

# MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY MEDICAL JOURNAL.

*EDITED BY THE MEDICAL FACULTY.*

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[In order to encourage free discussion and original investigations, the pages of this journal will be open to all articles of a medical and scientific character, but the author—whose name will always be appended—will be alone responsible for the views and opinions expressed. The mere publication of an article will not be regarded as an endorsement of its sentiments by the editors.]

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THE vexed question of the medical co-education of the sexes having been brought directly home to this school by the late act of the Regents admitting females to the University, the Medical Faculty have presented to the Regents, through a committee of their number, their views upon this subject. The following is a copy of the memorial presented by the committee:

**TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF REGENTS:—**

The undersigned, a committee of the Faculty of the Department of Medicine and Surgery, having been duly elected and instructed by their colleagues, beg leave respectfully to submit for the consideration of the Regents certain points with reference to the medical co-education of the sexes, which in their judgement, are not inopportune at this time.

Several letters have already been received by the Dean, asking if women would be received as students into the Department of Medicine and Surgery at the commencement of the next annual session, and other applications will doubtless be made during the next few months. In view of these facts the Medical Faculty would respectfully beg the Honorable Board of Regents to take the whole subject under consideration, and then favor them with such instructions as they may deem for the best good of the University.

The undersigned would respectfully submit that the Medical Faculty entertain no prejudice against the medical education of women. There are, however, at the present time, two parties who entertain opposite views on this question. The advocates of female medical education claim that woman is mentally fully qualified to acquire the necessary knowledge, that her powers of endurance are greater than those of man—that her sensibilities and sympathies with the sick are more pronounced—that many women would prefer a life devoted to the relief of human suffering, rather than the cares of a family—and finally that a proper sense of delicacy demands that the duties of the *accoucheur* shall be placed in the hands of women, while it is believed that the diseases of women and children, at least, can be more properly and successfully treated by female physicians.

The opponents of these views, on the contrary, allege that there are insuperable obstacles in the way—that from the age of puberty throughout the most active period of her life, woman is during a large fraction of each month a quasi invalid—that her mental and moral manifestations are seriously perturbed at such times—that she cannot safely bear the exposures incident to a laborious profession while thus suffering—that every exhibition of a woman's highest function, viz: child-bearing, must incapacitate her from exercising the functions of the medical profession during a large part of the period of utero gestation, and for at least a year subsequently, if she ministers to her offspring in accordance with the laws of nature—that, from her emotional nature, even in the practice of obstetrics she would in grave emergencies, that not unfrequently arise, lack the necessary courage and firmness—and finally, that as child-bearing would be an insuperable obstacle in the way of a female physician, the danger would be that foeticide and infanticide, already alarmingly frequent, would become still more so.

With these conflicting views the undersigned have at present nothing to do, their action in this matter having no reference to the propriety of female medical education as such, but only as to the best method by which this can be accomplished.

In their judgment the medical *co-education* of the sexes is at best an experiment of doubtful utility, and one not calculated to increase the dignity of man, nor the modesty of woman. They believe that it must be obvious, even to the casual observer, that a large portion of medical instruction cannot be given in the presence of mixed classes without offending the sense of delicacy, and refinement, which should be scrupulously maintained between the sexes.

They believe here as elsewhere that familiarity will be likely to breed



contempt ; and they are decidedly of the opinion that in certain departments, at least, medical instruction should be imparted to female classes alone. They also think that what is true of lectures, is as a rule doubly applicable to public clinics, where there is inevitably such an exposure of the person, as to be indecent when the audience is made up of both sexes.

Believing, as they do, that these views will commend themselves to the moral and religious sense of the people of Michigan, (to say nothing of the delicacy and refinement which grace their homes) they would willingly leave the whole matter of female medical education for their intelligent, candid decision. The undersigned respectfully submit that they are acting in this matter not only in accordance with their own convictions, but with those of the most eminent Female Physicians in the country. It will be remembered that after the disgraceful scene which transpired at one of the Philadelphia Hospitals, during the past winter—from the commingling of sexes—the female medical professors stated in the public prints that they did not approve of mingling the sexes in public clinics—that women should obtain a medical education by themselves—and that they would refuse to admit young men to the Female Medical College, should they present themselves. To avoid the difficulties and improprieties of medical co-education, Female Medical Colleges have already been founded in all the principle eastern cities for the medical education of *women alone*, and are in successful operation.

In discoursing on female medical education, the London Lancet for January of the present year, well says, “ But if the two sexes were educated together at our Medical Colleges, it could only be at the expense of many of those qualities for which women are admired, and by which their influence—which is not by any means small—is exerted. It would scarcely be practicable, with our English ideas of morality and of the social relations of the sexes, to teach an audience of young men, and women all the facts of Anatomy and Physiology ; or to dwell upon those connected with diseases of the sexual organs, or their results ; and to omit them altogether would leave out of consideration some of the most important pathological facts.”

In the Edinburgh Medical Journal, for December, 1869, it is stated that the University Court of the University of Edinburgh has adopted a resolution that “ Women should be admitted to the study of medicine in the University, in separate classes, confined entirely to women,” etc.

In view of all these considerations, the undersigned beg leave respectfully to suggest, that the Medical Faculty of the University of Michigan hold themselves ready and willing to give a full course of medical

instruction to females, at any convenient time, and for a suitable compensation ; or, should this be deemed inexpedient, they would still farther suggest, that a Female Medical College, either in Ann Arbor or the neighboring city of Detroit, might, with propriety, receive such countenance and favor from the University as the honorable Board of Regents might deem fit and proper.

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

Signed,           A. B. CROSBY, M. D.  
                      S. H. DOUGLASS, M. D.  
                      A. B. PALMER, M. D.

Ann Arbor, March 25, 1870.