also certify that Miss Blackwell has always shown a great aptitude and taste for science,

HUGUIER.

FROM CLEMENT HUE, M. D., SENIOR PHYSICIAN TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S AND CHRIST'S HOSPITALS, LONDON.

I have had the pleasure of being most diligently attended by Miss Emily Blackwell, M. D., for some months during my visit to the patients of the Hospital.

This has afforded me many opportunities of witnessing her ardent love of knowledge, her indefatigable zeal in the examination of disease, her sound judgment and kind feeling.

In the wards of the Hospital, and by the bedside of the patients, Miss Blackwell has gained the profound respect of my pupils as well as the grateful acknowledgments of my poor patients. I heartily pray that success may crown her benevolent undertaking.

C. HUE.

FROM DR. RIGBY.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Miss Emily Blackwell, M. D., for some months, and willingly testify to her medical acquirements, not only as regards her extensive medical reading, but also as regards her equally extensive experience, obtained both in America, Paris, Edinburgh and London.

The energy and devotion to her profession which she displays, are highly creditable to her, the more so as she pursues her course in the most quiet, unostentatious manner. She wins the respect and esteem of all those who are so fortunate as to know her.

I sincerely wish her success in the charitable object which she has in view, and feel sure that, wherever her lot is cast, she will be the benefactress of her fellow creatures.

EDWARD RIGBY, M. D.,

Fellow of the Royal Coll. of Physicians, Senior Physician to the General Lying-in Hospital, Examiner in Midwifery at the University of London, &c.

FROM DR. SOUTHWOOD SMITH.

I hereby certify that Miss Emily Blackwell, M. D. has very diligently attended my practice at the Hospital, and has made herself acquainted with the various forms of fever prevalent in this Metropolis and their treatment.

Dr. SOUTHWOOD SMITH,

Senior Physician of the London Fever Hospital.

FROM DR. WILLIAM FENNER.

I have great pleasure in stating that Dr. Emily Blackwell has attended most diligently at the Hospital for Sick Children, London, on the days of my visits, and that I have been struck by her intelligence, zeal, and amount of medical knowledge.

WILLIAM FENNER, M. D.,

Physician to University College Hospital, and the Hospital for Sick Children, etc.

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