

In 1390 there were four Master Surgeons appointed from the Barber Surgeons' Company, sworn before the Mayor, "to practise truly their trade, and to make faithful oversight of all others, not only of men but of women, undertaking cures or practising the art of surgery, presenting their lack both in practice and medicine as often as need be." Guildhall Letter Book, H, 248. Meanwhile a Society of Physicians had arisen, as distinguished from the monkish practitioners. They seem to have united with the surgeons in a petition to the King and Court, of which there are two renderings in the Rolls of Parliament 9, Hen. V. 1421. Vol. IV, p. 130, and 185, the one in Norman-French, the other in English. "Forasmuch as a man hath three things to govern, that is to say, soul, body and worldly goods, the which should be principally revealed by three sciences, Divinity, Physick and Law, these connings should be practised by the most conning men in the same sciences, and most approved in cases necessarie to encrease of Vertue, long life, and goods of Fortune. But many unconnyng and unapproved in the aforesaid science practiseth, and specially in Physick, so that in this realm is every man, be he never so mean, taking upon him to practyse, and suffered to use it, to the great harm and slaughter of many men; where if no man practised theryn but only conning men and approved sufficiently learned in art, philosophy, and physick, as it is kept in other lands and realms there should many men that dyeth, for defaute of help lyve, and no man perish by unconnyng. Wherefore . . . pleaseth to your excellent wysdomes that no man of no manner of estate, degree or condition practise in Physick, but he have long time used the Scoles of Physick within some university and be graduated in the same, that is to say, that he be Bachelor or Doctor of Physick having letters and testimonials sufficient of one of these degrees of the University, under peyne of long imprisonment and a fine of £40 to the King and that *no woman* use the practice of Physick under the same paine."

This is the earliest attempt to exclude women from the medical profession *as a sex*; and it does not seem to have been altogether successful.

I rather imagine that the physicians having combined with the surgeons in this petition, as distinguished from the barber surgeons, gave the surgeons courage to engage in a conflict with their rivals in 1424. Whether the latter had friends at court or not, or whether they had the best of the argument, the decision was given in every count in favour of the barber surgeons. Dr. William Moore, of Dublin, shows that there were women distinctly sharing in the privileges of the Irish Guild of Barber surgeons, founded 1446, like the English members. These latter became formally incorporated as a London City Company in 1462. Their charter says very little of the barbering business, and a great deal about the surgery. They secured the privilege of formally examining candidates in that science, and they became the pioneers of technical education, in that they first provided regular scientific lectures and courses of instruction for their members, with an occasional "anatomy." The barber surgeons were no more assailed by the Guild of Surgeons. A composition was made between the rival bodies in 1493, and they agreed to examine their members together, the first diploma was granted in 1497, and called a "Letter patent of barber and surgeon." In 1511 an Act of

Parliament infringed their common rights, placing the training of surgeons in the hands of clerical dignitaries. Possibly the company had not been careful enough. A petition had again been presented stating "The science and connyng of Physick and Surgery daily exercised by many ignorant persons—common artificers, smiths, weavers and women boldly take upon them great cures and things of great difficulty, in which they partly use sorcerage and witchcraft, partly apply such medicine to the disease as be very noyous—no person within seven miles of London should practise without being first examined and approved by the Bishop of London, or the Dean of St. Pauls', calling unto him four doctors of Physick and other expert persons in Surgery." This act roused great opposition, and a counter-petition was brought forward averring "the Company of Surgeons of London, minding only their own lucre, and nothing the profit or case of the diseased, have sued troubled, and vexed divers honest persons, as well men as women, whom God hath endued with the knowledge of the nature, kind, and operation of certain herbs, roots, and waters, and the ministering of these to such as be pained with customable diseases. And yet the said persons have not taken any money for their pains or cunning, but have ministered the same to the poor people for neighbourhood, God's sake, and charity. And it is now well known that the surgeons admitted will do no cure to any person but where they shall know to be rewarded with a greater sum than the cure extendeth unto. For in case they would minister their cunning to poor people unrewarded there should not so many rot and perish to death for lack of surgery as daily do. (See, "Memorials of the Craft of Surgery," p. 85, Flint South and D'Arcy Power.)

For some time the clergy interfered with their examinations, but in 1540 the Barber Surgeons received back their ancient privileges, and in that year the unincorporated Guild of Surgeons united with the incorporated Guild of Barber-Surgeons. Dr. Thomas Vicary was Master in 1541, 1546, 1548, 1557. Dr. John Hall about this time wrote an impassioned book about the abuse of Chirurgerie. In the reign of Philip and Mary there was an inspection and revision of their charter. Every Liveryman might keep three apprentices, but he must not teach any but his apprentices, nor use or teach surgery without being examined. In 1595 the College of Physicians cautioned them against practising physic. There are several instances of Barber-Surgeons practising physic being fined, and this may account for the frequent use of blood-letting on all patients in these times instead of simple medicines.

Meanwhile, midwifery seems to have been quietly practised by women. The Royal Midwife of Elizabeth Grey or Woodville, the Queen of Edward IV., had a pension of £40 a year granted her for life. Now as we must always multiply the value of money at that time by more than ten, to realise what it means to-day, this was not such a trifling pension. It was even mentioned in the Act of Resumption 13 Ed. IV. (1473) "Provided always that this Act extend not nor in any wise be prejudicial to Margery Cobbe, the widow of John Cobbe, being midwyfe to our best beloved wife, Elizabeth, Quene of England, unto any grant by our letters patentes of £40 by yere, during the life of the said Margery!"—The first man who specialized in this branch of Surgery, seems to have been Dr. Blacklock, in 1610.

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