

**Dame Louisa Aldrich-Blake / by Lord Riddell.**

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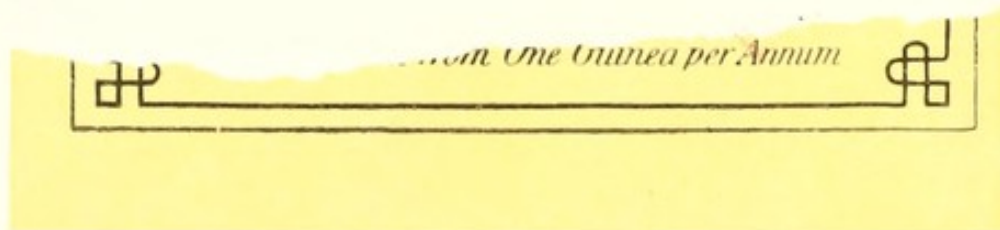


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ALDRICH-BLAKE

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DAME LOUISA ALDRICH-BLAKE



1921

Reproduction of Portrait painted by Sir William Orpen, K.B.E., R.A.,  
and Exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1923.

DAME LOUISA  
ALDRICH-BLAKE

BY  
LORD RIDDELL

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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BZP (Aldrich-Blake)



## PREFACE

**I**N writing this biography my object has been to reveal Dame Louisa's personality. I have tried to show what she was as well as what she did. Goethe said the object of biography is to explain how the man was affected by his surroundings and how they were affected by him. This maxim I have tried to follow. A longer book might have been written, but materials were scarce and I have no sympathy with biographical verbosity. The task was undertaken at the request of the Dean's executors and as a token of admiration for a remarkable woman who honoured me with her friendship. My fear is that I have not done her justice. I wish to thank all those who have supplied information. Special acknowledgments are due to Mrs. Jeakes, Miss Wigram, and Miss Deason, Dame Louisa's valued secretary.



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## CHAPTER I

**A**FTER proclaiming, rightly or wrongly, that few women reason well, the Rev. Frederic Aldrich-Blake proceeded to teach his daughter Louisa Brandreth Euclid at an early age. No doubt he knew she would prove an apt pupil. In other respects the reverend gentleman had sound ideas as to rearing girls. Things of the mind received due attention, but he allowed his four daughters to run wild in their home at Welsh Bicknor on the Wye, in those days a sparsely-populated country district, famed for its beauty and remoteness. As a result, Louisa became skilled in navigating the treacherous river, an expert with the rod, a fearless horsewoman, a daring swimmer, a capable veterinary surgeon and horsebreaker, a good carpenter and a keen and understanding gardener. These achievements were rendered possible by a sturdy body, a sound mind, a quick eye and clever hands.

Like many persons of her type, she was reserved, shy and inclined to silence. Nevertheless, family tradition records two characteristic sayings. When she and her sister, then quite young, were trying

to set a hawk's broken wing, the bird tore them with its beak. The sister made the practical suggestion that the creature should be left to its fate. Louisa disagreed, and remarked, "When you start a thing you must finish it," thus unconsciously plunging into the time-worn dispute whether conduct should be governed by necessity for moral discipline, or by expediency. The second saying is less controversial. When the same sister complained that certain things were not to her liking, the small Louisa responded, "It is better to talk about what you like than about what you don't like."

The Rev. Frederic Aldrich-Blake came of good Suffolk stock, with a well authenticated pedigree dating back 250 years. His original surname was Aldrich. Although I can find no evidence of the fact, he is said to have been related in the collateral line to the famous Vice-Chancellor Aldrich, who flourished at Oxford in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Vice-Chancellor was a versatile person—a musician, to whom we owe much of the best plain-song music—a logician, whose manual was used at Oxford until late in the nineteenth century, and an architect, having been the designer of All Saints' Church and a part of the Quadrangle of Christ Church, Oxford. He was also noted for his convivial habits, and his facility for writing songs in English and Latin.

Frederic was born at Erwarton Hall, Suffolk,

in 1824. He was the youngest of a family of eleven who underwent the not uncommon experience of being impoverished by a reckless and extravagant father. Frederic was therefore educated at the Blue Coat School and had to make his own way. There is no occasion to state his experiences in detail, but one phase of his life had a marked effect on that of his daughter Louisa. From sixteen to nineteen her father earned his living by teaching English in a school at Neuchatel. While there he had visions of becoming a doctor and went often to the hospital to help the surgeons. His stories of this period of his life, including the horrors of terrible operations without anæsthetics—little used in those days—made a great impression upon Louisa as a child. Consequently when her father suggested that his girls should take up professions she expressed a wish to become a surgeon. This was in 1882. The Rev. Frederic was sympathetic but did not know what educational facilities existed for training medical women. He, however, made inquiries at the circulating library to which he belonged, and ascertained that there was a School of Medicine for Women in London.

Louisa's father perceived, however, that her practical qualities, valuable though they were, required to be supplemented by a first-class education of the normal kind. Therefore he stipulated that she should go to Neuchatel for a year, and promised that if, when she returned, she was



still of the same mind, he would do what was necessary to give effect to her ambitions.

Here we must leave her career for the present and return to that of the Rev. Frederic himself.

At the age of twenty-nine he took Holy Orders, and became successively curate of Stanningfield, Suffolk, and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London. While serving there he met his future wife, Miss Louisa Blake Morison, a Scottish heiress. Her fortune was derived from an uncle, Lieut.-Col. Thomas Blake, of Demerara, who stipulated by his will that his niece's husband should take the additional name of Blake. Consequently on his marriage the Rev. Frederic Aldrich became the Rev. Frederic Aldrich-Blake.

From her mother Louisa inherited the gentle, sympathetic, unselfish qualities by which her somewhat masculine temperament was diluted. Nevertheless, Mrs. Aldrich-Blake was a woman of character and determination. Mrs. Jeakes, another of her daughters, says :

“Mother managed to exact implicit obedience without any trace of severity. I don't know now how she ruled so effectively her six large high-spirited children, but she certainly made it clear, without any struggle, that when she did give a command it must be obeyed, and it was. She taught us the Church Catechism, read us Bible stories, and gave us very practical teaching about

the duty of doing things for other people. She was, I think, the most unselfish woman I ever knew, and we adored her in a rather undemonstrative way. She was reserved and so were we, but we never doubted her devotion, and our home was a very happy one. Father was the old-fashioned type of clergyman, doing his duty Sunday by Sunday, with little or no variation in the services, visiting his parishioners in illness or trouble; but otherwise Mother did the visiting, and provided remedies and little luxuries for all who came for help."

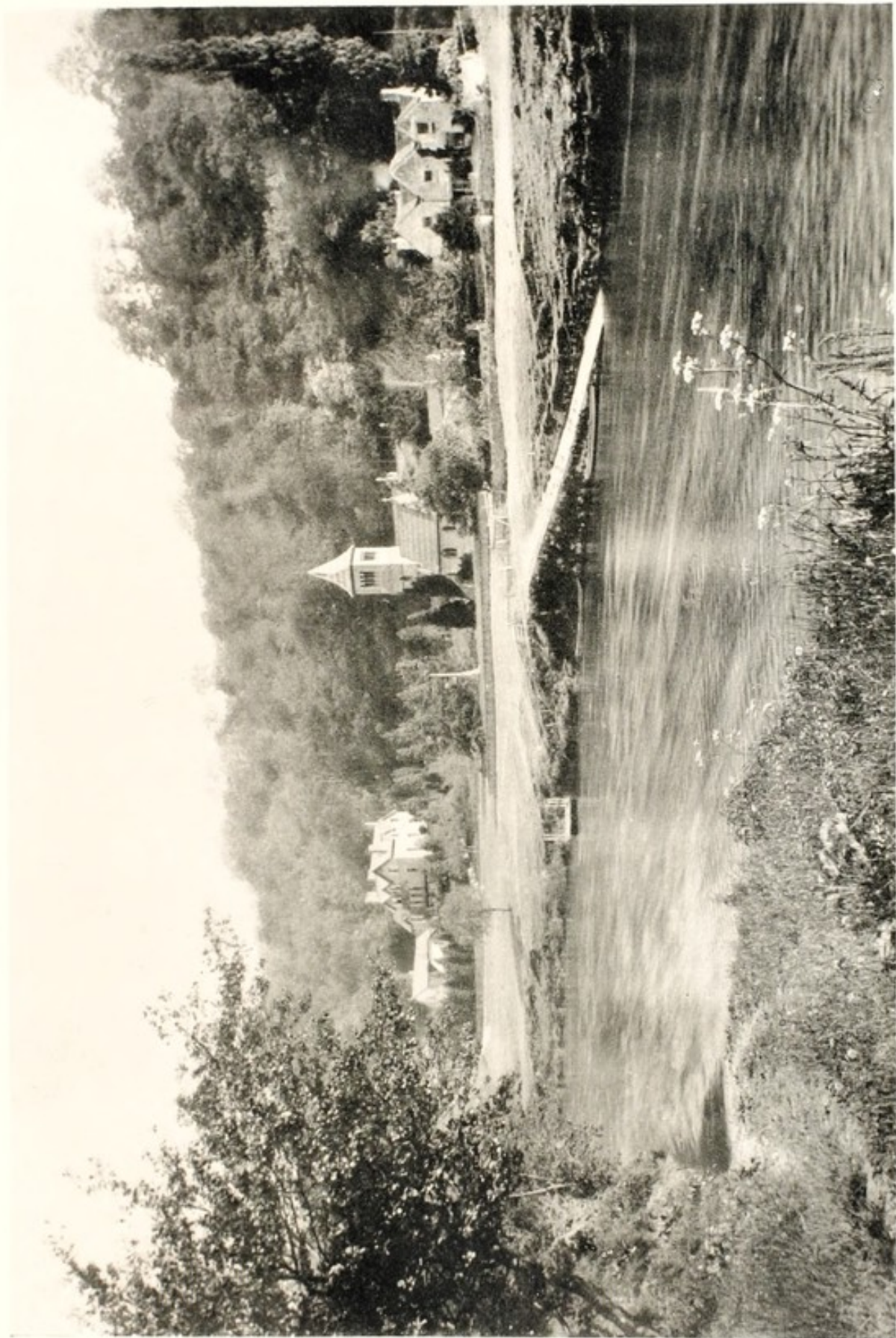
When her mother died in January 1918 Louisa wrote to Miss Eveline Mitford :

"Dear little mother, I think she was the best person I ever knew and ours has been the most perfect relationship always. She never said a cross word or did a selfish thing—I don't believe she ever had a selfish thought."

Miss Aldrich-Blake's family ties were strong, exceptional and lasting. Despite her strength of character and her achievements, she remained distinctly feminine in her family relationship. She never became an individual unit. To the day of her death she was an integral part of the Aldrich-Blake family. Her nine nephews and only niece were her special joy, and she lavished on them what amounted almost to a mother's devotion.

The Rev. Aldrich-Blake began his married life at Chingford Rectory, Essex, in 1862. Here Louisa was born on 5th August, 1865, her elder brother Frederic having preceded her by two years. Later in the year the Reverend Frederic migrated to the tiny parish of Welsh Bicknor, Herefordshire, where he remained until his death some forty years later. Here the rest of his children, Mrs. Jeakes, Mrs. Micklethwait, Miss Margaret Aldrich-Blake and Mr. Robert Aldrich-Blake were born. He built a new Rectory overlooking the lovely Wye Valley and there brought up his family.

The household would have formed a good subject for one of Anthony Trollope's novels—the rather stern Rector—his gentle wife—the open-air life—the high ideals—the mixture of Conservatism and enterprise—the yearly visit to London—the Rector's loyalty to Morley's Hotel, Trafalgar Square—his unflinching devotion to museums, picture galleries and "Our Boys," which, as it ran for 1,300 nights, enabled him to take his children to witness it so often that the small Louisa came to think it was the only theatrical piece.



*Photo. W augh, Monmouth*

NEW RECTORY

WELSH BICKNOR

OLD RECTORY



## CHAPTER II

**A**T the age of sixteen Louisa went to Oak Hill, Great Malvern, a rather Victorian school, where the art of deportment ranked high. She struck her school-mates as above all things "manly." She had nothing of the then typical schoolgirl about her—none of the petty enthusiasms or terrors. She did not learn the piano like other girls. The domestic needle was not in her line, and she had no "fancy work." But when occasion required she could sew in her own quaint fashion, much as a man would do when called upon to mend his own garments, and she was not above tying the sashes of the little girls and helping them with their sums. At book-work she was slow, but sure, and her remarkable memory enabled her to retain anything she once grasped. She did not remain long at Oak Hill. In 1884 she went to Neuchatel, and two years later matriculated and entered St. Hilda's, Cheltenham. At St. Hilda's she was a popular figure, notwithstanding her unusual taciturnity. Her intimates called her "Harry" and were proud of her "gentlemanly" appearance.

Contemporary evidence proves that looks did not belie her. I find she was a strong and skilful boxer and quite a capable cricketer. In a match between the ladies of Ross and Newland, played before "a large gathering of spectators" and fully reported in the local press, the three Misses Aldrich-Blake were prominent figures: Miss Louisa is described as "hitting in vigorous style, at the same time showing a good defence," with the result that "the fielders had plenty of leather-hunting." She finished with a score of 24 "gained in a manner which won for her the applause of both partizans and spectators." Evidently the Newlanders and their supporters did not join in the applause, which is not surprising. Probably they were too dejected. Owing to the skilful bowling of the three Aldrich-Blakes, Newland made only 74 runs in two innings, whereas the ladies of Ross scored 123 runs in one. Of these the Aldrich-Blakes contributed 69.

The outstanding traits of Miss Louisa's character, at this as at other times, were her profound sense of duty and constant aim at perfection, in small as well as in big things. Her affection for Cheltenham never waned and nothing pleased her better than to attend the annual meetings of the Old Girls. In 1922, on the last of these occasions, as usual the supply of china gave out. While the rest of the company talked, Miss Louisa was found in a back room carefully washing the cups—practical and useful as always.

In 1887 Miss Aldrich-Blake entered the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women, Hunter Street, Bloomsbury, London. There were eight other novices. To-day the average yearly entry has grown to 60.

Miss Kemp, one of her friends, says :

“ At this time she was fair and fresh coloured, the very picture of health and strength. Her blue-grey eyes, under the broad level brow, were honest, keen and dauntless—her expression grave when in repose. When she smiled her face lighted up, with a genial, friendly look. In the same way there was a heart-felt warmth in her laugh, which was somewhat low in tone, and characteristic of her sincere nature. She did not talk much and never about herself.

“ She dressed in sombre colours and very simply : her walk was slow and dignified, much as in later life.

“ Work was all-absorbing and seemed no burden to her. I cannot think she ever had to force herself to study like ordinary students. She seemed to have no desire for amusement.

“ Her most salient characteristic was a sound judgment and critical acumen. She refused to give an opinion upon a subject if she had not reflected on it, so that whatever she said carried weight.”

She was an unusual type of student. Unlike most of her predecessors and contemporaries, she



did not take up medicine to advance female emancipation or to earn her living. Just as she set the wounded hawk's wing, or worked in her father's garden, or later washed the tea-cups at Cheltenham, in studying medicine her object was to do a good piece of interesting and useful work. Consequently her attention was never diverted by the throbbing excitement of a new and victorious movement, or by the agitation for additional privileges for medical women. Others triumphed and agitated. She studied to become a first-class practitioner. It has been suggested that her object was to justify the entrance of women into medicine by showing what a woman could do. There is no evidence of any such motive. She took to the profession in the same way as a well-to-do youth, eager to perform some useful work in the world, and also, be it remarked, eager to find congenial occupation. Temperament is the ruling factor in life. To use modern jargon, Miss Aldrich-Blake had "the work complex." Persons endowed with this gift often get more credit than they deserve. What others find a task, they find a pleasure. This conversation well displays Miss Aldrich-Blake's ruling motives.

R. : They tell me you still operate several hours a day. Do you ever get tired or bored ?

Miss A. B. : No, I love my work. Do you remember we discussed this the first time we met ? You said you loved work for its own sake and I said I did so too.

R. : I remember. It was a bond of union. But what would you do if by a miracle the whole nation required no medical or surgical treatment for five years ?

Miss A. B. : I should return to Welsh Bicknor.

R. : But what would you do when you got there ?

Miss A. B. : I should garden and make roads.

R. : Why roads ?

Miss A. B. : It is useful work, and you see the result of your labours, whether it is good or bad.

R. : Would you like to live your life over again, just as you have lived it ?

Miss A. B. (after reflection) : Yes, I think so. I have had many dear friends, and *I have enjoyed doing things*. I have not always been able to do what I wanted to do, but there is a pleasure in doing your duty.

Thus armed, Miss Aldrich-Blake devoted herself whole-heartedly to her studies while at the School. "Work early and late, undisturbed by social distractions or feminine foibles," was the strict order of the day. She had another advantage. Her practical and somewhat conventional mind prevented excursions down medical by-ways where enthusiastic and more imaginative students often waste time. She concentrated on the subject in hand and did her utmost to master it. Mr. Boyce Barrow, F.R.C.S., one of her teachers, who is still living, tells me that he remembers Miss Aldrich-Blake as a very intelligent and industrious student,

Her tact and reliability appealed to him particularly when she gave anæsthetics for his operations. He was also attracted by her natural gift of manual dexterity, which found so many opportunities for display in surgical work.

When she described in detail an abdomino-perineal operation she had done he felt sure she was on the high-road to a brilliant career.

Concentration on her work did not, however, prevent her from helping fellow-students. Dr. Rukhmabai of Rajkot, India, writes :

“ When I was living at College Hall, Miss Aldrich-Blake was reading for her M.S. She suggested I should go to her room every other day for half an hour to get hints on surgery. I was taken aback. I said, ‘ You cannot spare the time. You are too busy.’ She replied, ‘ That will be all right. I must myself go over the ground and if you are there it will only mean repeating it aloud.’ This unselfish arrangement was most valuable to me. She had a natural gift of driving main points into other people’s heads.”

Her note-books as a student display the care and precision with which she did her work, and the sketches by which they are freely illustrated prove that she was a draughtsman of no mean order. During her professional career she was fond of illustrating her work by sketches and diagrams, for which she had a passion.



*Photo. Dighton's Art Studios*

1887



This strenuous life would have been too much for most women. Not so Miss Aldrich-Blake, who confessed at the age of twenty-seven that she had never had as much as a headache. In what may be described as a medical age, it is surprising that no poet has sung the praise of a perfect nervous system and a set of well-balanced ductless glands!

Miss Aldrich-Blake's educational achievements speak for themselves. The Intermediate Examination in Medicine was passed in 1889, and in the same year she won prizes at the School in Anatomy, Practical Physiology, Organic Chemistry and *Materia Medica*. In the three following years she obtained more honours in Pathology, Medicine, Surgery and Operative Midwifery. In 1892, at the age of twenty-seven, she qualified to practice by taking an M.B. at the London University with 1st Class Honours in Medicine and Obstetrics. In 1893 she secured the Bachelorship of Surgery at the London University with 1st Class Honours, and qualified for the Gold Medal. All the other candidates were men. Miss Aldrich-Blake was placed third in order of merit, the names in the first class being—

Carwardine, Thomas.

Jaffe, Charles Samson.

Aldrich-Blake, Louisa Brandreth.

Low, Vincent Warren.

The examiners, Sir Henry G. Howse and Sir

Henry Morris, reported that Miss Aldrich-Blake had obtained the number of marks qualifying for a Gold Medal. As there were only two medals she did not receive one. In 1894 she became an M.D. London University and in 1895, at thirty, she secured her crowning glory by becoming a Master in Surgery, the first woman to obtain this much-coveted degree.

This brief paragraph describes the results of eight years' unremitting toil providing no scope for descriptive writing. There is not much to be said about a life spent with constant regularity in classrooms, dissecting-rooms, hospital wards and examination chambers. Unfortunately we do not know how what she saw and did impressed this robust country girl. If she ever related her impressions, no record seems to have been preserved either in correspondence or in the memories of friends and relations. This is not surprising. Miss Aldrich-Blake was reticent and she was not introspective. Later in life she contended that women medical students must be judged on their merits as if they were men. From that angle, her own scholastic career, although distinguished, was not a phenomenon. Thousands of men had won similar distinctions. We must remember, however, the conditions that prevailed during her student days. Not unnaturally, although, of course, unreasonably, there was strong opposition to medical women, due to two causes: first, the economic fears of hard-working, underpaid professional men; and second,

the traditional but of course mistaken belief that woman's proper place was the home. To compete with men in such an atmosphere might well have shaken the stoutest nerves. Miss Aldrich-Blake had special qualifications for the ordeal. Inscribed on the porch of St. Andrew's University is the motto, "They say! What say they? Let them say!" Miss Aldrich-Blake's strength was that she was oblivious of what was being said. She was serene, and she was not out to fight men. In fact she admired them, and wished to work side by side with them in amity. Her wise father used to tell her with pride, in true Victorian fashion, that "she had a mind like a man," and she was proud of the compliment. The result was that throughout her life she was admired and respected by the other sex, although they recognized that she was the type of competitor to be feared as well as admired and respected. Her examination work was not hampered by the thought that she was fighting a band of unfriendly men or that she was the champion of female medical students. She was just Louisa Brandreth Aldrich-Blake doing her best to qualify as a medical woman, and to show her father in far-away Welsh Bicknor that his Louisa was what he believed her to be.

She had another merit. While she had confidence in herself she was entirely free from vanity, one of the most destructive mental defects.

This leads to the conclusion that a world composed



of Louisas would be most effective. Perhaps it might be rather dull. Men and women do not live by bread alone. However, there is no danger. Unluckily Louisas are few and far between. Intense concentration by choice is comparatively rare. Most people concentrate because they have to, not because they wish to.

There is one strange feature about Dame Louisa's life. So far as I can discover she never had a love affair. I once asked her why she had never married. She laughed and was about to reply. Unhappily some one came into the room and interrupted the conversation. I never had a chance to put the question again. Now I suppose I shall never know. Her intimates suggest that she was always too busy to bother about men. It may be—but even the busiest people find time for love-making. Perhaps—and more likely—she never met the right person. With all her masculine qualities she was essentially a woman, and when she set aside her shyness and reserve, a very charming one. She never aped the man, and never wished to be regarded as mannish. Indeed she strongly objected to mannish women. Her friends were mostly of a feminine type. In her opinion it was a mistake for professional women to copy men's clothes or their habits. In short, she subscribed to King Edward's famous dictum, "Men are men, and women are women!"

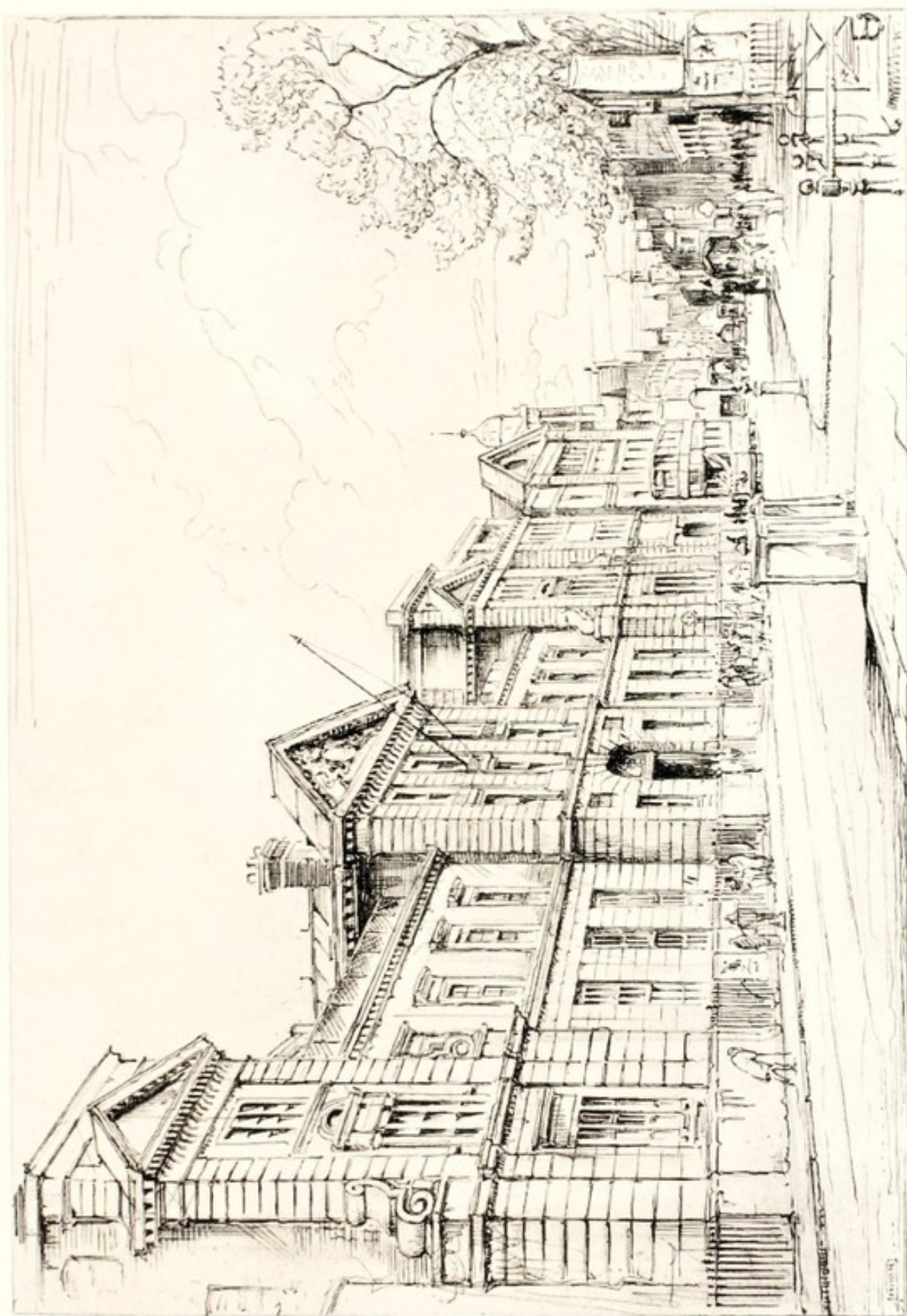
For some years she kept a diary, but the entries merely record her daily work and her expenditure

on special items. For instance, we find that in 1895 an evening dress cost her seven guineas and in 1888 a riding habit eight guineas. We learn also that for some years she rode every Saturday afternoon, but where she obtained the horse, and where and with whom she rode, does not appear.

### CHAPTER III

WE now pass to the second phase of Miss Aldrich-Blake's professional life, the period between 1892, when she qualified, and 1914, when she was appointed Dean of the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women. On qualifying she decided to specialize as a general surgeon. Progress in this branch is usually slow and success comparatively rare. Many are called, but few are chosen. Harley Street, like the Temple, teems with aching hearts and empty pockets. The medical ladder to fame is little understood by the public, who do not realize that unless under very exceptional circumstances, no specialist can hope to succeed who has not built up a reputation by years of hospital work, including the teaching of students. Most students go into general practice and it is on their recommendation in most cases that the specialist is selected. This process ensures that only able people reach the top rungs of the ladder. Miss Aldrich-Blake followed more or less the usual course.

1895-1902. Assistant Surgeon at the Elizabeth



*From an etching by W. Monk*

ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL, GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON  
Founded 1828



Garrett Anderson Hospital, Euston Road, London, founded in memory of the distinguished lady whose name it bears, staffed and controlled entirely by women.

1895–1906. Anæsthetist to the Royal Free Hospital, the first woman to hold the post.

1896–8. Surgical Registrar at the Royal Free Hospital, again the first woman to hold the post.

1897–1920 on staff of Canning Town Women's Settlement Hospital. This appointment entailed much labour and often involved a three-mile walk from Plaistow to Poplar railway station at a late hour of the night.

1902–10. Full surgeon at the E.G.A.

1910–25. Senior Surgeon at E.G.A.

1919–25. Consulting Surgeon at the Royal Free Hospital, where all students are women, but which is staffed by both sexes.

In these days surgical operations are favourite topics of conversation with the laity, but few laymen realize the qualities required to make a first-class surgeon. The power to inspire confidence in the patient—the gift of ascertaining what is wrong—the judgment to know what should be done—the skill and nerve required for the operation—presence of mind to cope with unexpected emergencies. Miss Aldrich-Blake possessed these qualities. Her dignified bearing, wise look and deliberate way of speaking gave a not mistaken idea of strength,

sincerity and sagacity. Her quick eye, sense of touch, knowledge, sympathy and patience made her a skilful diagnostician. Her surgical judgment is said by experts to have been sound. As an operator she was indefatigable, often operating at the E.G.A. for eight or nine hours at a stretch—a remarkable demonstration of physical vigour. As an illustration of this and her mental determination, when in 1920 she slipped in one of the corridors of the hospital and broke her knee-cap, with the aid of a splint she went on with her work, including operating, for a week. Her attitude towards the accident was peculiar. She seemed to regard it from an impersonal point of view. It was interesting and nothing more.

By some experts she was considered unduly deliberate as an operator, but others allege that this appearance of slowness was due to attention to detail, avoidance of unnecessary movements indulged in by operators of the flashy type and the gentleness with which she treated the patient, thus avoiding post-operation shock. It is also known that she could be speedy when she thought it necessary.

Mr. Joseph Cuning, Senior Surgeon to the Royal Free Hospital, remarks: "When present at one of her operations, I said, 'I should not mind her operating on me!' This remark will appeal more to surgeons than to anyone else, for none are so scared about whom they would choose for themselves, as those who are constantly operating on others."

At the hospital she paid the minutest attention to every detail in the operating theatre and wards. Nothing escaped her attention, not even a leaking tap or faulty screw. Indeed she delighted in doing small repairs herself. Her interest in both hospital and private patients was keen and lasting. Like most great surgeons she had the gift of remembering cases long after she had treated them.

In dealing with hospital patients, she was not content merely to perform the operation. When necessary she would try to strengthen their moral fibre. Often she would send them post-cards asking them to come to the hospital for examination, her real purpose being to have a little chat. On the death of a woman who had been addicted to the bottle, quite a bundle of such post-cards was found under her pillow, tied up with ribbon. She had become a reformed character.

These particulars have been gleaned from various reliable sources. If they sound panegyric, they at least express the opinion of those who worked with her. Whether she was a slow or fast operator, she was successful. Her patients did well. She had a great merit. She inspired confidence by her serenity and obvious capability, thus minimizing fear—one of the chief causes of post-operation shock. Anæsthetization does not prevent the mind from working. Apparently in operations as in other things courage is an asset. The individual to some extent controls his fate. For the layman



speed in operation work is an interesting subject. Is it better to be cut up quickly or slowly? Presumably, other things being equal, speed is an advantage. But surgeons will tell you that speed depends not only upon mechanical celerity but also upon knowing what to look for and where to look.

It must be confessed that, unlike many other surgeons, she was not lyrical about her work. She did not contribute much to surgical literature. So far as I can discover; she wrote only two articles: "Abdomino-Perineal Excision of the Rectum by a New Method" ("British Medical Journal," 19th December, 1903) and "Pain as a Symptom of Pelvic Trouble" (Fairbairn's "Practical Encyclopædia of Midwifery and Diseases of Women, 1918").

She also read an important paper on "Hysterec-tomies for Cancer of the Cervix" at the Meeting of the British Medical Association at Leicester in July, 1905, and another on "Cancer of the Breast treated by Operation" to the St. Mary's Hospital Medical Society on 10th November, 1920. Both display great industry and attention to detail. After resigning from the E.G.A. she intended to devote her spare time to writing a review of her surgical work, with results as far as they could be ascertained, but after her operation in 1924 she never had sufficient physical strength to carry out the project.

Dame Louisa never made a large professional income. She charged full fees to those who could

afford them, having no sympathy with the patient who will gladly pay several hundred pounds for a fur coat and grudge a hundred guineas for an operation on which her life depends. But most of her patients were not well-to-do, being women earning their own living, and these were charged very moderate fees.

Dame Louisa was an expert in hospital management. She was one of the two first medical women appointed to visit hospitals applying for grants from King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, and in 1925 became a member of the General Council. During her eight years' service she visited twenty-one separate hospitals and her reports were said to be models of what such reports should be.

She took an active part in managing the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, and her practical knowledge of hospital requirements was of great value when the institution was enlarged. She displayed the keenest interest in the preparation and settlement of the extension plans and herself purchased the site needed in 1919.

## CHAPTER IV

**M**ISS ALDRICH-BLAKE was fond of general reading of the sort in vogue during the serious 'seventies and 'eighties. Here again she resembled her father. Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Dr. Arnold, Carlyle, were her favourite authors.

The opening address delivered at the London (R.F.H.) School of Medicine for Women in 1900, sets forth her philosophy. It is a remarkable disclosure of a virile personality. Let her speak for herself.

“The fact of joining a profession gives at once a definite field of duty, an objective for our thought, purposes and hopes, which is in itself a virtual repose.

“The development and subsequent exercise of any faculty which we possess, must add to our possibilities of real pleasure, for there are few, I believe, who will not agree that the doing of those things which we can honestly feel we do with increasing facility, does give pleasure.

“One of the particular advantages of the medical

profession as a field for our energies is the *very large* number of faculties which *may*, and the considerable number which *must* be cultivated in order that we may be even passable disciples of that Science and Art.

“Every good quality, whether of *character* or of *intellect*, can find material whereon to exercise itself in the daily life of any but the merest automatic machine of a doctor, if indeed such a machine could exist.

“*Intellect* and *character*—there are the two great influences which we bring to bear on the work which we do through life, and of the two, those who have had the best opportunity of judging, in the medical profession at any rate, consider that the influence of character on the career is the greater.

“By character one means the sum of those qualities of courage, energy, thoroughness and truth, which are given to some in greater measure than to others, but which we must all do our utmost to increase in ourselves if we wish to do and to be the best that is possible for us.

“Courage in attacking difficulties, energy to overcome them, thoroughness to do our best with each thing we undertake, and through all Truth, which includes habits of accurate thinking as well as those of right speaking and dealing, all these are especially needed in our after-life and must be cultivated by every means we can devise.

“Since my position for the moment gives me complete freedom from contradiction, I shall use that liberty to consider that we are all agreed as to the extreme importance, both for the individual and the school, of the formation of right habits or customs of work and life as students of medicine.

“The influence of students on one another is far greater than that which can possibly be exercised by the constituted authorities, and there is no escaping from the responsibility devolving on each one of you, to do her share to make the spirit of this place worthy of its greater body.

“The spirit that we want in order that each may do the best work that is in her, is something of that hardy nature which looks upon obstacles as things to be battled with, while the most disastrous certainly is, that weak, I could almost call it mean spirit, which grumbles at difficulties and trials it has not pluck enough to attack and overcome.

“Dr. Arnold has said: ‘With regard to one’s work I suppose the desirable feeling to entertain is always to expect to succeed and never to think you have succeeded.’

“Without the stimulus of hope, work with most of us is apt to be a very half-hearted sort of thing. Humility is a virtue, and perhaps the surprises of life are less apt to take the pleasant form for those whose estimate of their own worth is great, than for those whose estimate is small; but beware of that humility which would paralyse honest effort.

I should suspect it of being the outer garment of mental laziness.

“The second half of Dr. Arnold’s sentence, ‘never to think you have succeeded,’ is certainly quite as important. If one reads the lives of great men, either of our own or of any other profession, the thing that strikes one most about them is the enormous energy with which they pursue their work, one thing leading on to another. In our own small way, we can never get the best that is possible out of our lives, without the exercise of some measure of that same energy, prompted by the conviction that anything attained is only an opportunity to do something further.

“You are preparing for a profession in which learning must continue as long as life lasts; in which self-instruction and self-reliance are absolutely essential. Therefore cultivate them from the very beginning, for as Herbert Spencer has said, ‘It is not the knowledge stored up as intellectual fat which is of value, but that which has been converted into intellectual muscle.’

“No one is more conscious than I am of the value and in fact the absolute necessity of good teaching, for the ground to be gone over is wide and ever increasing. But mere recipients of knowledge do not acquire the power of attacking new subjects on their own account. The difference between being educated and being crammed is that while the former presupposes active participation and

the development of the power of observing facts, reflecting on them and drawing correct inferences from them, the latter consists of receiving and retaining as best you may a quantity of predigested mental nutriment. This, like other predigested products, can only be indicated in abnormal mental states, resulting, I should suspect, from previous neglect of the regular mental meals.

“The number of classes and demonstrations is such that I often think the only fear is lest students should lose sight of the fact that they have to learn as well as to be taught; lest they might feel that responsibility for their ignorance of any subject rests on other shoulders than their own. I am glad to believe they do not think so and I trust they never will.

“The medical course is accurately mapped out. You are obliged to follow it; but the liberty of doing or not doing your individual best with each subject as it comes before you always remains.

“Do learn your anatomy, physiology, etc., because you know that your after work requires that knowledge, not merely because a heartless body called the ‘General Medical Council’ has decreed that an examination in those subjects must be got through somehow.

“Both at the School and afterwards at the Hospital cultivate by every means at your disposal habits of patient accurate observation. Remember that making a diagnosis does not mean the mere fitting

of a disease with its name. What you need is a just view of the condition present in the part diseased, in the patient as a whole, and also an estimate of the effect of his surroundings. You must get this view in a greater or less degree in order that you may have any sort of rational basis for treatment.

“The power of really seeing what we look at is perhaps one of the rarest of gifts.

“Sir James Paget once said that it would be an interesting and instructive book if some one would write, not a history of discovery, but a history of oversights, things that have been under men’s feet, plainly before their eyes, and have been absolutely overlooked. He says: ‘We never pass a month, never a week, without finding observations made, discoveries made, by persons at work in the same field that we are, or suppose ourselves to be, at work. And why do we not see these things? Surely that these persons should have seen them clearly and that a crowd of others should not have observed them all, must be proof that the crowd was very careless or very idle, or really it was proof that observation is very difficult and not to be acquired except by the most careful study and self-discipline.’

“Take all the occasions possible of finding out how far your knowledge is your own by putting in a due appearance at all class examinations. Having to write upon a subject teaches one more surely



than anything else how vague and indistinct are many of the impressions which one took for knowledge. Without exalting examinations and the passing of them into the position which should be occupied by 'the desire to know,' it is a practical point that they have to be passed, and also that the more frequently we practise a thing in the small, the more likely we are to keep our wits about us when the test comes to the large. That keeping of our wits about us is a most valuable quality—one that we cannot do too much to gain. Without presence of mind we cannot make half of our knowledge available. From the very beginning of any public career one must school oneself to look upon nervousness as a disability one must do one's utmost to conquer. For those whose temperament makes them need this discipline most, the process is a very unpleasant one. I suppose the first step is to look it straight in the face as an enemy, for when the enemy suggests that we should avoid certain paths on account of the difficulties that may beset us, we are less likely to take the suggestion than if it comes from what we regard as a life companion, without which we know we should get on better, but which we have more or less taken for granted, and may even consider as a kind of excuse for certain of our failures. Habitual exposure must lessen our susceptibility, for the fact of having previously done things under somewhat similar circumstances gives at any rate a degree

of confidence which without that experience one would have lacked.

“Don’t be too much afraid of making mistakes. We can all be perfectly certain that we shall make mistakes, but unless we are unteachable we shall not make the same ones too often. If, as students, you avoid answering a question because your answer may not meet with approval, you waste a valuable opportunity of getting the correct solution impressed on your mind. I don’t mean mere guessing—I can’t think that of much value as an intellectual exercise. What you want to cultivate is the habit of rapid reasoning, so that your answer, whether right or wrong, has a real basis in your mind. The two chief sources of mistakes are *ignorance* and *carelessness*. If you constantly avoid the latter, the former will to a large extent cure itself. Carelessness in work must be to us the unpardonable sin, thoroughness in its widest sense, our highest aim.

“Whatever we undertake, if not for its own sake then simply because we have undertaken it, is worthy of the best attention we can give it.

“I hope you will forgive me if I speak too strongly upon this subject, but it is one upon which I feel strongly. I think there is a danger, particularly immediately after qualification, that a rightful anxiety to gain experience may prompt some of us to lightly accept a humble post and equally lightly to depart from it, not giving due weight to

the thought which seems to me to lie at the root of all work that is of value, namely that duties we have taken upon ourselves, being alive and well, we must faithfully perform.

“Of course, in this matter as in all others, there is no hard and fast line. Individuals must decide for themselves, but I believe that experience, valuable as it is, if paid for by pieces taken out of a reputation for reliability, will be found in the end to have been dearly bought.

“One end of all instruction is to fit the individual for the work he is to do and the place he has to take. Therefore for us the treatment of the patient is the test of the success of our education.

“When you have completed the student division of your medical career you will none of you imagine that treatment begins and ends with the presentation of a suitable prescription. What I wish to emphasize now is rather the importance of early consideration of your attitude towards the sick as you daily meet them in the Hospital.

“It is inevitable in the early part of Hospital life that one should class patients according to their diseases in order to acquire the necessary knowledge of types. If you are to be as useful as you can be, however, you must remember that you will have to treat an individual—not a type, and that wide knowledge, only to be obtained by real study, of human nature will enable you to do this in the best possible manner.

“It is sometimes said that a scientific student does not make a good doctor. That can only be the case if relying on his pure science he insists on looking at the disease as it were through a microscope, magnifying the morbid portion, and never seeing the human being at all.

“This is not in the least a necessary result of the scientific spirit. Far from it. The fault in such a case comes from want of appreciation of the value of those other many things, not from any real incompatibility between science and that which we might call wisdom.

“Remember always that your primary object is to heal. Never give avoidable pain either by touch, speech or manner.

“I do not for a moment mean that any one of us would be guilty of deliberate unkindness, but it requires the exercise of more thought and self-control than we are sometimes inclined to give to the matter, in order that we may avoid hurting one of the many with whom our duty brings us daily in contact.

“One is obliged to say and do much that gives pain—the more reason never to do so needlessly. However little a patient may be in a position to estimate your intellectual and technical attainments, any one of them can and will appreciate your kindness.

“To be broad-minded—thorough—kind—the saying of it is easy, the doing will last us all our lives !”

I must direct special attention to one phrase, "Truth, which includes habits of accurate thinking as well as those of right speaking and dealing." That was the basis of her character and her life.

As may be judged from this address she was an admirable teacher of the plain practical kind, but not one of those who enliven or goad students by witty sayings or caustic observations.

She continually impressed upon the students the serious nature of the surgeon's responsibility. Every operation, however small, must be regarded as a matter of importance. It might seem a small thing to the surgeon, but it was a big thing for the patient. A surgeon must never allow himself to become indifferent. He must maintain his enthusiasm and ever remember the sacred trust imposed in him by the patient and the community.

Furthermore a surgeon must always try to improve his methods. Others might criticize him, but he should be his own chief critic. Self-criticism was specially necessary regarding everyday operations. A surgeon must never allow himself to get into a groove. She herself had the misfortune of worrying over-much about her surgical work. If she had a serious case on hand she never dismissed it from her mind and was often unable to sleep owing to anxiety. She was continually questioning whether she could do more for the patient.

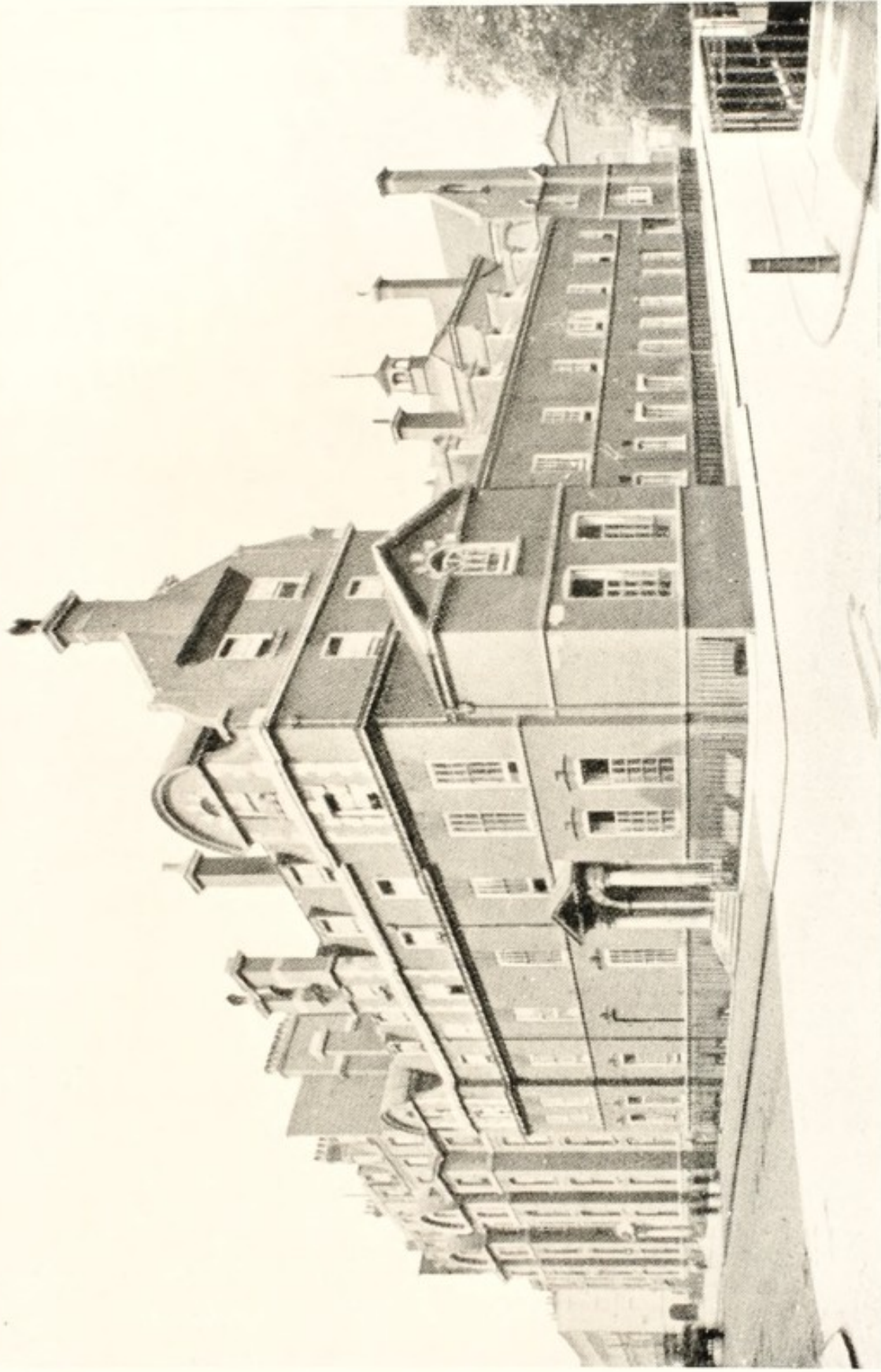
Sanity and moderation were the key-notes of her advocacy of the claims of medical women. I told

her I had heard a lady doctor say on the platform that if she had to choose between a male and female doctor she would employ the latter even if she were inferior. The Dean smiled and remarked, "She would deserve to lose her life. If women have to rely on that point of view it is a bad look-out for them. If women are going to compete with men, they must be equally efficient. Of course I don't mean that the girl who is practising in a suburb must be equal to the President of the Royal College of Physicians. My meaning is that she must possess at least the same degree of skill as male practitioners in her own line, for instance the complaints of women and children. You cannot have two standards of efficiency—the male and the female. The sooner women students get that idea out of their heads, if it is there, the better. We talk too much about competing with men. The real point is to concentrate on your work and to learn to do your job. Why think anything about competition? If you are good at your work, you are certain to succeed, and if you are not, you are certain to fail." In response to this unwonted piece of eloquence, I took leave to remark that when engaged in litigation it is a good maxim to try to win on the strength of your own case rather than on the weakness of your opponent's.

## CHAPTER V

**D**AME LOUISA was best known as Dean of the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women, and will be judged in a great measure by what she did in that capacity. As appears later, she did great things. She was appointed in 1914 and held office until her death. The School, like other London Medical Schools, is affiliated to the London University.

It was founded in 1874, mainly by the efforts of that stormy petrel, Miss Sophia Jex-Blake, to aid the movement to admit women to the medical profession. In 1858, by a lucky chance, Miss Elizabeth Blackwell, a doctor with an American diploma practising in London, had slipped on to the new Medical Register formed under the Medical Registration Act of that year. The Act admitted all doctors in practice at the prescribed date. Miss Blackwell was practising. Therefore she was entitled to be registered. Whether she was a skilful practitioner, I do not know. She was certainly a determined lady of leonine appearance. Seven years later, the brilliant Mrs. Garrett Anderson, then a woman of thirty,



THE LONDON (ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL) SCHOOL OF MEDICINE FOR WOMEN  
HUNTER STREET, LONDON

Founded 1874





conceived the idea that she would like to become a doctor. To fulfil her ambition and procure registration, it was necessary to pass the examinations of one of the examining bodies whose certificates are accepted under the Registration Act. She applied to the Apothecaries' Society to admit her. They were not sure of their powers. Nevertheless, they allowed her to qualify. Then, perceiving the serious issues involved, they took efficient steps to prevent other incursions. Nothing further happened until 1868, when Miss Jex-Blake and five other ladies wished to qualify. They made Edinburgh their battlefield for medical rights. The fight was long and bitter. Eventually in 1874 they retired discomfited to the less hostile atmosphere of London. There they continued the agitation, and with the aid of Mrs. Garrett Anderson, and a number of sympathizers, including Darwin and Huxley, succeeded, in 1877, in securing an Act of Parliament empowering medical examining boards to admit women. The London University immediately exercised their new powers. These privileges were fought for and granted not because there was a widespread demand for medical women, but as a measure of justice to women who wished to earn their living or to render public service as medical practitioners. The emancipation of women was in the air. This was part and parcel of the movement. For practical purposes it remained to be seen whether medical women were wanted,

whether they could successfully compete with men, and whether with the more limited field of practice at their command—they did not wish to treat men except in hospitals or in cases of emergency—they could make medicine a financial success.

These were the problems to be faced by the School. And there was another problem. Was it desirable for women to concentrate on any, and if so, what branches of medicine and surgery?

In 1877 the School was linked up with the Royal Free Hospital for clinical teaching, but for other purposes still retained its own buildings and staff.

Dame Louisa was the fourth Dean. Her predecessors were :

Mr. H. T. Norton (1874–83).

Mrs. Garrett Anderson (1883–1903).

Miss Julia Cock (1903–14).

All three, in his or her day and generation, did splendid work.

There were, however, marked differences between Miss Aldrich-Blake and her predecessors. She was, first, foremost and always, a surgeon. Her main object was to improve the technical education of the students. As a result, while she sympathized with the suffrage campaign, she took little part in it. According to her views, the future of medical women depended upon efficiency and not upon the success or failure of a political movement. The new Dean was an able administrator and spared no

labour in the performance of her duties. But the task was not uncongenial. She enjoyed business and had a passion for committees, which, notwithstanding her autocratic tendencies, never bored or disheartened her—wonderful woman! The committee system has its advantages, but with most of us it tends to damp enthusiasm and to cramp definite and decisive action. Miss Deason, her secretary, tells me that in 1923 the Dean attended 202 Committees, 224 in 1924, and 173 in 1925, besides doing two mornings and two afternoons a week at the E.G.A., one morning and one afternoon a week at the R.F.H. and carrying on her extensive private practice. At committee meetings she had an amusing masculine trick when the discussion waxed fast and furious of pushing her hat to the back of her head. The habit, however, excited no comment. With her it seemed quite a natural thing.

She did a great and lasting service to the School by putting its finances into order. Figures, statistics and Stock Exchange quotations of gilt-edged securities were her delight and recreation. When most busy people would have been playing bridge or reading a novel, nothing pleased her better than to browse amongst figures and statistics. Here again the Reverend Frederic comes upon the scene. He it was who first directed her attention to the pleasures of accountancy.

In 1908 she adopted the novel plan of taking a short course of lessons on this subject. She was

the only woman who attended the classes. Her notes show that she had successfully mastered the mysteries of book-keeping, balance sheets, etc., a remarkable feat for a person of forty with no previous business experience. This proceeding is typical of the woman. Her theory was that you could not do work well unless you thoroughly understood it. No trouble must be spared in qualifying for the task.

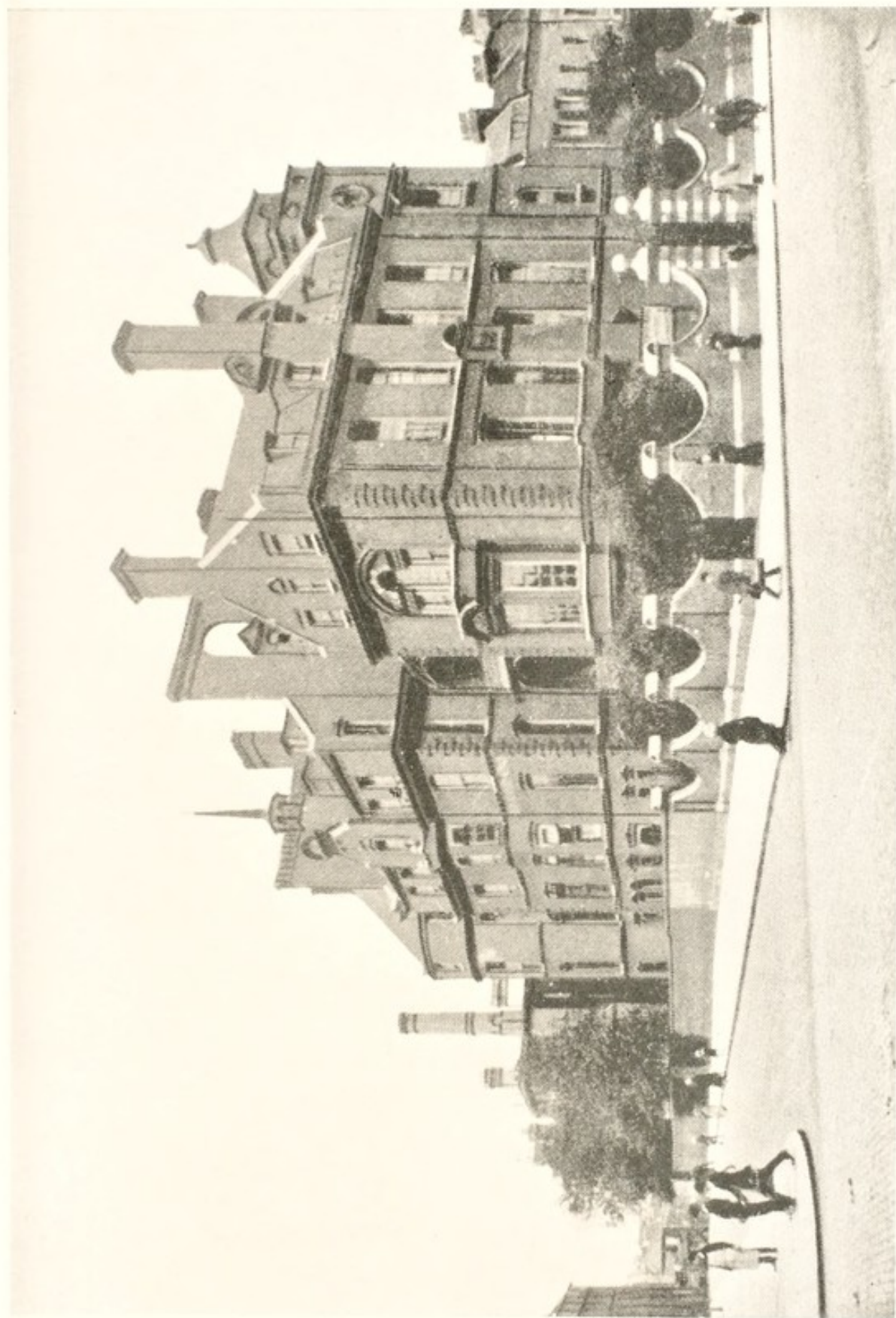
The Dean's gift for business was of great service to the Medical Women's Federation, of which she was Honorary Treasurer. Miss Ivens, the President, says: "Dame Louisa in 1917 took up with zeal and interest the burden of the financial affairs of the Federation, and it is characteristic of her that she left them in a most sound and satisfactory condition. As Honorary Treasurer Dame Louisa exerted a powerful influence on the Executive Committee and Council Meetings of the Federation. Any suggestion coming from her with regard to finance was usually adopted without demur, and her opinion with regard to difficult questions and business arising in Committee carried considerable weight. It was never given hurriedly or without due thought, and her sane outlook and wise counsel will be universally missed. The last meeting of the Executive Committee in December, 1925, was held at her house only a little more than a fortnight before her death. At that meeting she was mentally as alert and lucid as ever."

In business matters Dame Louisa had no illusions. Many people act as if deficits could be reduced by talking and pious aspirations. Dame Louisa was not one of these. She wanted a practical plan, and before expenditure was authorized, required to know how it was to be met.

Considering the sort of woman she was, it is strange that punctuality was not one of her strong points. "By thronging duties pressed," she was often late. She had too much to do, she was not a quick worker and her habit of intense concentration prevented her from noting how time was passing.

The necessity for enlarging the School was a pressing problem. The first section had been completed in 1901, to replace the charming, but inadequate, Georgian house where it commenced its career, and where, by the way, in strange contrast, George IV kept his mistress, Mrs. Fitz-Herbert. In 1909, owing to the influx of students, it became evident that full-time teachers and increased accommodation must be provided. But it was not until the war that anything definite was done beyond preparing the plans. The demand for medical women to fill the places of male doctors serving with the Forces brought about a further rush of students. The Dean threw herself wholeheartedly into the scheme for extending the School. An appeal for funds was issued, signed by Mr. A. J. Balfour, Mr. Asquith and Lord Curzon, enforced by a vigorous campaign in which the Dean took a

leading part, ably assisted by the President, the Hon. F. D. Acland, Miss Brooks, the Warden and Secretary, Dr. May Thorne, Professor Winifred Cullis and others. In spite of difficulties that would have overwhelmed less stout-hearted and determined persons, the building was erected, and opened by the Queen in October 1916. The extension doubled the size of the pre-war School, with a consequent increase of staff and equipment.



THE ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON HOSPITAL, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON  
Founded 1866





## CHAPTER VI

**T**HE war brought manifold duties. Miss Aldrich-Blake's great desire was to serve abroad, but the project, greatly to her disappointment, had to be abandoned, as she realized that there was no one who could adequately fill her place at the School, Royal Free and E.G.A. Most of her time was occupied by surgical work at the two hospitals and administrative work at the School. She also acted as visiting surgeon to the W.A.A.C. Hospital at Isleworth and the Herbert Hospital, Woolwich. In the midst of these activities she mobilized the medical women of the country at the request of the Government. She also took a leading part in equipping the Women's Unit which ultimately settled down near Cherbourg. During the Christmas vacation, 1914, she worked at this Hospital, and spent the following August and September at the Anglo-French Red Cross Hospital, Royaumont, under the charge of Miss Ivens and a staff of British medical women and nurses. While there the Dean did a good deal of operating. In the following year she repeated her visit. The Somme attack in

July had filled the hospital. Cases of gas-gangrene had poured in and the work was strenuous and exhausting. With characteristic energy the Dean applied herself to the work on hand. Her striking personality impressed the patients, who, with true Gallic insight, christened her "Madame la Générale."

## CHAPTER VII

ON taking office the Dean was confronted by new and difficult problems regarding medical education. The long-standing British methods of teaching surgery, medicine and obstetrics by unpaid members of hospital staffs had been severely questioned. In 1913 a Royal Commission on the London University, presided over by Lord Haldane, had recommended that the then existing arrangements should be modified, or rather supplemented. The proposal was that in each of the teaching hospitals certain wards should be allocated to full-time doctors, surgeons and obstetricians, who would be paid by the University and specially charged with the duty of teaching students. By this means it was hoped to combine the British method of teaching at the bedside and in the operating theatre with a professional system, similar to that obtaining in Germany and other countries. After the war, this scheme, known as the "Unit System," was adopted by the authorities and is now in operation. The Dean was strongly in favour of the innovation, but, in common with other eminent members of the pro-

profession, was of opinion that better results would be obtained if the heads of the Units were half-time officials. She considered that professors whose duty it is to teach students how to treat patients in their own homes should have opportunities of keeping in close touch with the necessities of general practice. It remains to be seen whether she was right or wrong. The Dean was anxious that Units should be established at the Royal Free Hospital. This was frustrated by the limited number of beds. There were only 165. In 1914 at the Dean's suggestion plans had been prepared for doubling the number. With his usual generosity, Mr. Alfred Langton, the Chairman, had purchased the land required, but for financial reasons it had been found impossible to complete the scheme. The new buildings would have cost £200,000 and maintenance £50,000 per annum. For some years previously Lady Barrett, a member of the Hospital staff, and now Dean of the School, had been urging with much foresight and energy the necessity for improved teaching methods in midwifery, then, notwithstanding its importance, a much-neglected subject. Few people realized that three babies were being born in the United Kingdom every two minutes and that every nine months there were a million expectant mothers. Fewer still realized the vast amount of unnecessary suffering and ill-health caused to women through unskilful treatment and the inadequate manner in

which students were trained in this branch of medicine. The introduction of the Unit system was an opportunity not to be missed. By the generosity of Mr. Langton and the efforts of Mrs. Kinnell, a member of the Hospital Board, Dr. May Thorne and others the necessary funds were raised. In 1921 the Unit was started under the directorship of Professor Louise McIlroy, M.D. It consists of eighty-three beds and has been a great factor in the campaign for increased attention to midwifery. The R.F.H. Unit was the Dean's pet child. She was proud of it and to the time of her death took the keenest interest in its welfare and success.

Now we are able to sum up Dame Louisa's constructive work as Dean of the School and a member of the governing body of the Royal Free Hospital.

1. She was mainly responsible for doubling the size of the School.

2. She took a leading part in increasing the number of beds at the Royal Free Hospital from 165 to 248, thus improving the status and usefulness of the institution.

3. She took a leading part in founding the Midwifery Unit, and with Lady Barrett and Professor McIlroy was largely responsible for its success.

These solid achievements justify the claim that the Dean contributed far more than her quota to the "stream of effort" that Bergson tells us constitutes humanity.

In the battle concerning the site for the new London University buildings the Dean was keenly interested. She was a strong advocate for Bloomsbury, and with characteristic thoroughness prepared with her own hand an elaborate diagram explaining the advantages of her favourite. The diagram shows the students resident in the various districts and the means of access to Bloomsbury. Whether it was ever used I do not know.

The impression the Dean made on the outside world is well described by Sir Humphry Rolleston, a former President of the Royal College of Physicians. He remarked, when she died :

“ Since the war I was constantly meeting her at Committees as representing her School, and occasionally in her capacity of surgeon. As Dean of the London School of Medicine for Women, and so an ambassador of women doctors, she wisely bided her time, but, when she did speak, was admirable in her quiet, conciliatory, and therefore convincing way of expressing an opinion which was presented with modesty, reserve and dignity. Her attractive personality—the outward index of her inward and spiritual grace—added in no small degree to her efficiency both as a guiding and controlling influence inside her School and as its representative in the wider sphere of medical London. Her professional help was valuable not only for its accuracy and technique, but for its sound common sense and

human outlook. Much as she achieved as a surgeon, it is rather her devoted service to the cause of the medical education and status of women doctors that must be uppermost in the minds of her colleagues and pupils, who will long bear her memory in grateful recollection. She did a great work."

Sir Humphry was right. She had a judicial mind. Accurate thinking was her strong point. She would have made an excellent judge. She took a real pleasure in balancing arguments. Jealousy, self-interest and prejudice never affected her. According to Aristotle, wisdom does not depend upon knowledge alone, but also upon intuition. Some are born wise and others are not. Dame Louisa was an outstanding example of the former type. I think she was the most disinterested person I have met. Dr. Phear well described her when he said, "Dame Louisa was one of those rare and noble characters for whom self-interest counts as nothing. She was indifferent to worldly success." I once inquired how she succeeded in being so disinterested. She gave this characteristic answer: "Never having been compelled to earn my living, I have been freed from the strivings that inevitably beset the lives of most professional people." The explanation may be incomplete, but it is worth attention.

The Dean was a generous giver, on what may be called Manchester School lines, always glad to



support any deserving case or person. That gave her real pleasure. But her view of life was summed up in the famous hymn :

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high or lowly  
And ordered their estate.

To her, as to many others of her class, this scheme of things seemed inevitable. Though full of kindness and personal generosity she could not understand what it was like to live on 30s. a week. Labour was a commodity, to be paid for at market prices like everything else, even in a public or charitable institution. The Scottish uncle who made the family fortunes seemed to put forth a ghostly finger when such questions came up for discussion. Nevertheless, the beggar at the door had a sympathetic listener if he caught Dame Louisa's attention. Ingenious stories, displaying a knowledge of Herefordshire, frequently produced the railway fare necessary to enable the relator to return to this sacred district.

Instinctively she had no sympathy with trade unionism, but her logical mind was perplexed by this syllogism :

All Trade Unions are to be condemned.

The British Medical Association is a Trade Union.

Therefore the British Medical Association is to be condemned.

How could she condemn a society that had done so much for doctors, and was not she herself a member? Perhaps, when all was said, working people were entitled to combine for their own advantage, just as much as professional men and women.

The Dean was not a quick thinker and was slow and sometimes tedious in expressing herself. The right word was often long in coming, and sometimes she gave the impression that she was seeking not only for words but for ideas. As she herself said, when asked by her nephew Nevill if she was fluent in German, "I am afraid I am not very fluent in any language." Nevertheless she had the gift of going to the heart of a subject, and when she had finished one felt that she had picked out the essentials and made a valuable contribution to the discussion.

Her achievements, character, dignity and example, made her an ideal head of a great educational institution for women. The welfare of the students was her constant thought, and the ovations which greeted her when she rose to speak at the Jubilee Dinner at the Guildhall in 1924 and at the Royal Free Hospital Dinner in 1925, showed how she was loved and esteemed. She kept a hold on all their activities and rarely missed a students' meeting or entertainment.

Like other gifted people, she had the defects of her qualities. Her inclination was to work alone and to do too much herself. She liked to attend to every detail, and by temperament found it

difficult to be communicative. She had no sympathy with sentimentality. She likewise lacked the vivacity and sparkle that arouse the emotions of an audience. In short she had none of the arts of the demagogue.

In January 1925 the King made her a Dame of the Order of the British Empire. She was the second woman doctor to receive this distinction. The honour brought many congratulations and gave her much pleasure. The cordial messages received from male colleagues in the profession gave her special gratification.

Amongst others Lord Dawson wrote :

“It is an honour not only to yourself but to the whole profession.”

Sir Thomas Barlow :

“It is the year-in and year-out work that tells and one rejoices when the recognition comes at the zenith.”

Sir George Makins :

“May I offer my hearty congratulations on the recognition of your splendid work. . . . Our profession generally will appreciate the honour done to you and your School.”

Sir Frederick Mott :

“I wish to offer you sincere congratulations,



*Photo. Lafayette*

1912



conscious as I am of the great work you have done in surgery and in the advancement of the Medical School for Women to the very high position it now holds.”

Sir George Blacker :

“ I am glad that all the work you have done for the profession and for medical education should have received some recognition.”

Sir Donald MacAlister :

“ Will you allow me to offer my hearty congratulations and good wishes on your high distinction ? ”

Sir Arbuthnot Lane :

“ It was with the greatest pleasure that I saw your name in the Honours List. Your position in the profession is such a very strong one that no title can do adequate justice to your merits. I trust you will never give up your work. Good people are scarce, and no one in the profession is more esteemed and respected than you are. You are a great example.”

Other friends were no less appreciative. Dame Mary Scharlieb wrote :

“ You have done much to carry out the admirable work so ably begun by Julia Cock, and every

member of the School, official, staff and students, ought to be, and are, profoundly grateful to you for your self-sacrificing labours."

Sir Cooper Perry, of the University of London :

"I am very glad you have got your D.B.E. Having this occasion to congratulate you, may I take the opportunity of saying how much I have been impressed by the careful reports you have written on your Hospital Inspections for the King's Fund."

Lady Barrett :

"Your honour is a delight to us all. There is no one for whom we have more desired it."

Colonel Clive Wigram :

"For your wonderful services to the Empire and to the women of this country you have deserved recognition many times over."

Miss Margaret Tuke, Principal of Bedford College :

"I congratulate you most warmly, and still more the Government for its wisdom."

Sir William Plender :

"It is a great delight to your many friends that a life of unselfishness and sacrifice for the good of others should be so recognized."

Miss Garrett Anderson, M.D. :

“No one ever deserved recognition more. You have given ungrudging, wonderful service to medical women at the E.G.A., the R.F.H. and above all, at the School.”

Some of her friends indulged in the hope that she would be appointed one of the Queen's surgeons. Probably tradition was too strong to permit of such an innovation.



## CHAPTER VIII

**I**T may be asked, What religious opinions formed the basis of her life? The answer is difficult. She was not self-revealing. But on one occasion when talking to a friend she took out of a drawer a beautifully-bound copy of Sir Edwin Arnold's "Song Celestial," opened it at Chapter XII and said rather shyly, "This is my idea of religion." Chapter XII reads :<sup>1</sup>

*Arjuna.* Lord! Of the men who serve Thee—  
true in heart—

As God revealed; and of the men who serve,  
Worshipping Thee Unrevealed, Unbodied, Far,  
Which take the better way of faith and life?

*Krishna.* Whoever serve Me—as I show Myself—  
Constantly true, in full devotion fixed,  
Those hold I very holy. But who serve—  
Worshipping Me The One, The Invisible,  
The Unrevealed, Unnamed, Unthinkable,  
Uttermost, All-pervading, Highest, Sure—

<sup>1</sup> "The Song Celestial," or "Bhagavad-Gita," translated from the Sanskrit text by Sir Edwin Arnold. Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. 1s. 6d. net. The above is reproduced by their kind permission.

Who thus adore Me, mastering their sense,  
Of one set mind to all, glad in all good,  
These blessed souls come unto Me.

Yet, hard

The travail is for such as bend their minds  
To reach th' Unmanifest. That viewless path  
Shall scarce be trod by man bearing the flesh !  
But whereso any doeth all his deeds  
Renouncing self for Me, full of Me, fixed  
To serve only the Highest, night and day  
Musing on Me—him will I swiftly lift  
Forth from life's ocean of distress and death,  
Whose soul clings fast to Me. Cling thou to Me !  
Clasp Me with heart and mind ! so shalt thou dwell  
Surely with Me on high. But if thy thought  
Droops from such height ; if thou be'st weak to set  
Body and soul upon Me constantly,  
Despair not ! give Me lower service ! seek  
To reach Me, worshipping with steadfast will ;  
Work for Me, toil in works pleasing to Me !  
For he that laboureth right for love of Me  
Shall finally attain ! But, if in this  
Thy faint heart fails, bring Me thy failure ! find  
Refuge in Me ! let fruits of labour go,  
Renouncing hope for Me, with lowliest heart,  
So shalt thou come ; for, though to know is more  
Than diligence, yet worship better is  
Than knowing, and renouncing better still.  
Near to renunciation—very near—  
Dwelleth Eternal Peace !

Who hateth nought

Of all which lives, living himself benign,  
 Compassionate, from arrogance exempt,  
 Exempt from love of self, unchangeable  
 By good or ill; patient, contented, firm  
 In faith, mastering himself, true to his word,  
 Seeking Me, heart and soul; vowed unto Me—  
 That man I love! Who troubleth not his kind,  
 And is not troubled by them; clear of wrath;  
 Living too high for gladness, grief, or fear,  
 That man I love! Who, dwelling quiet-eyed,  
 Stainless, serene, well-balanced, unperplexed,  
 Working with Me, yet from all works detached,  
 That man I love! Who, fixed in faith on Me,  
 Dotes upon none, scorns none; rejoices not,  
 And grieves not, letting good or evil hap  
 Light when it will, and when it will depart,  
 That man I love! Who, unto friend and foe  
 Keeping an equal heart, with equal mind  
 Bears shame and glory; with an equal peace  
 Takes heat and cold, pleasure and pain, abides  
 Quit of desires, hears praise or calumny  
 In passionless restraint, unmoved by each;  
 Linked by no ties to earth, steadfast in Me,  
 That man I love! But most of all I love  
 Those happy ones to whom 'tis life to live  
 In single fervid faith and love unseeing,  
 Drinking the blessed Amrit of my Being!

This probably expresses her views. She never

wavered in her allegiance to the Church of England, although in later years not a regular attendant. It is, however, doubtful whether her beliefs were what are called orthodox—not that I imagine she had renounced orthodox Christianity as untenable. It is rather that she had never possessed or assimilated it. Creeds and dogmas did not appeal to her. Her beliefs seemed to be in the wisdom and mercy of the Almighty and in the necessity for living a righteous life. During our brief sojourn on earth we must love our God, our fellow-man and our work and we must be humble. On these principles she acted, and not unsuccessfully. So far as I can discover, she never did a mean, unkind or unjust thing. Such mistakes as she made were due to lack of knowledge and not to wrong intentions. Furthermore her convictions, whatever they may have been, enabled her to face the great crisis of her life with rare equanimity. What more can be required of any religious beliefs?

## CHAPTER IX

**D**AME LOUISA was fond of aphorisms, and had a habit of recording those that appealed to her on stray scraps of paper. Occasionally she wrote out little aphorisms on her own account. The contents of these scraps of paper are illuminating. Like her speech to the students they show what sort of woman she was—what she believed in and what she aimed for. This is the last one she wrote :

“ Why do we hate one another ? Why all this temper and scorn, spite and cruelty ? Man wants to do right—almost every man and woman alive. And the rules are so simple—fidelity, unselfishness, loving-kindness, humility—but we can't manage them except in little spurts. It seems to me so simple now—love of man, love of God, love of work—humility, because the time is so short, and we are all so weak.”

Here are some of the others :

No man can produce great things who is not thoroughly sincere in dealing with himself.

Nobility in a friend who is far above us in mind and spirit may make a man aware, by the discovery of much that both have in common, of like possibilities in himself and thus give both motive and help for the work of developing them—Humble and unsparing of himself.

Genius might be described as the higher efficiency, differing from ordinary efficiency not only in being indefinably greater, but also because it works along different lines.

Lower efficiency results of long effort. Higher is a gift and does the right thing rightly without exactly knowing why.

Another side of genius is the power of changing the environment with the man—and to say whether it consists in something in the man himself or in something which he finds and realizes around him.

It is said of the Christians of the early second century, because they acknowledged the goodness of God towards them, therefore on account of them there flows forth the beauty that is in the world.

“The more intellectual people are,” says Pascal, “the more originality they see in other men. To common-place people all men are much alike.”

To conquer circumstances by the development of an internal force.

Suppression of self is always the condition of true self-realization.

For the man who wants to serve, there is no lack of opening; but he will be going in, not to get but to give, and to give himself.

The Faith which is willing to face the impossible is itself the appointed means of achieving it.

Be noble and the nobleness that lies  
In other men, sleeping but never dead,  
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own.

To know the true, to see the beautiful, to be united in spirit with the good, this is its own reward.

All service rendered to the community, all useful and true work is honourable and it is not made dishonourable because money is taken for doing it, it is dishonourable and dishonest if the work is bad.

Blessed is he who has found his work, let him ask no other blessedness—and the wealth of a man is the number of things which he loves and blesses and which he is loved and blessed by.

Moral genius is but the innate, or acquired power of feeling more sensitively with or for other people, of making wider, deeper, more vivid connections.

Personality is strong with the strength of the idea behind the man.

“To make some nook of God’s creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God. To make some human heart a little wiser, manfuller, happier, more blessed, less accursed. It is work for a God.”

To work well is in itself success, the opposite alone is failure.

I will conclude with her favourite saying from Marcus Aurelius, “Evil hurts none but the doer.”



## CHAPTER X

**D**AME LOUISA, as might be expected, was not a gad-about. From 1887 to 1896 with a short break she lived at College Hall, Byng Place, W.C. In 1896 she rented the Georgian house, No. 17, Nottingham Place, W.1, and there she remained during the rest of her life. Like other abodes of the medical profession Nottingham Place always strikes me as a dull and uninspiring thoroughfare, but I doubt whether it impressed her in this way. Her town surroundings did not seem to affect her. She was self-contained. For many years she lived alone, but in 1915 her friend Miss Rosamond Wigram joined her, and thereafter they kept house together, but on an unusual plan. Each went her own way, and neither lady ever asked the other where she had been or what she had been doing. As the Dean remarked to me, the observance of this rule would avoid many breaches between friends who live together. The partnership meant much to Dame Louisa. It provided her with a loved and congenial companion, and brought fresh interest into her life. As she said when writing to Miss Mitford, "Rosamond's

presence in the house is an abiding joy." The establishment was certainly made brighter by the presence of a lady who was not preoccupied with professional cares. In later years, the Dean was fond of a little small talk. In her grave way she liked to hear about the latest fashions, the theatre, picture galleries, or the doings of her friends and acquaintances. Her own style of attire was of the simplest kind—a loosely-fitting dark blue dress reaching to the ankle, with a collar and a touch of the old-fashioned waistline, low-heeled shoes, a loose, dark-blue circular cloak and a hat which suited her, but which defied all feminine attempts to fix its period.

She had numerous pockets in her coat and skirt, in which she packed away her requirements for the day—a neat little packet of papers for her various appointments—a stethoscope—her latch-key—a pocket-comb—her loose money—pennies in one pocket, silver in another, and notes in a third. The thing required was always produced at a moment's notice. The pockets seemed endless, but so far as I know, no one ever had the temerity to ask how many there were.

In early womanhood and middle age she was tall, being some 5 feet 7 inches in height, well-made, and powerful-looking, but later on developed a slight stoop, due no doubt to the long hours she spent at the operating table.

When crossing from Cherbourg to Southampton

during the war, she spent most of her time on the bridge with the captain. There was a bad storm and the ship pitched and tossed. Relating his experiences the captain said: "She was a fine sailor, fearing nought. The heave of the ship threw her on me and I caught her in my arms. She was a hefty armful!"

Sir William Orpen's portrait gives an accurate idea of her dignified bearing, well-formed head, rather florid complexion and steadfast, kindly eyes. She looked what she was—an English lady. As Miss Brooks happily describes her, "a thoroughbred." She was essentially English—English in habits, character and point of view. Her devotion to country life, her steadiness, her solidity, her sense of justice, her benevolent outlook, her deliberation, her thoroughness, her modesty and it may be added her obliviousness of things she did not understand, were all notable English qualities. Indeed, she was a fine type of the class from which she came.

With strangers she was reserved and distant, and lacked the art in which Frenchwomen excel of keeping the conversational ball rolling. Consequently casual acquaintances found conversation difficult. It takes two to converse. The first time I met her was at a public dinner some years ago. She was gracious but frigid. I tried various topics without response. Then, by a stroke of good fortune, I mentioned the beauties of the Usk and

Wye. Her manner changed. She spoke with fervour of the glorious sunsets on the Wye and of its beauties in the clear light of early morning. After that we talked freely.

As with many busy people who love their work, her occupations were all-engrossing. She was hospitable, and had kindly thoughts for absent friends, but for the most part no time for the amenities of friendship. Except for brief periods she never idled. Indeed she much resembled a stately frigate, which rarely furls its sails or diverges from its course. Friends and relatives might come and go, the most alluring invitations might be received, but the daily routine must be observed, the hospitals and the School must be visited, the day's work must be done, not only from a sense of duty but because of ingrained habit and natural inclination. Continuity was one of her assets. Except at holiday times she was ever intent upon her work. Year in and year out she persisted in her task. She, however, had the gift of enjoying her times off. Among birds, animals, trees, flowers and green fields she could forget her work, and at holiday times had no fancy for serious conversation. She preferred a little quiet fun. Although not humorous herself she enjoyed other people's jokes and good-humoured chaff.

The Dean loved young people and took the keenest interest in their doings, particularly in those of her nephews and their friends.

Captain Maurice Jeakes, one of her nephews, says :

“The number of things she thought of to do for you were countless, and she always seemed to think of the very things you wanted most. Nothing was too much trouble for her. On one occasion when a Sandhurst cadet who had had supper with her one Sunday missed his train, she herself drove him to Sandhurst. This was done when her health had begun to fail, and is a typical example of her thoughtlessness of self where others were concerned. Her generosity was wonderful, and every gift she gave me was something I really wanted to possess. She always thought it out beforehand. One wonders how she found the time.”

If the careful selection of appropriate gifts is an unmistakable sign of affectionate regard, Dame Louisa excelled in this respect in her dealings not only with her nephews but with all her friends.

She was a “Times” reader of the old-fashioned type. Every day she ploughed through it from start to finish. She began at breakfast and finished after dinner. Then she took a nap and after that worked until 12.30 or 1 a.m. “Punch” was another of her pleasures. She read and enjoyed every inch of it. Most of her evenings were devoted to professional or official work.

Much is said and written about the disabilities of professional women. An orator remarked recently that no woman should be expected to do the work of two women, by which she meant that a woman who works should not be called on to perform domestic duties. Unlike most professional women, Dame Louisa was never troubled by housekeeping, although she took a keen interest in the management of her home, ordering the weekly supplies with unfailing regularity. Her wants were moderate, and she was not hampered by the need for small economies. Also she was the sort of person who gathers an efficient and devoted staff. She possessed the sort of domestic *camaraderie* that servants rejoice in. She was the dignified, just, generous, considerate chief, and they were her *aides de camp*. Her faithful maid, Florence Small, for instance, was with her for twenty-five years.

It must be admitted that she had not much literary skill. Her mind was not of that sort. She could enunciate moral truths in a plain rugged fashion, or she could state facts clearly, but her letters lacked vivacity and fluency. They were more like the letters of a plain practical man than those of a woman. Few personal letters have been preserved. What a unique situation for the biographer of a woman! Fifty years of active intellectual life and practically no correspondence for the biographer to grapple with!

Her motor-car was a great joy. She often drove herself, and alone. Being a skilled mechanic, road troubles had no terrors. On a free Sunday in company with Miss Wigram she delighted in a long country drive with a wayside lunch. She was a careful driver, but, true to early sporting instincts, not a slow one.

The following little story is characteristic :

A sister of a nursing home where she sent patients told a friend that on a wet afternoon she saw Miss Aldrich-Blake pass the window on her way to the front door. Sister wondered why she was so long in ringing the bell. On going to the door she found Miss Aldrich-Blake leaning over the gutter conferring with a small boy, who was trying to sail a boat made out of a piece of flat wood and a match.

Like most people with mathematical minds—or perhaps it was a throw-back to the musical Vice-Chancellor—Dame Louisa was fond of music. Church music made a special appeal to her.

She delighted in Wagner. When she visited Dresden in 1887 she wrote to her friend, Miss Lefroy, now Mrs. Owen :

“ The Opera House is one of the best in Germany, and the orchestra the best. I have seen eleven operas, six by Wagner. I never imagined anything like them. They are perfectly marvellous. The orchestral part seems to tell you almost more than

the words. Don't say that it is because my knowledge of the language is small, for, though that remark is true, yet before going to hear an opera, I always spend my spare time for two days reading it up, with a dictionary, not a crib, and by this means I really do understand what I hear. Those I heard were 'Tannhauser,' 'The Meistersinger,' and the four which make up the cycle of the 'Nibelungen Ring,' 'Rheingold,' 'Walkure,' 'Siegfried' and 'Gotterdammerung.' That last means 'Twilight of the Gods'—nothing worse. . . . There is another Wagner at the end of this week, so I shan't start till after that. . . . Really to enjoy Wagner's operas properly you ought to know them well, as every person in them has his or her own particular air, as do also any special place or thing. In the 'Gotterdammerung' there were often four distinct motives all going at the same time, combined in the most wonderful manner. It is very tiring to listen to, especially for the first time, but very, very lovely."

In a quiet sedate fashion the Dean enjoyed the ceremonial part of her duties. She liked the public dinners and was not averse to making a speech. Her powers of public speaking developed greatly during the last ten years of her life. Though she had neither wit nor eloquence she often turned a neat phrase and her sincerity and well-bred demeanour were of immense service to professional



women as a whole. Her last speech at a public dinner is typical. It was made at the Colchester Oyster Feast in October 1925 in response to a Toast "Women in Public Life" proposed by Lord Ullswater.

Dame Louisa Aldrich-Blake, in a brief response, said that work had been her greatest pleasure in life and it was a great joy to her to feel that in these times the opportunities for training women for useful service had been so greatly advanced. Work was the most desirable thing in life, and she looked forward to the time when there would be less distinction between men's work and women's work and that the qualification regarded as essential would be fitness and inclination, whether they happened to be men or women.



*Photo J. Russell & Sons*

1924



## CHAPTER XI

THE Dean was not a great traveller, but would have travelled more if her life had made this possible. Shortly before taking her degree, she spent a holiday in Greece and Italy with Miss Brodrick, who was doing research work there. Miss Brodrick says :

“ We squeezed into a fortnight an almost incredible amount of sightseeing, including the Greek Easter ceremonies and the Easter Monday dancing at Megaera. We went on to Corinth, Nauplia and that wonderful theatre at Epidaurus which in those days was only reached with difficulty. Tyrrhena, Mycaene and Argos we saw, and to our great joy we managed to get to Olympia and to see the Hermes of Praxiteles in his own home. We then went back to Athens and drove down the gorgeous pass of Daphnae to Eleusis, and after a few more days took a boat to Corfu, then looking its loveliest. From Corfu we went to Rome, and from there Dame Louisa had to return to work. It was during this holiday, by the way, that for the first and only time I saw her really ‘scrimmaged,’ and that was under circumstances

which everyone will allow called for rapid action. It was in an out-of-the-way village in Greece which we had reached late the night before, and the only shelter we could obtain was of the roughest and dirtiest description. I was awakened soon after 5 a.m. by a very peremptory and somewhat agitated order to 'get up *at once*, the wall is moving!' Opening a sleepy eye I saw to my horror a brown army marching in close order up the wall near my bed. Needless to say we were both of us dressed and out in the street in double-quick time.

"She had planned to come out to me for a winter on the Nile as she was very keen to see—not the temples and tombs and mummies of the ancient Pharaohs—but the diseases which are especially Egyptian. That was one of those delightful Spanish castles which are reared but never inhabited."

In 1923 Miss Aldrich-Blake went with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Aldrich-Blake, and her three boys, and Miss Wigram to the Dolomites. Miss Wigram says :

"No one enjoyed the time more than Louisa. Her knowledge of mountains gained by her time in Switzerland came to the fore when she planned the many expeditions, mostly on foot, which occupied whole days out. She never lost her bearings and seemed to know exactly what we should see at every turn. It gave her enormous pleasure to point out the finest pieces of scenery to her nephews, almost as though she had visited

the places before, though they were new to all of us. The two days spent in Verona on the way home were different. She knew little of Italian towns, but equally enjoyed being shown the sights as she had enjoyed showing the mountains to us."

Miss Aldrich-Blake had for some time wanted to see the American hospitals, and in August 1919; finding that Miss Martindale, M.D.; was arranging to go, she joined forces with her and they travelled together. Unhappily, with one exception, Miss Aldrich-Blake did not preserve a record of her impressions.

The trip lasted about six weeks. They visited New York, Washington, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Rochester, Cleveland, Toronto, and New London. They inspected numerous hospitals and saw many medical and surgical lions, including the Mayos, Mr. Harvey Cushing, Dr. Howard Kelly, Dr. Hunner, Dr. Crile and others.

Miss Martindale writes :

"Miss Aldrich-Blake was a delightful companion; often silent she would, when once she started, talk by the hour. She enjoyed everything. She loved the sea and the ship, and the wonderful atmospheric effects, and I think the fact that she had travelled so little enhanced the pleasure. But her absolute satisfaction with her own country was intensely obvious, and the rather dreary fields and

landscape between Liverpool and London seemed to be in her eyes real beauty.

“She said, ‘It is the fact that one mayn’t take longer than a limited number of weeks for one’s holiday that makes the holiday so precious. It would mean nothing to us if we had not our real work to go back to.’”

The only written record of the tour left by Dame Louisa is a description of Rochester, where the famous Mayos have their wonderful clinic.

“Rochester calls itself a city, but it is quite a little place, a few brick and stone houses (besides the Hospital); all the rest are little wooden buildings plumped down in a plot of grass. Never any walls, or hedges, or gardens—just a road between grass plots. To-day near here there is one of these houses being moved on huge baulks of timber on rollers, apparently to be put down somewhere else.

“The surgery at the Hospital is wonderfully organized and very good on the whole and quite justifiable and wise, but it is wholesale. Somehow I think I should soon be sick of the thought of surgery if I lived here long. I really enjoyed watching the work, and there is much to learn, but to have a small town turned into a hospital centre, to which all America goes apparently, makes an awful atmosphere. The hotels are filled with people who have had or are going to have operations, and their husbands, wives or families; and in spite of

the number of beds, the waiting lists seem to be enormous, and it is so far from anywhere that the people settle down to wait their turn. The taxi-drivers ask if you are sick or your friend, and if you are going to have 'Willie' to operate on you or 'Charlie,' and there is not a thing in the place except being ill or getting well again. It is horribly out of proportion."

As the Ancients used to say, "The half is often better than the whole."



## CHAPTER XII

**C**OURAGE was one of Dame Louisa's outstanding qualities. At the end she had need of it. Two years before her death she was stricken with what she knew was a mortal and lingering disease—an illness that might bring with it pain of a ghastly sort which, however, she was spared. The symptoms she recognized only too well. She had treated hundreds of patients who had suffered in the same way. She knew that fate had signed her death-warrant. With characteristic reserve she never discussed the subject with her friends and with characteristic fortitude she dismissed it from her mind and went on with her work, until a few days before her death. The last and perhaps the greatest of her achievements was the self-conquest that enabled her to bow to the inevitable without bitterness. Although she became thin and drawn, few of those who met her realized how ill she was. The end came swiftly. She attended and spoke at the opening of the Maternity Centre at Essex Road on 31st October. Her last visit to the School was for a Council Meeting on 18th November. On

16th December a Council Meeting was held at her own home, at which she took the chair, and on 28th December, 1925, at 17, Nottingham Place, the gallant and great lady met death with the same serenity and reserve with which she had encountered life. The following incident shows the stoical character of this remarkable person. On a bitter afternoon shortly before her death, when walking through the courtyard at the Royal Free Hospital, she was taken seriously ill with breathlessness. Mr. Langton and I thought she would collapse. She would accept no assistance and slowly struggled to attend a meeting.

Her death called forth many tributes from high and low. Her Majesty wrote, through Col. Clive Wigram, to Mrs. Scharlieb, President of the School :

“The Queen was shocked to learn that the close had come to the active and distinguished life of Dame Louisa Aldrich-Blake, for whom the Queen had a very sincere regard.

“I am commanded to convey to you and to your colleagues an expression of the true sympathy of Her Majesty in the irreparable loss which your School and the medical world have sustained by the death of this eminent woman surgeon.

“The Queen knows that Dame Louisa Aldrich-Blake will be missed by a large circle of friends and patients to whom she had endeared herself

by her attractive personality, wise influence and generous thought for others."

The Memorial Service at St. Pancras Church, opposite the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital where she had done so much useful work, was eloquent of the deep esteem in which she was held by the medical profession, her colleagues, her friends, her pupils and her students. She was cremated at Golder's Green and her ashes buried at Welsh Bicknor.

Her chauffeur, Everett, writes :

"I shall never forget the last sad journey. I was given the honour of travelling down to Welsh Bicknor, carrying in the car the treasured casket. It lay amidst a bed of gorgeous wreaths and flowers and the beautiful cross of red carnations which had rested previously on the coffin seemed to stand out still guarding the casket. My feelings I cannot express as I wended my way through the peaceful lanes and villages knowing my sad mission. When I finally reached the secluded church at Welsh Bicknor I placed the casket at the altar. The beautiful red cross stood upright by the pulpit and the other flowers seemed to fill the little church. The service next day (Sunday) was most impressive. I was asked if I would carry the casket to the grave. How eagerly I consented, knowing full well it would be the last duty I could perform for such a great Lady. The sadness I felt can well be

imagined, yet when my task was ended I somehow felt relieved, for the beautiful peaceful spot and lovely surrounding country is beyond words. A more beautiful spot could not have been chosen. Then it was I turned away, knowing the one whose very life had been entrusted to me during my years of service would require me 'no more,' though she will live in my memory for ever."

## CHAPTER XIII

I WILL not close on a sad note. The Dean was an optimist to the end. When speaking to the students in October 1924, she told them that; looking back a great many years, she could say from the bottom of her heart that the practice of medicine was a splendid life, affording more completely than any other calling scope for the use and development of almost every faculty with which human beings are endowed. "We must make the most of our opportunities; we must be willing to take reasonable professional risks; without being vain or conceited we must believe in ourselves if we are to expect others to believe in us. At the outset something depends on opportunity. Later all depends on character, industry and ability." She added, "It may not be given to many of you to make great discoveries, but observation is the basis of all medical work. If you do not develop your powers of observation to the utmost, your work will lose not only much of its usefulness, but much of its charm."

These are not her precise words, but I have stated in effect what she said. As things go, hers

was not a long life, but it was a happy and useful one. Can more be expected? With her, work was a recreation. She might well have written one of Sacha Guitry's letters, in which he says :

“ In work is repose, is joy, is liberty. What is fatiguing is to be disturbed in one's work. Work is discredited by those who imagine that one should work to live. On the contrary, one should live to work. To keep out intruders, one should write on the door, not, ‘ Monsieur works ’ but ‘ Monsieur rests.’ As for the idea of extending to the professions the limitation of hours of labour, it seems to me simply burlesque. What would you think of a painter who should say, ‘ After five o'clock I shall cease to regard ! ’ ”

The Dean could take a holiday and enjoy it in light-hearted fashion, but the great purpose of her life was never neglected. She was always observing, always thinking, always striving to produce a good piece of work, not for money, fame or glory, but for her own satisfaction. That, coupled with good health, made her both happy and useful. To paraphrase the Scriptures, she sought the right kingdom, and all else was added unto it.

