

Medical women.

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MEDICAL WOMEN.

THE movement whose object has been to permit and to enable women to pursue the study of medicine, and upon passing the requisite examinations to become registered under the Medical Act, 1858, as 'legally or duly qualified medical practitioners,' dates, practically speaking, from the month of March 1869, when Miss Jex-Blake first made application to the University of Edinburgh to be allowed to attend the lectures of the Medical Faculty with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Medicine, which would have carried with it the right to registration under the act. The readers of this Review may be safely presumed to be not unconscious of the broad facts of the struggle which has now ended in the accomplished fact of the admissibility of women to the ranks of the medical profession. The case is an instance, not uncommon in the history of movements destined to succeed, of an uphill struggle apparently against long odds, of doubtful progress, hopes disappointed or defeated, the patience and the courage of many trembling in the balance, and then at the moment of the greatest discouragement, the hour before the dawn, of a sudden collapse of opposition, and then of daylight and the haven reached. I hope that at such a moment it may not be entirely without interest to tell succinctly the tale of this endeavour, and to make clear the position which we have now gained.

To do this I must go back to the Medical Act of 1858. The purpose of that act, in the words of the preamble, was to enable 'persons requiring medical aid to distinguish qualified from unqualified practitioners.' The act provided for the constitution of a 'General Council of Medical Education and Registration of the United Kingdom.' The Council was to consist of representatives of the nineteen examining bodies of the country, and of persons nominated by the Crown. As a council of education it awaits the adoption of a scheme of conjoint examination by agreement or by law, to become practically operative; the registration clauses are in full working and of complete effect. The persons entitled to be registered, and none others, are the licentiates of any one of the nineteen examining bodies (s. 15); and by ss. 32, 34, 36, 37, and 40, no person can recover charges who is not registered under this act;

no person shall be held to be a 'legally or duly qualified medical practitioner' under any Act of Parliament unless he be also registered under this act; no unregistered person shall be entitled to hold any public medical or surgical appointment; no certificate requiring medical signature shall be valid unless the person signing be duly registered; and any person falsely pretending to be a registered person is made liable on summary conviction to a penalty of 20*l*.

Clearly, as a consequence of these provisions, the practice of medicine in this country could only be open to women who should contrive to find their way on to the Medical Register instituted by the act; and this could only be accomplished by passing the examinations and obtaining the license of some one of the many examining bodies referred to. The following statement will show the difficulties encountered, and how they have been finally overcome.

The act recognises no foreign certificates or degrees, but it made an exception (Schedule A) in favour of persons already possessing the degree of M.D. from any foreign or colonial university, and already practising in this country before the 1st of October, 1858; and one English lady, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, having obtained a degree in medicine, in 1849, from a college in the State of New York, took advantage of this exception, and obtained registration in this country.

In the year 1860 Miss Garrett (now Mrs. Garrett Anderson, M.D.) began the study of medicine in England with a view to registration and practice under the Medical Act. After trying in vain elsewhere she was accepted as a student at Apothecaries' Hall; she attended some classes in common with male students; in lieu of attendance upon others, which was not permitted, she was compelled to pay comparatively heavy fees for separate and private tuition by recognised teachers. She had difficulties in obtaining hospital instruction, which in her case, however, were in time surmounted, and in 1865 she was registered as a licentiate of Apothecaries' Hall. Her title of M.D. she owes to no English examining body, but to a foreign university. The marked distinction with which she passed her examination in Paris is well known, and her equal distinction and success in the practice of her profession are matters both of general and professional recognition.

I have not dated the movement from Mrs. Garrett Anderson's personally successful attempt, because its immediate consequence was the closing of the door through which she had forced her way; the Apothecaries' Hall signalling the fact of her admission by the passing of a new rule, which forbade students thenceforth to receive any part of their education privately, whilst it was known that from some at least of the public classes women would certainly be excluded. Her honourable place appears to me to be that of a forerunner of the movement, which she has, however, continuously aided, and now aids,

by personal service and pecuniary help, and by the prestige of her own character and repute.

In March 1869, as I have said, application was made to the University of Edinburgh to admit a woman to medical study with a view to a medical degree. As the application was from one woman only, a tentative attendance on the classes of botany and natural history was suggested by the Dean of the Medical Faculty, the question of matriculation being postponed for the time. The assent of the two professors specially concerned was given to this plan, and it then received the formal approval of the Medical Faculty and of the Senatus; but, some dissentient professors having appealed against the proposal, the university court interposed its veto on this 'temporary arrangement in the interest of one lady.' Then four more ladies came forward to unite with Miss Jex-Blake in a renewed application to be allowed to make arrangements for *separate* classes, and this application found in time a favourable response; and in November 1869, with the consent of every governing body in the university, regulations were officially issued admitting women to formal matriculation, and to subsequent 'instruction for the profession of medicine.' In the previous month of October, the five ladies, having been admitted provisionally to the preliminary examination in arts, had passed, and were then matriculated and duly inscribed as *Cives Academicæ Edinensis*.

During the first session things went well enough, so well indeed as to arouse to an activity the reverse of creditable the hitherto latent opposition of male medical students and of medical men. Then opposition began; professors refused to teach the women, male students mobbed them, university authorities sought escape from the honourable obligations under which they had voluntarily placed themselves, by the suggestion that they had exceeded their powers. The five women tried the case in 1872 by an action of Declarator. Lord Gifford (the Lord Ordinary) gave judgment in their favour. Had the university been desirous not to fail in honour, but to fulfil their obligations if they could, they might have rested upon this judicial decision. On the contrary, they appealed against it to the whole Court of Session, and in June 1873, by a bare majority of the court, they obtained a reversal of Lord Gifford's judgment; and the ladies were mulcted in the costs of both sides in both suits. It was necessary to appeal to a yet higher tribunal. Such appeal might have been made on the question of law to the House of Lords; but that would have meant further indefinite delay and further heavy expense, and then, if the result were favourable, a probable refusal of the university to act on their ascertained powers. It was necessary to *secure* the admission of women to medical study and practice, and not merely to ascertain that one out of nineteen examining bodies could admit them if it liked. Miss Jex-Blake and her friends

determined to widen their appeal, to base it on the ground of right, and to address it to Parliament and to public opinion. It has taken four years to complete the justification of that policy, but it is now complete.

In 1874 a bill was brought in by Mr. Cowper-Temple, Mr. Russell Gurney, Mr. Orr Ewing, and Dr. Cameron, 'to remove doubts as to the powers of the universities of Scotland to admit women as students and to grant degrees to women.' The second reading of the bill having been postponed from the 24th of April at the request of the member for the university, it proved impossible to secure for it another and a later day. The bill was reintroduced in the session of 1875, and came on for second reading on the 3rd of March, but was thrown out by 196 to 153 votes. On the 22nd of March Mr. Cowper-Temple returned to the charge with a bill to permit the registration of the degrees of the Universities of Paris, Berlin, Leipzig, Berne, and Zurich, when such degrees should be held by women, they being debarred from the ordinary means of registration; each and all of these foreign degrees ranking constantly and indubitably higher than many of the passes of English examining bodies. But, in the absence of Government support, no day could be secured for a second reading, and the matter was again deferred. The Parliamentary case did not seem hopeful. Time is not on the side of private members and their bills; but time was everything to these five ladies who had already been spending so much of their time and their money in vain; and time, too, was a vital question in another respect, to which I will now allude.

When the appeal to Parliament of Mr. Cowper-Temple's bill in 1874 failed, owing to the persistent opposition of the University of Edinburgh, it had already become evident that a wider issue must be raised than that of enabling Scotch universities to give medical instruction and to grant medical degrees to women. It was in harmony with this conviction that the idea was conceived of now founding in London a school of medicine for women. In this attempt Miss Jex-Blake succeeded in enlisting the thorough sympathy and the invaluable services of the late Dr. Anstie, to whose efforts, in large part, the establishment of the school in the autumn of 1874 was due. Very suitable premises were obtained in the neighbourhood of Brunswick Square,¹ and a strong staff of teachers was secured, all, with one exception, being recognised lecturers at other medical schools. It was felt that the existence of the school would be in itself an appeal to the justice of Parliament. But the school could not continue to exist if the way to examination were long barred to women, who could only be expected to avail themselves of the instruction it afforded under two conditions—viz., 1st, that the

¹ 30 Henrietta Street, Brunswick Square.

instruction should suffice to entitle the students to examination, if Parliament should repudiate their supposed disability of sex; and 2nd, that Parliament should practically remove that disability. At the end of the session of 1875, the school had existed for one year; the course of study would be naturally one of three years, but nothing seemed then to point to a reasonable probability of legislation opening the way to the examining, licensing, and registration of medical women within a period of two more years.

But there was another difficulty quite as serious as the difficulty of legislation. Every examining body required, and rightly required, that students presenting themselves for examination should have received practical clinical instruction in a hospital and by the bedside. Some of the examining bodies require that the hospital should have no less than 150 beds. To establish such a hospital *de novo* and *at once* was an impossible financial operation. The London School of Medicine was therefore bound to exhaust every effort in appeals to existing institutions. It applied at every hospital where there appeared to be a hope, however feeble or forlorn; it was everywhere refused. Even should Parliament open the door, the hospital difficulty—a practical and financial difficulty—remained. What chance was there of both difficulties being overcome in the course of another eighteen months or two years?

Nevertheless, although it might prove too late for the fortunes of the school, progress was clearly beginning to be made. On the 16th of June, 1875, in answer to a question of my own on the Medical Act Amendment (College of Surgeons) Bill, Lord Sandon admitted, in the name of the Government, that the subject of the medical education of women, only very lately submitted to the attention of Government, demanded their consideration; and he undertook that it should be carefully considered by the Government during the recess, so that they should be enabled to express definite views with regard to legislation upon it in the next session. And this was the first step positively gained—the admission by Government that the question was one upon which they were bound to come to an opinion, and the promise that they would do so effectively not later than the following session of 1876. In accordance with this undertaking, and in anticipation of it, a letter had been already addressed by Mr. Simon, in the name of the Lord President of the Privy Council, to the President of the General Medical Council, requesting the observations of the Medical Council on Mr. Cowper-Temple's bill; and the letter further stated that it appeared to the Lord President that the bill could hardly fail to raise in Parliament the general question of the admission of women to the medical profession, and that his grace would therefore be glad that the Council should also discuss as fully as they might see fit this wider question. The Medical Council met on the 24th of June. The discussion lasted three days; it was able,

exhaustive, and full of the evidences of a marked faculty of debate; and it ended by the adoption of a report to the Privy Council that 'the Medical Council are of opinion that the study and practice of medicine and surgery, instead of affording a field of exertion well fitted for women, do, on the contrary, present special difficulties which cannot be safely disregarded; *but the Council are not prepared to say that women ought to be excluded from the profession.*'

I will now pass to the session of 1876. Very early in the year a deputation, headed by Lord Aberdare, late Lord President, waited on the Lord President, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, to represent to him the case of women and their claim to legislative help. The Lord President was reminded of the promise of the Vice-President that Government would be prepared with a view of their own on the question of legislation; but although the deputation was courteously received, no further or more definite statement or promise on behalf of Her Majesty's Government was forthcoming.

In the absence of any announcement of the intentions of Government in the matter, Mr. Cowper-Temple reintroduced his bill for the registration of certain foreign medical degrees when awarded to women. Before the end of May 1876, Mr. Russell Gurney's bill had been introduced; its object was to enable the British examining bodies to extend their examinations to women as well as to men. It was an 'enabling' bill and nothing more; but it had a very wide scope, operating permissively not merely upon Scotch universities, but upon every one of the nineteen examining bodies of the United Kingdom.

The Recorder's bill was also referred by the Lord President to the Medical Council, who discussed it on two occasions, and who reported generally in its favour, but suggested the addition of words to make it quite clear that the measure would be permissive only, and to prevent the conferring of medical qualifications upon women from carrying with it any right to take part in the government of the examining bodies who might have conferred them. Mr. Russell Gurney at once accepted the suggestions of the Medical Council.

On the 5th of July Mr. Cowper-Temple's bill came on for second reading, but was withdrawn after debate, upon a statement from Lord Sandon that the Government were prepared to support the Recorder's bill. Even then anxiety was by no means at an end, for the Government were not prepared to make the bill their own and to find a day for it, and any persistent opposition would have been almost necessarily fatal to its passing at so late a time; but these dangers were by good fortune escaped, and before the end of the session the bill received the royal assent and became law.

Those who favoured the admission of women to the medical profession were satisfied by the passing of this act. They reasoned thus: 'de deux choses l'une;' the act will either have effect or

not. If any one of the nineteen examining bodies avail itself of the act, the door will be opened, other bodies will follow suit, and it will not be possible that the door should be closed again. If, on the contrary, every one of the examining bodies should refuse to avail themselves of the powers of the bill, the case for a compulsory measure taken up by the Government of the day will have become complete.

Of these two alternative possible results, the former was happily and at once realised in fact. It might be thought that the University of Edinburgh would at once have resumed the initiative in order to redeem its pledges, however late; but it set the seal on its former procedure by now again refusing all action on behalf of its own matriculated students, and the ladies were obliged to turn elsewhere. But in the month of September Miss Edith Pechey made application both to the Queen's University and to the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland for admission to examination, and each of these bodies granted her request on condition of compliance with ordinary regulations. As far as the Queen's University was concerned, these regulations required attendance at four courses of lectures in one of the Queen's Colleges. The assent of four professors at Galway was obtained, but the council of the college interposed and vetoed the arrangement; and the immediate opening of the session made further action at the time impossible. On the other hand, no difficulties had to be encountered in dealing with the Royal College of Physicians; and the first fruits of the bill have been the examination and admission through that college to the Medical Register of Dr. Elizabeth Walker Dunbar, Dr. Elizabeth Hoggan, Dr. Louisa Atkins (M.D.'s of Zurich), and of Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake and Dr. Edith Pechey (M.D.'s of Berne), in the months of January, February, and May of this year.

But the Women's Medical School was not yet by any means out of its difficulties. Two years had gone, and although the Recorder's bill had passed and was bearing fruit, it alone could not secure the future of the school, for every examining body required students claiming to be examined to have gone through a course of practical hospital instruction, and no hospital in London, as it then appeared, was likely to be persuaded to open its doors to women. Fortunately this difficulty has also been overcome. Since the autumn negotiations had been in progress with the authorities of the Royal Free Hospital in Gray's Inn Road on the part of the school. The Royal Free Hospital has *no male school*. It was upon this ground especially that the London School of Medicine for Women based their appeal, and not in vain. The Weekly Board of the hospital replied by a resolution that as no other metropolitan hospital appeared to be in a position to grant the required facilities, it was only *just and right* that the Royal Free Hospital should afford them. The General Committee of the hospital confirmed the resolution of the Weekly Board. The

question was discussed with every member of the medical staff, and the discussions ended in their unanimous assent. The agreement between the school and the hospital, involving certain not inconsiderable financial obligations on the part of the school, was worked out to its present shape with equal patience and candour on the part of the hospital authorities, and with identical results; it was signed on the 12th of June last. This timely conclusion, so fortunate for the interests of women desiring to study and practise medicine in this country, and so vital to the interests of the school, is mainly due to the conviction of the justice of the claim and to the admirable patience and tact of Mr. James Hopgood, the chairman of the Weekly Board.

This record of progress would not be complete without referring to the resolution of the Senate of the London University to admit women to medical examinations and degrees.

The adoption of that resolution was shortly followed by a proposal in Convocation to request the Senate to suspend action upon it, until they had considered the question of admitting women to other than medical examinations and degrees. The proposal was adopted in Convocation by a small majority. But at its meeting on Wednesday, the 20th of June, the Senate decided, by a vote of 16 against 11, to carry out their original resolution without delay.

What is the women's case against which medical prejudice has fought so stoutly if not so long?

The common law of this country knows no distinction of sex in these respects. The field of labour is, at common law, open alike to women and to men. Natural and social conditions affecting the character and relations of the sexes have given men a priority in remunerative employ. The man is by nature the bread-winner, the woman the manager of the home. But there are many exceptions. The woman may have an especial call to play the part ordinarily undertaken by the man. She may be single and have to earn her living and, it may be, that of others dependent upon her. She may be married, and her husband may be incapable of work or unwilling. She may be a widow with children to support. If you take the census in hand, you will find how considerable is the number of women engaged in trade or in agricultural pursuits.

The thing settles itself by other than Parliamentary law. No one is the worse; and most certainly no one would dream of the need of aiding nature to keep up the difference of sex by the enactment of a law forbidding a woman to engage in the ordinary business occupations of life.

What is the case for their exclusion here either by law or by the practice of the examining bodies through whom alone they can obtain admission on to the Register and become 'duly qualified' under the act of 1858? It cannot be put higher than the words of the Medical

Council itself—viz., that ‘the study and practice of medicine and surgery, instead of affording a field of exertion well fitted for women, do, on the contrary, present special difficulties which cannot be safely disregarded.’ Let that be granted for the sake of argument. What then? Is not that also and at least equally true of many of the business occupations which women are free or, it may be, sometimes compelled to follow, and yet which no one seeks to interdict to them by law? Or can this be held by reasonable people to be a sufficient reason for their forcible exclusion? Clearly not in the opinion of the Medical Council in their report of the 8th of June, 1875, from which date the position of the opponents of medical women became untenable, and the legalised admission of women to the ranks of the profession only a question of time. This is enough; but this is not all. Independent of the general question of freedom and of right, there are special reasons why men should not be permitted to exclude women from the practice of medicine; and as these reasons had no inconsiderable effect, I think, upon the mind of Parliament, I will state them here. The claim of women to this admission was in fact a double claim. First there was the claim of women to study and to practise medicine; and secondly there was the claim of women to be medically attended, if they chose, by persons of their own sex. The latter claim, especially, has been, I believe, deeply and sensitively taken to heart by many men in the profession and outside; to me it has always seemed, I must confess, a claim almost impossible for a man of justice or delicacy long to refuse. I have heard more than once this honourable sentiment uttered by the lips of a medical man: ‘If there be one woman who desires to study and to practise medicine, and one other woman who desires to be medically attended by her, it is enough for me; law ought not to forbid or practically to prevent.’ No one can at this moment answer the question—neither the advocates of this ‘woman’s right’ nor those who have opposed it—how great that desire and demand may prove to be. It will now be a question of demand and of consequent supply; but at least the door is open and the road clear, and, under the conditions which I have described, the next few years will furnish a practical and conclusive answer to this question.

I have written of this case as really at an end, as won, and I believe it to be so; but medical antagonism is not yet allayed, although I am not without hope that the time is rapidly approaching when medical men will smile at it themselves. I must note some instances of it curiously enough connected with that branch of surgery, the practice of midwifery, wherein women might be supposed to have an exceptionally strong claim to the services of persons of their own sex.

In December 1875 a motion was brought forward by a member of the Council of the College of Surgeons to admit women to the license in midwifery of the college, which is a registerable license.

In January 1876 three ladies made application to be examined. They handed in certificates of attendance upon a four years' course of complete medical and surgical instruction, which were referred to a committee for inspection and report. The opinion of counsel was taken; it was to the effect that the college was bound to admit the applicants to examination. The committee reported that the certificates were satisfactory; the council by resolution admitted the candidates, whereupon Dr. Barnes, one of the examiners in midwifery, immediately resigned. Next came an official letter from the college to the three ladies promising them admission to the next examination, which in its turn was followed by the resignation of Drs. Farre and Priestley, *i.e.* of the whole examining board. Since then there have been no examiners and no examination; but there was immediately a meeting of the Obstetrical Society, at which a vote of thanks to the members of the examining board was carried by 'universal acclamation.' The Obstetrical Society would appear to be still of the same mind and spirit in 1877; for they have, it would appear, submitted to Her Majesty's Government proposals for imposing special conditions on women who desire to act in England as professed midwives, which the Medical Council has not been able to endorse, because, amongst other reasons, the society propose, in respect of midwives, that the mere act of unqualified practice should be a misdemeanour, which would be an exception to the spirit of the present law respecting unqualified medical practice for gain, and because they would reserve liberty to male persons to do what the law would forbid female persons to do under the same conditions!

The cause is won, I doubt not, but we shall none the less hear of it again as a matter of dispute, and that probably ere long, and in consequence of the acts of examining bodies themselves. I have referred to the constitution of a conjoint examining board, by the cooperation of all or several of the examining bodies, under the powers of the act of 1858. It appears that a scheme has now been matured for the constitution of a joint examining board for all the English (as distinguished from the Scotch and Irish) examining bodies, and that the scheme received the sanction of the Medical Council at its meeting on the 24th of May last. The scheme provides for a conjoint examination entitling the successful candidate to the license of the Royal College of Physicians of London, the diploma of member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and the license of the Society of Apothecaries. The English examining bodies are to undertake to abstain, *so far as allowed by law*, from the exercise of their independent privilege of giving admission to the Medical Register; and there is a special provision that if women be admitted to examination by the conjoint board, they shall not, on passing, be entitled to become licentiates or members of any of the cooperating authorities without the special permission of such authority.

It would appear, therefore, that under this scheme each English examining body proposes to deprive itself, so far as allowed by law, of the power of admitting women, through its license, to the Medical Register, whilst the conjoint board binds itself to make the results of its own examinations to a certain extent inoperative in the case of women, without the special permission of each of such authorities. I do not desire to regard these provisions as evidence of an unfavourable disposition towards medical women. I think that they may be otherwise explained. The undertaking of the separate bodies to abstain from the exercise of their independent privilege is evidently conceived in the interest of the maintenance of an uniform as well as a high standard of examination in all the branches of a complete medical education. The reserve '*so far as allowed by law*' apparently has reference to sections fortunately introduced in committee of the House of Commons into the Apothecaries Act Amendment Act of 1874, and the Medical Acts Amendment (College of Surgeons) Act of 1875, reserving any existing rights of women as far as Apothecaries' Hall and the College of Surgeons are respectively concerned; and these bodies are, I believe, at this moment bound to admit women to examination upon conditions which the arrangement between the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital will now secure. On the other hand, the provision that the examination of the conjoint board shall not entitle women to the ordinary diplomas without the consent of the cooperating body is a mere deduction from the permissive character of Mr. Russell Gurney's bill. Undoubtedly it would have been to be preferred that each of these examining bodies should have reserved its right under the Recorder's act to place the names of women on the Register; but that such may be the intention, though not yet expressed, of the conjoint scheme, I am disposed to infer from the facts that the University of London is a party to it, and that the Senate of that university has determined to admit women to its medical degrees.

The name of Sir James Paget, chairman of the conference of representatives of examining authorities upon the subject, which subscribes the scheme, will be taken as conclusive proof of the absence of any intention, by a side wind, to deprive women of the advantages to which they have just attained; and I entertain little doubt that the scheme will eventuate in their examination by the proposed conjoint board itself with the sanction of the Royal College of Physicians of London, as well as of the College of Surgeons and Apothecaries' Hall, whose sanction, in my view, may be assumed.

I desire now to go back upon this sketch of events for the sake of a few words upon the various parts which persons and institutions have played.

And first for the University of Edinburgh and its part. Women have been in this movement immensely indebted to that university

in more ways than one. They are indebted to those members of the university (a majority of the non-medical professors) who have stood by them from the first, who helped them to and through the conflict whose function, historically speaking, will be held to have been that of preparing for the wider parliamentary issue which was to come, and who have constantly testified in their favour to the end. They are also indebted, hardly less so albeit in a different sense, to those other members of the university who made of themselves the local and personal concentration and embodiment of professional prejudice, and who did the movement the exceptional service, *quoad* the public mind, of enabling the case to be presented to Parliament, not only as a question of public policy and right, but as a case of private and personal injury by the evasion on the part of a public body of an honourable engagement. And these obligations on the part of medical women have been continuous; for the University of Edinburgh, not content with obtaining a decision from the Court of Session that they had exceeded their powers in matriculating and undertaking to admit our five ladies to medical education and to their degree of M.D., and with saddling the five complainants with all costs, carried their opposition further into the High Court of Parliament itself, which they petitioned *not* to enable them, by a permissive enactment, to redeem their word.

Both Senate and University Court, under the same signature of 'A. Grant, Principal,' petitioned the House of Commons against Mr. Cowper-Temple's enabling bill; the Senate prayed that no legislation might take place until the subject had been inquired into by a Royal Commission or otherwise; the University Court was of opinion that so wide and important a question as the admission of women to academical degrees should not be referred for decision to *small local boards* like the university courts of Scotland. In 1875, as I have shown, Mr. Cowper-Temple's bill was reintroduced, and the University Court again petitioned that the university might not be enabled and relieved, but that inquiry by a Royal Commission *or otherwise* should precede any attempt at legislation. In 1876 a Royal Commission on Scotch Universities was appointed, but the case of these lady students was refused a hearing. But the subject has been inquired into 'otherwise,' as prayed—inquired into, as far as medical degrees are concerned, by Parliament itself, which has thought fit to 'enable' the University of Edinburgh in spite of itself. What use that 'local body' may now make of the powers which it has ended by obtaining remains as yet, as far as my knowledge goes, neither decided nor ascertained.

The part of the General Medical Council has been altogether different. That body could not but represent to a considerable extent the dislike of the profession to the invasion by women of their own preserves. But the Medical Council contains in large proportion the

élite of the profession ; and, what is perhaps more to the point, it contains a considerable admixture of men, the nature of whose practice has given them a wider acquaintance with the lay world, and with the data upon which legislation must practically be based, than falls to the lot of large numbers of the profession absorbed from the first in their local professional avocations, and unavoidably prone to exclusively professional views.

The view of the Medical Council was expressed in June 1875, when they reported to the Lord President that 'the Council are not prepared to say that women ought to be excluded from the profession.' Nothing could be more accurate, in my opinion, than this implied statement of the question, which was nothing less or other than this : 'Shall women be *excluded* by law ?' And nothing could be wiser than their conclusion as the expression of opinion of a body responsible to the public for the whole medical profession of the country. That sentence was the *coup de grâce* to the medical, and indeed to all other, opposition to the women's claim. Had the Council taken a different view, the claim of the women might have been postponed and evaded for yet a little time ; it could not, I believe, have been defeated. But now the concession is made with the assent of the great representative body of the profession, and that representative body is placed in altogether truer relations with Parliament and Government and public opinion than might otherwise have been the case, to the great benefit, in all probability, of its own future influence in legislation and administration. Her Majesty's Government has been marked in its deference to the Medical Council, and rightly so ; for it is in the interests of the public as well as of the profession that Parliament and Government, in questions affecting a great profession, should be able to deal with it with the aid and intermediation of a body of men so distinguished and so competent, and with something of the training in life which is necessary to larger legislative views. The Government did well to act through such a body ; and although Lord Sandon's help seemed from time to time to be given with a certain timidity and reserve, I willingly acknowledge the obligations in this matter of women to him, and, I should like to add, to Lord Beaconsfield, whose real interest in the subject, as a woman's question, I have not been able to doubt.

Of the Royal Free Hospital, and of its chairman, what can I say more or better than that, in their own words, they have done that which was 'just and right,' save this also, that they have done it in the best way ? We shall have a real experiment now, and a conclusive and convincing answer, for our time, to the question, 'Do women want this, or do they not ?'

One thing more remains to record. These pages will, I think, have presented to the reader's mind evidence of a tough and persistent and continuous struggle. Such struggles do not persist and

succeed, according to my experience, without the accompanying fact, the continuous thread as it were, of one constant purpose and dominant will. Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake has made that greatest of all the contributions to the end attained. I do not say that she has been the ultimate cause of success. The ultimate cause has been simply this, that the time was at hand. It is one of the lessons of the history of progress that when the time for a reform has come you cannot resist it, though, if you make the attempt, what you may do is to widen its character or precipitate its advent. Opponents, when the time has come, are not merely dragged at the chariot wheels of progress—they help to turn them. The strongest force, whichever way it seem to work, does most to aid. The forces of greatest concentration here have been, in my view, on the one hand the Edinburgh University led by Sir Robert Christison, on the other the women claimants led by Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake. Defeated at Edinburgh, she carried her appeal to the highest court, that most able to decide and to redress, the High Court of Parliament representing the nation itself. The result we see at last. Those who hail it as the answer which they sought have both to thank, in senses and proportions which they may for themselves decide.

JAMES STANSFELD.

