

a noble death,' inasmuch as she claimed none of the rights of a human being—that is to say, suggested nothing that might be considered 'unwomanly'—and honourably did her duty of being useful to man!

From this gloomy subject I may turn to one which, I hope, will cheer (at any rate at the first sight) many women and men; one which is supposed to fulfil a great desideratum, and is to dispense altogether with the services of male doctors for women. I refer to the 'Female Medical Aid.' The credit of initiating this system is due to the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, to whom, there can be no denying, we are all deeply indebted. But for her Ladyship's earnest desire for the welfare of the daughters of India, the question of their physical amelioration would have, for some years to come, been left in the background.

The first question which all right-minded Indians have to ask themselves is: Is there any real need for the 'Female Medical Aid'? On surveying the field of its progress, one finds that the efforts of its promoters have been, and are being, directed towards one end, and one end only. That is the opening of Hospitals for women, and equipping them with female doctors; in other words, providing 'Female Medical Aid' for the lower classes, who do not object to seeing male doctors. It will thus be seen that it is not only futile, but harmful in the extreme, as it aims at restraining the freedom of those who, by virtue of their being poor, move about freely. The employment of female doctors is, therefore, highly undesirable. The question of midwives is another matter altogether, and will be referred to presently.

As to the inefficiency of such a system, there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone having a clear insight into the question. Not that there is any question about the intellectual capacities of women, for it has clearly been shown that they can comply with examinational tests, and can win the most coveted degree. But the fact is that women are unfit to follow the medical profession for physical and physiological reasons. Bearing this in mind, and considering the practical knowledge of the average medical woman in India, one shrinks with horror from the thought of extensive employment of female doctors to meet an imaginary demand; for such a thing cannot but be attended with grave and lamentable results. Such medical treatment, it will be seen, is worse than no medical treatment at all; and one cannot too strongly repudiate such an enterprise.

Whatever may be asserted in favour of the 'Female Medical Aid' system by its promoters, it cannot be denied by them that it is practically impossible to find a sufficient number of women suited to the generality of Indian women, who are fit, however superficially, to enter the medical profession. The reason is simple enough. Female doctors in India, from the point of view of private practice, are really meant for the uneducated women in the conservative community; and it is obvious that these women cannot appreciate the services of those not acquainted with their customs and language—not to speak of feelings. It all comes to this: that unless she is a native of that part of the country where she is to work, a female doctor cannot be of any practical use to the native women.

As a matter of fact, most people recognise, and rightly recognise, that the women's appropriate duties (the grave responsibility and importance of which are unfortunately not realised by some men) are at home

and in bringing up children. But there are, it will be said, some women—widows (especially Hindu widows) and some others—who require some means for a decent livelihood. To them, I will recommend—and I will even urge them—that they should take up teaching. If there is anything most urgently needed for Indian women, if there is anything specific for the amelioration of their condition, it is—and it is well that it should be boldly stated, and clearly recognised—education and general enlightenment. I cannot, therefore, too imploringly ask those ladies who are already in the medical profession in India, and those who are going to embark on it, to recognise that their work is contrary to the philanthropic idea which is said to underlie their enthusiasm.

I will allude to one thing more in connection with the 'Female Medical Aid.' That is, the grievous injury which it is doing, and will do, to social progress and to the medical profession in India. The injury to the social cause is readily apprehended when one considers that women in search of a serious occupation, instead of living a useful life by following the right direction, as in instructing their unenlightened sisters in various ways, assume a most disagreeable attitude. Not only do they waste their energies and delay the social progress, but they actually obstruct its way.

Turning to its injurious influence on the medical profession in India, one finds oneself equally aghast. While strenuous efforts are being made to improve the tone and raise the standard of the profession, the 'Female Medical Aid' system aims at degrading its *prestige* and lowering its standard."

The cloven hoof—and the masculine selfishness—peep out here. It is not a question of morality, or progress, or humanity. It is not a question of hundreds of thousands of Hindu women gaining the advantage of skilled medical treatment. All this is narrowed down to a petty Trades Unionism, and a terror lest the employment of women in the profession should interfere with the profits of the men.

"I may now venture to make a few suggestions. Let those women—native Indians, Eurasians, and English—who have any desire to ameliorate the condition of their unfortunate sisters in India, and also those who require some opening for livelihood, take up teaching and nursing. Let women retain the midwifery work—for it is hardly likely that Indian women will ordinarily consent to male doctors attending them as accoucheurs; but let them not meddle in medical and surgical work. Lady doctors, I repeat, are not required in India. Let no woman think of fighting against Nature: to follow her closely is the mission of humanity. Who can doubt, then, that the best pursuits of women are those for which they are best fitted by Nature? Nursing, for instance, is a profession for them alone: for surely a good male nurse—having that tenderness, compassion, and self-sacrificing devotion which are natural to women—is a rarity."

It is the old, old, story over again. Of course women may be Nurses and teachers, because men have little desire to enlist in such poorly paid service. Therefore these may be left to the women. We are quite willing, however, to do as Mr. Dhingra suggests, and leave the matter to Nature, for by so doing the world will be the better for the work of such women as Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Dr. Jex-Blake, Dr. Garrett Anderson, and their talented pupils.

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