

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN MEDICINE

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CHAPTER I

THE FIRST WOMEN IN MEDICINE

There is an idea prevalent among most people today that the advent of women into medicine is a new and novel thing. Imagine their surprise, or at times even chagrin, to learn that the first doctors were women, and that women in medicine have been known as long as the history of medicine itself.

In the earliest days of the human race it was the woman who acted as the physician, although at that time she was not known as such. After a fight the men instinctively went to their women to apply the crude remedies, just as a child which hurts itself instinctively goes to its mother for aid and sympathy. Women were the first nurses and practitioners of the healing art. Among the savages even today there are medicine men who drive out evil spirits and maintain their position in the community by the fear they excite, but these are simply the quacks whereas, in the majority of cases, the women actually care for the sick.

The earliest of Greek Mythology furnishes one of the first accounts of women in medicine. The daughter of Aesculapicus, son of Apollo, who by his skill in medicine, restored the dead to life were medical mistresses of suffering humanity. Hygea became the goddess of health. (a) It was she who presided over the temple devoted to the sick at Epidourus.

The Iliad is another proof of the fact that women were in

(a) Galey, C.M.: The Classic Myths, Ginn and Company, N.Y. 1911, p. 104,260,38.

medicine from the earliest times. The daughter of Augea, King of Epei, cared for the wounded Grecians on the plain before Troy. She prepared

"The gentle bath and washed their gory wounds"

also

"His eldest born, Agamede, with golden hair,

A leech was she, and well she knew

all herbs on ground that grew." (b)

In his notes, Professor Blackie, a translator of Homer and The Iliad remarks, "It seems undeniable that women have a natural vocation for exercising certain branches of the medical profession with dexterity and tact --- It is gratifying, therefore, to find that a field of activity which has been recently claimed for the sex finds a precedent in the venerable pages of the Iliad --- In fact, nothing was more common in ancient times than medical skill possessed by females." (17)

In the Odyssey mention was made of an Egyptian female leech, Polydamna, her name when translated meaning "subduer of many diseases". Also, when Queen Phaedra was disturbed and apparently ill, her nurse addressed her as follows: "If thy complaint be anything of the more secret kind, here are women at hand to compose the disease. But if thy distress is such as may be told to men, tell it that it may be reported to the physician." (17) The above indicates that even in that early

time, certain women were trained to take care of women and that there was a limit beyond which society considered it indelicate and unrefined for men to go in treatment of female disease.

From the above passages it is clear that from the earliest times, there were women in medicine, and that they occupied an integral part in the community. From earliest Greece many women were possessed of a high degree of medical skill, "the medical herbolists", "who prepared juices, infusions, and anodynes from rare plants". Others were good in treating painful lesions - "quickly drawing the barb from the flesh and healing the wound of the soldier" ^(23, p.267) There is a further account of Aetes, King of Colches, whose daughter practiced in her father's court in 1228 B.C. She made a specialty of antidotes for poisons, which was considered the most important specialty of the age. The Grecian women were renowned for their medical skill. Pliny, in his natural history, mentions Olympios of Thebes, the author of many well known prescriptions, Salpe who wrote on remedies for diseases of women, and Satira, who wrote a prominent treatise on the treatment of fevers.

Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, who lived at least a half century before the Christian Era wrote on preserving beauty and compounding cosmetics. Galen would also give her credit for writing several unpublished volumes relating to the diseases of women, although Cleopatra gave her sister, Arsenee, credit for writing these articles. In Egypt priestesses in the temples combined the arts of religion and medicine. "The story of Moses shows that female gynecology was not unknown."
(22)

In Athens, as early as 500 B.C. there was a discussion in regard to female physicians which became a state problem, but which resulted in legalization of the medical profession for all free-born women of Athens. Because this episode was practically repeated in European countries in modern times, it seems relevant to describe it in more detail. Mrs. Cellaar, a noted midwife in the time of James II translates from the Roman author Hyginus as follows: "Among the subtle Athenians, a law at one time forbade women to study or practice medicine or physick on pain of death, which law continued some time, during which many women perished, both in child-bearing and by private diseases, their modesty not permitting them to admit of men either to deliver or cure them. But God finally stirred up the spirit of Agnodice, a noble maid, to pity the miserable condition of her own sex, and hazard her life to help them; which to enable herself to do she apparelled herself like a man and became the scholar of Hierophilus, the most learned physician of the time, and having learnt the art, she found out a woman that had long languished under private diseases, and made proffer of her services to cure her; but when she discovered Agnodice was a maid, the woman committed herself into Agnodice's hands, who cured her perfectly. And after her many others, with the like skill and industry, so that in a short time she became the successful and beloved physician of the whole sex." When it became known that Agnodice was a woman she was liked to be condemned to death for transgressing the law - which, coming to the ears of the noble women, they ran before the Areopagites and, the house being encompassed by most women of the city, the ladies entered before the judges and told them

they would no longer account them for husbands and friends, but for cruel enemies, that condemned her to death who restored to them their health, protesting they would all die with her if she were put to death. This caused the magistrates to disannul the law and make another, which gave gentlewomen leave to study and practice all parts of physick to their own sex, giving large stipends to those that did it well and carefully. And there were many noble women who studied that practice and taught it publicly in their schools as long as Athens flourished in learning." (a) The above is an account of one of the earliest struggles for women to be accepted as physicians for their own sex. There is nothing peculiar in the idea that women are fit physicians for women and men for men; on the contrary, it is only the custom of the past few centuries which has kept society from seeing the absurdity of any other belief.

After Agnodice's victory, many Grecian and Roman women won medical distinction in Italy, Egypt, Asia, and much of the then known world. Theano, the wife of Pythagoras, became well known for her work in medicine. In fact, after the death of Pythagoras, his medical school was carried on by Theano and her two sons. At that time, Theano wrote several medical treatises which were in that period remarkable for their learning. Hippocrates, Galen, and Pliny make frequent references to many women who practiced women's and children's diseases, as well as surgery and general medicine. In Florence

(a) Quoted in "Medical Women", p. 11, by Sophia Jex-Blake, M.D., Edinburgh 1886. Cf. Hyginus, Fabularum Liber, No.274.

there is, at the present time, a manuscript on "Diseases of Women" written by Metradora during this period. Another woman who gained distinction in this early period was Antiochus who lived in the second century. Galen mentions a statute found in the ancient town of Tlos in Asia Minor with the following inscription: "To Antiochus, daughter of Diodotos of Tlos, the council and commune of the town of Tlos, appreciating her medical skill, raised this statute to her at their own expense."
(22)

Because of the favorable conditions offered foreigners for the practice of medicine during the rise of the Roman Empire, there was a large migration of physicians and surgeons from Greece to Rome. The practice of medicine flourished, but again, it was not confined to men alone. There are records of certain women who were held in high repute, two of whom, Victoria and Leoparda, were mentioned by Theodorus Priscianus, a medical writer. In fact, Priscianus dedicated his third book of "Rerum Medicorum" to Victoria who he said "has not only an accurate knowledge of medicine, but is a keen observer and experienced practitioner."

Some, however, are unwilling to accept the above as proof that women were held so high in the medical world when Rome flourished. They may say that errors were made in translations and that the above mentioned were men in reality. In answer to these people, there are other proofs. The word medica, used by the latin authors of the classical period, shows there were women doctors as early as the time of Augustus. Certain epigraphs on monuments form still another

source of proof. One funeral tablet found in Portugal mentions a woman who was "Medica Optima" meaning an excellent physician. Still another tablet had on it the inscription, "Mistriss of Medical Science." (a)

There are numerous other names which might be mentioned among the first women in medicine, but enough has been mentioned to prove that the history of women in medicine is as old as the history of medicine, that from the very beginning it has been the attitude of society that women should attend women when female disorders arise, this view having been lost sight of only during the past few centuries, because of customs which have grown up, and that from the very beginning women have been experts in medicine as well as men, many of them enjoying public esteem and veneration.

(a) Quoted by Mozano, H.J.: Women in Science, D. Appleton and Co., N.Y. & London 1913. Cf. Herten and Rossi - Inscriptions Urbis Romae Latinae. p.1245, No.9478, Berlin 1882.

CHAPTER II

MEDIEVAL WOMEN PHYSICIANS

Before taking up the history of the medieval women physicians, it would be interesting to study about the women physicians in the early christian period (fourth and fifth centuries). During the early ages of the christian church, many of the female converts became physicians. In fact, four of the saints who lived before 500 A.D. were women and physicians. Saint Zenais and Saint Philomela, who lived during the first century, were natives of Tarsus. They left their homes to devote their lives to medical science and christianity. These two women were relatives of St. Paul. "Tradition says that St. Paul, the chronic woman hater, was always attended in his illness by (21) St. Zenais. Saint Theodosia, St. Procapius' mother, was looked upon as an excellent physician in Rome in the early part of the fourth century. The fourth woman physician numbered among the early christian saints was St. Nicerata who practiced at Constantinople under Emperor Arcadius. It is said that to her St. John Chrysestom owed the cure of a serious gastric condition.

Fabiola, a native of Rome, is the foundress of the first important hospital of that city. At her time, a hospital was unheard of, and so the work done by this early christian woman is of unestimable value. She had the christian desire to aid the sick, but more than that, she had foresight and executive ability of such a degree that she was able to conceive and start the plans for hospitals, which many consider a very modern device in the care of the sick. While she lived she was loved by all, and news of her work went all over the

world. When she died, her funeral brought together all Rome. Her work in establishing a hospital did more for suffering humanity than any person in that day was capable of dreaming of. Saint Jerome said of her: "If I had a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths, and iron lungs, I should not be able to enumerate all the maladies to which Fabiola gave the most prodigal care and tenderness - to the extent even of making the poor who were in health, envy the good fortune of those who were sick."

The Middle Ages date from the time of Romulus Augustus in 476 to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. During this period, the "Dark Ages" as sometimes called, although it was then that men and women became interested in every phase of humanity, the learning was confined to the religious institutions and the practice of medicine was in the hands of the monks and nuns. The monasteries and nunneries became the headquarters for those wounded in battle and for the sick so in fact, these places were medieval hospitals. Mozans in his "Women in Science" states that "the healing art was considered as pertaining to woman's calling and it became a part of the curriculum in convent schools; no girl's education was considered complete unless she had an elementary knowledge of medicine and of that part of surgery which deals with the treatment of wounds. When a sick man went to a castle, the wife and daughter took charge." (23)

There are numerous references in history to women who played an important role in the medicine and surgery during the middle ages. The very frequent introduction of women physicians into the poems and

romances of this time is an interesting fact. In the story of "Aucassin et Nicolette" the heroine sets the dislocated shoulder of her lover. Again, in the story of Tristan and Isolde, the fact is evident that women always went prepared to give first aid. The account is given of how Isolde with her mother gives attention to Tristan who had fallen exhausted after his combat with the dragon.

Saint Hildegarde who lived in Germany (1098 to 1179) was according to Mlle. Lipinska, the most important medical writer of her (18) time. Her writings show that during the middle ages in the convents much of the life was spent in serious study of human learning of all kinds and in particular of scientific work. The Benedictine nuns were given exactly the same opportunities as the monks. Hildegarde, although of noble german parentage, decided to become a Benedictine when her education was completed, and in a convent at Rupertsberg she became the center of attraction for most of the world of her time. Her advice was asked for by Popes, Emperors, and prominent thinkers. She early became aware that the nuns needed more accurate knowledge of medicine than they had, for the monasteries and convents were the center of all travel. They were the hotels, and since many of the unwell traveled to gain relief, they became the hospitals as has already been mentioned. Great experience for practical medical work was afforded in these centers, and Hildegarde was enough of a scientist to take advantage of this opportunity. From her works "it is certain that this great woman was acquainted with many things of which the doctors of the middle ages were ignorant, and which the investigators of our own age, after redis- (35) covering them, have announced as something entirely new."

Hildegarde wrote books on materia medica, pathology, physiology, therapeutics, and good practitioners. She wrote "Liber Simplicis Medicinae", which was edited at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Dr. Schott under the title of "Physica S. Hildegardis". This work consists of nine volumes treating of plants and animals. It contains many plants used in materia medica. Virchow called it "an early materia medica curiously complete considering the age to which it belonged". In her "Liber Compositae Medicinae" she considered the causes, signs, and treatment of many of the prevalent diseases of her time. Nearly all of the methods of diagnosis now used are to be found or at least hinted at in her work. She even anticipated some of the modern ideas such as the circulation of the blood. In one place she said that "when headache and migraine and vertigo attack a patient simultaneously, they render a man foolish and upset his reason. This makes many people think that he is possessed of a demon, but that is not true." (35) It would take too much space to tell of some of the interesting things written by Hildegarde. Her life was a living proof that the nuns were very successful physicians because of their thorough knowledge of the healing art. They were able to diagnose diseases and prescribe for them with as much skill as the very carefully trained physician. It was no wonder that the people believed them to be supernatural.

During the middle ages the inmates of the convents were not the only women who achieved distinction in medicine. Salernum, a famous health resort thirty five miles southeast of Naples, became the

center of the great medical school of Salerno, founded by the Benedictine Monks. Salerno was known as the "day star" and "morning glory" of the best culture in the healing art. It had requirements as rigid as the best medical schools today with a three year premedical course of philosophy and literature, a five year course in medicine, and a one year course with a doctor. It was the benefactor of all scholarship and culture regardless of sex. Thus, Salerno was the first University to open its doors to women and the first to grant degrees to them. There was a carefully organized department of women's diseases which was entirely under the care of women professors. Trotula, the head of this department, who in modern times was known as "Mother Trot" is one of the most famous of all graduates from Salerno. She was the wife of John Platearius I. Her name was known all over as a learned woman. Two books are attributed to Trotula, "De Morbis Mulierum et Eorum Cura" - The Diseases of Women and Their Cure, and "De Compositone Medicamentorum" or "The Compounding of Medicaments". There has been much argument as to whether Trotula wrote these works, but most authors are agreed that she did, and that she is worthy of all the fame she has received.

As has been said, Trotula's fame spread far beyond her native Italy. In later centuries her name was used to give dignity to any treatise on women's diseases that was being exploited. In France there are records of herbalists who went through the country, and they had a speech as follows: "Charming people, I am not one of these poor preachers, nor the poor herbalist, who carries little boxes and sachets, and who spread out before them a carpet. I am the disciple of the great lady, who bears the name of Madame Trot of Salerno. And I would

have you know that she is the wisest woman in all the four quarters of the world."

There were numerous other women graduates from the medical school of Salerno all of whom published works and received great reputation from them. One woman described a perineorrhaphy and advocated its performance immediately after labor. Abella wrote various works on medicine in latin verse among them "De Natura Seminis Hominis" and De Atrabile,"Rebeca de Quarra, Mercuriade, Costanzella Calenda who was famous for her beauty and intellect, and Francesia all were graduates of Salerno. In one collection of documents from Salerno is the official document relating to the doctorate conferred upon Francesia, "Whereas, the laws permit women to practice medicine, and whereas, from the viewpoint of good moral, women are best adopted to the treatment of their own sex, we, after having received the oath of fidelity, permit the said Francesia to practice the said art of healing."^(a)

The women north of the Alps were not idle in medicine during this time either. In 1292 there were eight women doctors in France when the Edict of the Faculty of Paris was passed "which forbade the practice of medicine to all who were not members of that body, to which only unmarried men were admitted."⁽²²⁾ Consequently, no schools were open for women in France, and they had to get their education as well as possible from the practicing physician, reading, and experience. Jacobe Felicie was the only woman who rose above the mediocre, and she was hailed before the court because of practicing medicine. Her defense

(a) Collectio Salernitana, Tom. III, p. 338, by G. Henschel, C. Daremberg and S. De Renzi, Naples, 1852-1859.

said that she had never treated the sick for gain and that she treated only those who had been left by their own doctor. Nevertheless, Felicie had to pay a heavy fine. As in the time of Agnodice the women arose saying that they would rather die than reveal the secrets of their infirmity to a man. The result was the reverse of the case of Agnodice though, and women didn't recover in France for five hundred years (1860), when Ecole de Medicine of Paris opened its doors to Mary Putnam and Elizabeth Garrett.

In Teutonic legends, many women were celebrated as physicians and surgeons. The "parting gift recorded of the Queen given to Princess Ysolde, when she leaves "her native Ireland to become the wife of Cornwall's King" is a chest of drugs, philtres, and poisons." (22) It was Ysolde's fame as a physician which brought her to the attention of her future husband.

In England during the reign of King Edgar (959-975) women were entitled by law to practice medicine. In Scott's Ivanhoe he describes how Rebecca "proceeded with her own hands to examine and bind up the wounds" - also - "The youngest reader of romances and romantic ballads must recollect how often the females, during the dark ages, as they are called, were initiated into surgery." (22) In England women were not to enjoy privileges in the medical world long because the male competitors became jealous. In 1421 Henry V had Edgar's law repealed and little more was heard of women in this particular field until centuries later.

During the middle ages the women enjoyed as many privileges as men in the medical world south of the Alps. Some of the most out-

standing works of the time were published by women, many of which are modern in all but the date. North of the Alps conditions were different. In England, France, and Germany, the practice of medicine and surgery was in the hands of men until the last century. The reason was that the men wished to monopolize medicine. They were jealous of any advances made by women and even afraid perhaps. They used many arguments such as those that women lack strength and capacity, that it is indelicate and unwomanly to have women in medicine, and that the women didn't have the knowledge although these same men refused to allow the women to enter the universities. Women were the midwives but that was all. The fallacy of the above arguments is evident when one knows how women physicians flourished in Southern Europe during the same period. Years before Plato had said, "and if I am right, nothing can be more foolish than our modern fashion of training men and women differently, whereby one-half of the power of the city is lost, for reflect - if women are not to have the education of men some other must be found for them, and what other can we propose?" In northern Europe during this time history was simply repeating itself. As Walsh says, "it is extremely difficult to find any important movement or occupation that is not merely a repetition of a previous interest of mankind". Plato insisted that women should have the same opportunities for education as men, and, at the beginning of the Roman Empire the women had free rights with the men.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IN MEDICINE IN "MODERN HISTORY"

After the "Dark Ages" the number of women in medicine was much decreased all over the world with the exception of Italy where a few women did much for medical science.

Mondino, who became famous as the father of modern dissection, had Alessandra Giliane among his pupils. She made the first attempt of injection of anatomical specimens for preservation. She also used dyes in the injection of arteries and veins. This young woman gave her life for science, and died as the result of septicemia incurred from one of her experiments.

At the University of Bologna women were accorded the same privileges as were given to them at Salerno, and again, they made use of their opportunities. In the early part of the fifteenth century, an Italian woman, Dorotea Bocchi was Professor of Medicine there. Another well known woman here was Anna Morandi Mazzolini who held the chair of anatomy for nineteen years. She not only discovered the point of insertion of the oblique eye muscle, but she was the first to reproduce in wax such minute portions of the human body as nerves and vessels in order that the teaching of anatomy might be simplified. Her delicate anatomical models in wax are the pride of the museum at Bologna where they are collected in five beautiful cases. Anna Mazzolini was known through Europe and, in fact, people going through Bologna would stop to see her models. This great woman died in 1774. During her life such people as Emperor Joseph II visited her, and she had the satisfaction of being offered the chair of anatomy at Milan, but how much greater

would have been her satisfaction if she could have known how much she inspired other women, for in the next half century Italian women became thoroughly educated in medicine. What is more, Galvani used her models in his first lecture in anatomy.

There were other great women physicians at Bologna, but space permits only mentioning them. There was Maria Petroccini of Florence who lectured and left several works on the physical education of children; there was Zaffira Feretti who was appointed under the Italian Government as Director General of Midwives in Italy; and there was Maria delle Donne who was appointed by Napoleon Bonaparte to the chair of midwifery at Bologna.

Midwives flourished during these years. In fact, the history of midwifery of these times would be a thesis in itself. I will mention only a few of the most famous midwives who were responsible for the advance of women in medicine.

Medieval midwifery was exclusively in the hands of women. The term midwife has as its latin synonym *obstetrix* which has no masculine equivalent. Since *Moses* obstetrics has been in the hands of women and in fact, one Athenian writer speaks of a "man-midwife as masculine intrusion into that which natural instinct assigns to woman as her proper field of labour." The Queen of England all had their midwives, who were cared for by the state, receiving yearly salaries from the crown, and who were of such importance that acts of parliament were passed for some of them, one of the most renowned of whom was Margaret Cobbe. Another famous midwife was Alice Massey who attended Henry VIII Queen.

In the sixteenth century there was considerable criticism because of the ignorance and incapacity of many of the midwives, not so much because these women were unwilling to learn but because of the prejudice against their education in Northern Europe. Of course, the greatest obstacle in their education was the idea that it was improper to print matters relating to midwifery. Dr. Jex-Blake quotes the following from "The Birth of Mankynde", which was translated from the latin in 1540. "Many think it is not meete ne fitting such matters be intreated of so plainly in our mother and vulgar language, to the dishonours (as they say) of womankind, and the derision of their own secrets by the detection and discovering whereof men it reading shall be moved thereby - - - every boy and knave reading them as openly as the tales of Robin Hood." (17) There was much advocacy during this century for examinations of midwives. Dr. Willughby was one of the most ardent advocates of better education for these women, and he himself not only wrote on midwifery but trained his daughter who practiced with him. That there was strong feeling then against man-midwifery is shown in an interesting episode. Miss Willughby had an extremely difficult case and wished to call her father in as a consultant. Her father writes "at my daughter's request, unknown to the lady, I crept into the chamber upon my hands and knees, and returned, and it was not perceived by the lady."

The art of midwifery chiefly concerned women who should have been the best practitioners of it, but for various reasons it was transferred from women to men. At one time they were considered very highly in the community along with the magistrates, physicians, and surgeons, but they lost their respectable position because they were

denied the opportunities of needful study and careful instruction. They were left in ignorance by the men, who had every advantage of learning at their command. They were pronounced of inferior mental capacity or blamed for desiring knowledge which the men prevented them from acquiring. The factor which actually precipitated the transfer from women to men was the midwife forceps discovered by Peter Chamberlain. The idea was prevalent among men that "a surgical instrument must be controlled by the hands of a surgeon", although a famous French surgeon of the time said that the perfect surgeon has "an eagle eye, a lion's heart, and a lady's hand". Since all surgical training was jealously denied to women, it was inevitable that they should become inferior practitioners later to be driven from the profession entirely in Northern Europe.

A letter written by Elizabeth Celler January sixteenth, 1687 is quoted by Dr. Jex-Blake as follows: "the physitiens and chirugeons contending about it, midwifery was abjudged a chirurgical operation, and midwives were licensed at chirugeons Hall, but not till they had passed three examinations before six skillful midwives and as many surgeons", but for some reason probably due to occasional baptismal functions, "midwives were in 1662 referred for their licenses to Doctor's Commons, thus losing their official connection with the medical world."⁽¹⁷⁾

There is still another factor which caused the decline of midwives in England in particular. Queen Victoria, the first Queen to employ "men-midwives" was the cause. There was a belief among the midwives that the use of chloroform was wrong whereas Victoria believed it perfectly proper, and since she could have it administered by men

only, she did so.

About the time that the midwives were beginning to slip there was a well known woman in England, Lady Ann Holket born in 1622. She had enough mentality and will power to surmount many of the difficulties in her way and became very proficient, her reputation traveling to Holland and remote parts. The best physicians consulted her, respecting her opinion and feeling no offense if their patients consulted her. About twenty years later there was Elizabeth Lawrence who was also well known.

In Germany Elizabeth Keillen was living during this period. She was said by one writer to have a "great knowledge of medicine and chemistry". By a special decree of Frederick the Great, the University of Halle in 1754 granted a medical degree to Frau Dorothea Erxleben, the first German University to do such an unheard of thing. Later, however, the University of Giessen granted a doctor of medicine degree to Frau Von Siebold for her distinguished service in midwifery (1816). When one considers the amount of prejudice against woman's education during this period, one must realize that the bestowal of such a degree upon a woman was the reward of most distinguished work. The year following this Frau Von Siebold's daughter, Frau Von Heidenreich, received degrees of the university of Gottingen and Geissen. It was said of her that she was "one of the most famed and eminent female scholars of Germany, who was universally honored as one of the first living authorities in her special branch of science". An interesting thing about Frau Von Siebold is that she officiated at the birth of Queen Victoria.

In France there were also some women who rose above the aver-

age midwife. Some of the better known were Louise Bourgoies, Marguerite de la Marche and Madame La Chapelle. Madame La Chapelle was a great teacher of midwifery, who was respected by the medical profession as well. At her funeral in 1821 were all of the chief physicians of Paris, who came to show their respect of an educated and brilliant woman. One of Madame La Chapelle's students Madame Boivin became even better known. She was honored by many countries as one of the most distinguished practitioners of her time. She not only made original discoveries in anatomy and invented surgical instruments, but she received a prize from Societe de Medicine for a medical thesis. She was a member of the medical societies of Paris, Bordeaux, Berlin, Brussels, and Bruges and honoured with a doctor of medicine degree from the university of Marbourg.

In Russia midwives still flourished because of the customs of the Graeco-Russian church. A medical man was very rarely called in although the mortality rate was far lower in Russia than in England. The midwives were accepted in society as doctors.

In summary, the women of Italy and southern Europe were given equal chances with the men. They were constantly in practice and many of them became famous.

In northern Europe the place that women had held in medieval times was gradually usurped by the men. It was the result of ignorance and incapacity of the women forced upon them by the jealous males. The reformation was a subjection of women. In fact, whenever men have become educated, they have done their best to subject women. Men went into fields of practice where women had always been. They couldn't

completely subjugate the women, for there were many famous female physicians even in this period. The German, French, and English doctors were all self-made. They owed nothing to schools nor universities nor to the medical world. When women could rise above such obstacles and become so eminent, it is easily understood why, in the next period, women demanded their rights and the medical world had to admit that they were worthy of them.

CHAPTER IV

THE PIONEER MEDICAL WOMEN

In the United States there were numerous female midwives before the Revolution. In fact, the practice of medicine was reserved for men and the exclusive control of midwifery was in the hands of the women. There are interesting accounts of many of these midwives, some of whom delivered as many as three thousand babies. In 1773 there were two women in Connecticut of whom Dr. Macy writes, "Mrs. Jacob Johnson and Mrs. Huldah Beach, honored because of their remarkable skill as accouchenses. Granny Johnson rode on horseback keeping a horse for the special purpose, and traveling night and day, far and near." (22) In Vermont in 1765 there was Anne Hutchinson who "was possessed of a vigorous constitution and frequently traveling through the woods on snow shoes from one part of the town to another by night and by day, to relieve the distressed". Dr. Jacobi writes that this woman lived to be eighty-seven years of age, "An ironical comment on the theory of necessary deficiency of endurance in the female sex." During this colonial period the medical profession in the United States was not organized in any way, and the type of medicine practiced was deplorable.

With the Revolution there was a revival of medicine in the United States, Doctors started going to Europe for their education where, we have already seen women were not accepted in the medical schools and where even midwives had been suppressed. The result was a revival of medicine, but the exclusion of women from the profession, for as had happened in Europe, "organized knowledge triumphed over unorganized ignorance."

By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were many women who were doing all in their power to gain entrance into the medical schools in Europe, as well as in the United States, and these women had champions among the men as well as the women. There was a gradually developing movement for the higher education of women, which movement found an early expression in the medical profession. Some of the arguments used this time were very interesting. Dr. Samuel Gregory in 1848 protested greatly against men midwives. He went so far as to say in one of his lectures in Boston in 1848 that "the employment of men to attend women in childbirth, shown to be a modern innovation, unnecessary, unnatural, and injurious to the physical welfare of the community and pernicious in its influence on professional and public morality." Mr. Gregory went as far as to open a school of medicine for women in Boston in 1848, in which school women specialized in obstetrics. He also formed a female medical education society, but neither the school nor the society ever amounted to much, for they were founded on the wrong basis. There was no capable person at their head and what was more, women were very poorly trained and allowed to graduate and give cheap services in obstetrics. The fortune of medical women was not improved, for there was a movement abroad which insisted upon women being educated as men. Women no longer wanted to have an inferior education. All they asked was that they might have the same privileges as men. Dr. Jex-Blake, still a student at this time, said very aptly when someone was arguing against the education of women that "the wisest thinkers teach us to believe each human should fit himself best as he can to fulfil life - work most congenial to his tastes. If women claim that they do need

and can appreciate instruction in any or all science, I do not know who has the right to deny the assertion." (17) There were those who contended that science would hurt the character of the young women studying it. The women simply answered that "to the pure, all things are pure". There were still others who contended that it was immodest for a woman to go into the hospital wards and to make rounds with the doctors. The absurdity of this is apparent when you realize that nurses made rounds with the doctors and assisted in all surgical procedures. These nurses were commended above all others and yet they worked with men, whereas the women medical students would be working with only women.

As a result of this movement for the higher education of women, there were six women in the United States who, unknown to each other, appeared to the public almost at the same time, and requested an opportunity for a full medical education. The first of these was Harriet Hunt of Boston who had been practicing medicine in Boston without a diploma. In 1847 she was refused the request to attend lectures at Harvard so in 1850 she applied again and five out of the seven of the faculty voted in her favor. She was finally advised to withdraw her petition, for the faculty feared the students would leave Harvard and go to Yale upon the advent of a woman medical student. At the same time three colored students were refused. Dr. Jacobi in writing of this episode states "whenever a woman proves herself capable of an intellectual achievement, this latter ceases to constitute an honour for the men who had previously prized it. Hence, the urgent necessity of excluding women from all opportunity of trying." (26)

The next woman to appeal for an adequate medical education was

Elizabeth Blackwell. Her natural inclination was not toward medicine but on the contrary, her whole temperament revolted against it. Elizabeth Blackwell studied medicine to obtain wider opportunities for all women, and the record of her life is that of a heroic individual with a fine character and enviable background who sacrificed her life for an ideal and the higher education of women. She insisted upon equal rights with men but in turn she insisted that women be as well educated or even better than men, that they should work with the men instead of against them, and that women shouldn't undersell men. Miss Blackwell was criticized most severely. She applied to all of the medical schools in America and finally was accepted in a small college in Geneva, New York. She went through the medical school and graduated with honours, the first woman to receive an M.D. in America (January 1849). Not content with that amount of education she studied for two years in Europe where she could have practical experience in the hospitals. In 1854 she started the New York Infirmary for women and children, so that other girls could have hospital experience. She did not believe in women being isolated in such a manner, but if the hospitals refused to accept women, it was the best she could do. She said herself that "The thorough education of a class of women in medicine will exert an important influence upon the life and interests of women in general. Medicine is so broad a field, so closely interwoven with general interests, and yet of so personal a character in its individual applications, that the cooperation of men and women is needed to fulfill all of its requirements."

In later writing of her experiences as a medical student, Dr. Blackwell mentioned many episodes which described the attitude toward

women in medicine at that time. At Geneva she was treated well by the faculty and students but she writes, "very slowly I perceived that a doctor's wife at the table avoided any communication with me and that as I walked backwards and forwards to college the ladies stopped to stare at me, as at a curious animal. I afterwards found that I had so shocked Geneva's propriety that the theory was full established either that I was a bad woman, whose designs would gradually become evident, or that, being insane, an outbreak of insanity would soon be apparent. Feeling the unfriendliness of the people, though quite unaware of all this gossip, I never walked abroad, but hastening daily to my college as a sure refuge, I knew when I shut the great doors behind me that I shut out all unkindly criticism, and I soon felt perfectly at home amongst my fellow-students."⁽¹⁾ Miss Blackwell had public opinion to fight but she eventually won. She also had the medical profession to win over. She writes in another place as follows: "My first medical consultation was a curious experience. In a severe case of pneumonia in an elderly lady I called in consultation a kind hearted physician of high standing, who had been present in Cincinnati at the time of my father's fatal illness. This gentleman, after seeing the patient, went with me into the parlour. There he began to walk about the room in some agitation exclaiming - 'A most extraordinary case. Such a one never happened to me before. I really do not know what to do.' I listened in surprise and much perplexity, as it was a clear case of pneumonia, and of no unusual degree of danger, until at last I discovered that his perplexity related to me, not to the patient, and to the propriety of consulting with a lady physician". In this way Dr. Blackwell was for many years excluded from medical companionship, and from the means of increasing medical knowledge by dispensary practice.

She was a woman as well as a physician and as a pioneer, she lived an isolated life. She said "It is hard, with no support but a high purpose, to live against every species of social opposition - - - I should like a little fun now and then. Life is altogether too sober." Dr. Blackwell did more for women in the medical profession than any other one woman because first of all she was a perfect lady with high ideals and a well developed mind, and more than that, she was willing to fight for her ideals until she won.

Emily Blackwell was the third pioneer in the United States. She was refused entrance at Geneva so she studied at Rush until the college was censured by the State Medical Society. She graduated from Cleveland in 1852. The other three pioneers were Marie Zakzrewska, Ann Preston, and Emmeline Cleveland.

With Dr. Blackwell and the other doctors mentioned, women had won higher education in the United States. The next obstacle for them to overcome was the lack of hospitals where they could obtain an adequate clinical training. As has been mentioned before, The New York Infirmary was started by Emily and Elizabeth Blackwell and by 1857 women medical students could be accommodated there. Through Dr. Zakzrewska's personal influence and indefatigable labors, The New England Hospital for Women and Children was founded in 1863 and just before that through Dr. Ann Preston's work along with those interested in women's education, The Womans Hospital in Philadelphia was founded. By the earnest efforts of Dr. Mary Thompson of Chicago the fourth woman's hospital was founded in 1865 in Chicago. In 1875 The Hospital for Sick Children and Women was founded in San Francisco by Dr. Charlotte Blake

Brown and Dr. Buckle. With the opening of the Michigan University to women in 1869 both sexes were put on an equal basis and as Dr. Jacobi says "The foundation of hospitals effected transition for women physicians from the pre-medical period to the truly medical period when women could really have an opportunity to engage in actual medical work." (26)

The recognition of women by the medical societies with resultant intellectual companionship for the women completes the pioneer work of medical women in the United States. In 1876 Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson of Chicago was a delegate to the American Medical Association. The fight in the United States had been long and the opposition great, but women had finally won.

In Europe the public recognition of the justice and advance of women in medicine grew too. In 1867 Nadejda Suslaw, a Russian, was the first to obtain a degree from the University of Zurich. In 1869 Madame Kascheewarow received a degree from the University of St. Petersburg, with great applause and finally in 1870 Elizabeth Garrett of England received a degree from the Sorbonne. Mary Putnam also received a degree and graduated with honours from the same school.

England held out the longest. The opposing physicians were jealous and afraid the women would get the money. Sophia Jex-Blake, the pioneer in England, finally received a medical degree in 1878 after a ten years struggle in which she and six other women were not only mobbed and stoned, but were brought into a law-suit and finally had to go before Parliament. The women were the brightest in their classes but as Miss Elizabeth Smith said, "a woman must have uncommon sweetness

of disposition and manners to be forgiven for possessing superior talents and acquirements.

Today women are receiving an education as good as men are. The struggle of the early pioneers is over. All over the world women are accepted, and although at present there is a controversy in London in regard to accepting women in its medical schools, still women are given every opportunity.

CHAPTER V

THE PRESENT STATUS OF MEDICAL WOMEN

Today a young woman who decides to study medicine has no trouble in finding a place to take her training. Women medical students are accepted in the largest medical schools and state universities. On the whole, their work is above the average in their classes, but as yet there is a prejudice against women physicians which can be overcome only by each student making it her task to do away with such feelings.

The first factor, perhaps, is that a large majority of people have no confidence in women. They have been raised with the idea that all physicians are men and that women in medicine are a novelty. In matters of illness most people are unwilling to do experimenting, for they need their health in order to progress in an economic way and too much depends upon their well being. Dr. Richard Cabot said in one of his lectures that "the majority prefer a mediocre man doctor to a first rate woman - as long as true women will not have a fair chance to get the broadest experience or to give the best service to medical practice."⁽⁴⁾ This prejudice cannot be overcome at once, but within a few generations it should be if each woman in medicine gives the best kind of service available and asks for no special privileges. Women are more sympathetic with suffering than men, and they look at it personally, regarding the sufferer as an individual. If a woman is skilled in her profession and has intellectual ability, if she is willing to meet others in her profession on a professional basis asking for no special privileges because she is a woman, this in combination with her inherent instincts

as a woman, should make her a successful physician. She will take care of mothers and in turn of children which she has delivered, and in time she will do away with public prejudice.

There is a second criticism of women in medicine which seems to be wide spread. It is that women who take up medicine lose the charm of a woman, becoming masculine in dress and mannerisms. Again, it remains to the future medical women to prove or disprove this. If each girl will pay just a little more attention to her appearance than she feels she has time to, remembering that it is for the good of all medical women, she will do much in overcoming this criticism. Most girls spend far more time on their personal appearance than the average medical student. One reason is that they may not have so much to occupy their minds, but another important factor is that they have far more time. I believe this criticism may be just, not so much because the girl loses her femininity but she hasn't the time to develop it. For that reason, she should put forth a conscious effort to be a lady.

There are those who believe women shouldn't be educated for the medical profession, for they simply get married and never use it. Dr. Martha Tracy has recently made a survey of 471 medical women which is as follows:

Of those graduating in 1905 to 1910, 43 per cent are married and of these 80.2 per cent are in full practice, 5.8 per cent in limited practice, and 13.9 per cent have stopped. Of the 57 per cent unmarried 93.8 per cent are in practice and 6.1 per cent have stopped. Of those graduating 1912 to 1921, 56.9 per cent are unmarried and 96.7 per cent of these are in active practice. It would hardly seem just after reading these figures to say that women should be denied a medical education for they will never use it.

There is a definite place for medical women in many branches

of medicine and in many institutions. There are numerous women, who, through timidity, have never consulted a physician and have consequently lived miserable lives and have died before they should have. Many times, as a medical student, I have had women tell me how much it meant to them to be able to talk to a woman. If the women medical students are willing to do their best, they should find a real place with these women. They will find a place in prevention of medicine, in nutritional studies, and even in the specialties. Dr. Tracy says "With good training, good personality and willingness to work and to cooperate with her professional brethren, there is unlimited opportunity for success, though a number reply that a woman must be about 50% superior in the quality of her work to receive the same consideration as a medical man."
(31)

As for the more personal experiences, I can say as a medical student, that I have always been treated with the utmost respect in my classes. Many times I have known that some of the doctors would have preferred to have no women students present, but they have tried not to show their prejudice. I believe that in choosing an internship or in changing from one medical school to another, a girl is at a distinct disadvantage. It is my personal opinion, however, that the girls themselves can do much to overcome their obstacles, and that if each woman in medicine makes an effort, the future of medical women is assured.

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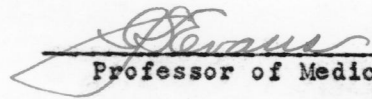
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