opinions rest, and how far they are the result of
habit, custom, and prejudice, or the real outgrowth
of deep convictions and beliefs inherent in the
most sacred recesses of human nature. While the
latter command ever our deepest reverence, as
the true "vox populi, vox Dei," nothing can be
more superficial, frivolous, and fallacious than the
former.

In a country where precedent has so much
weight as in England, it doubly behoves us to
make the distinction, and, while gratefully ac-
cepting the safeguard offered against inconsiderate
and precipitate change, to beware that old custom
is not suffered permanently to hide from our eyes
any truth which may be struggling into the light.
I suppose that no thinking man will pretend that
the world has now reached the zenith of truth and
knowledge, and that no further upward progress
is possible; on the contrary, we must surely be-
lieve that each year will bring with it its new
lesson; fresh lights will constantly be dawning
above the horizon, and perhaps still oftener dis-
covers will be re-discovered, truths once acknow-
ledged but gradually obscured or forgotten will
emerge again into day, and a constantly recurring
duty will lie before every one who believes in life
as a responsible time of action, and not as a period
of mere vegetative existence, to "prove all things,
and hold fast that which is good."

MEDICINE AS A PROFESSION
FOR WOMEN.

"The universe shall henceforth speak for you
And witness, she who did this thing, was born
To do it; claims her license in her work.
And as with more works, whose curse the plague,
Though twice a woman, shall be called a leech."
"Aurora Leigh."

It is a very comfortable faith to hold that "what-
ever is, is best," not only in the dispensations of
Providence, but in the social order of daily life;
but it is a faith which is perhaps best preserved
by careful avoidance of too much inquiry into facts.
The theory, if applied to past as well as to present times, would involve us in some
startling contradictions, for there is hardly any
act, habit, or custom which has not been held
meritorious and commendable in one state of
society, and detestable and evil in some other.
If we believe that there are eternal principles of
right and wrong, wisdom and equity, far above
and greater than the "public opinion" of any one
age or country, we must acknowledge the absolute
obligation of inquiring, whenever matters of im-
portance are at stake, on what grounds the popular

The above considerations arise naturally in con-
nexion with the subject of this paper, which is
too often set aside by the general-public, who,
perhaps, hardly appreciate its scope, and are not
yet fully aware of the importance of the ques-
tions involved in the general issue. We are told so
often that nature and custom have alike decided
against the admission of women to the Medical
Profession, and that there is in such admission
something repugnant to the right order of things,
that when we see growing evidences of a different
opinion among a minority perhaps, but a minority
which already includes many of our most earnest
thinkers of both sexes, and increases daily, it
surely becomes a duty for all who do not, in the
quaint language of Sharpe, "have their thinking,
like their washing, done out," to test these state-
ments by the above principles, and to see how far
their truth is supported by evidence.

In the first place, let us take the testimony of
Nature in the matter. If we go back to primeval
times, and try to imagine the first sickness or the
first injury suffered by humanity, does one in-
stantively feel that it must have been the man's
business to seek means of healing, to try the
virtues of various herbs, or to apply such rude
remedies as might occur to one unused to the
strange spectacle of human suffering? I think
that few would maintain that such ministration
would come most naturally to the man, and be
instinctively avoided by the woman; indeed, I
fancy that the presumption would be rather in
the other direction. And what is such minis-
tration but the germ of the future profession
of medicine?

Nor, I think, would the inference be different
if we appealed to the actual daily experience
of domestic life. If a child falls down stairs, and is
more or less seriously hurt, is it the father or the
mother (where both are without medical training)
who is most equal to the emergency, and who
applies the needful remedies in the first instance?
Or again, in the heart of the country, where no
doctor is readily accessible, is it the squire and the
parson, or their respective wives, who are usually
consulted about the ailments of half the parish?
Of course it may be said that such practice is by
no means scientific, but merely empirical, and this
I readily allow; but that fact in no way affects
my argument that women are naturally inclined
and fitted for medical practice. And if this be so,
I do not know who has the right to say that they
shall not be allowed to make their work scientific
when they desire it, but shall be limited to merely
the mechanical details and wearisome routine of
nursing, while to men is reserved all intelligent
knowledge of disease, and all study of the laws by
which health may be preserved or restored.

susted about every disease incident to those of the
other, would be very repugnant; nay, that were
every other condition of society the same as now,
it would probably be held wholly inadmissible.
I maintain that not only is there nothing strange
or unnatural in the idea that women are the fit
physicians for women, and men for men; but on
the contrary, that it is only custom and habit
which blind society to the extreme strangeness
and incongruity of any other notion.

I am indeed far from pretending, as some have
done, that it is morally wrong for men to be the
medical attendants of women, and that grave
mischief are the frequent and natural results of
their being placed in that position. I believe
that these statements not only materially injure
the cause they profess to serve, but that they are
in themselves false. In my own experience as a
medical student, I have had far too much reason
to acknowledge the honour and delicacy of feeling
habitually shown by the gentlemen of the medical
profession, not to protest warmly against any such
injurious imputation. I am very sure that in the
vast majority of cases, the motives and conduct of
medical men in this respect are altogether above
question, and that every physician who is also a
gentleman is thoroughly able, when consulted by
a patient in any case whatever, to remember only
the human suffering brought before him and the

Again, imagine if you can that the world has
reached its present standing point, that society
exists as now in every respect but this,—that the
art of healing has never been conceived as a sep-
ara profession, that no persons have been set apart
to receive special education for it, and that in fact
empirical "domestic medicine," in the strictest
sense, is the only thing of the kind existing.
Suppose now that society suddenly awoke to the
great want so long unnoticed, that it was rec-
ognized by all that a scientific knowledge of the
human frame in health and in disease, and a study
of the remedies of various kinds which might be
employed as curative agents, would greatly lessen
human suffering, and that it was therefore resolved
at once to set apart some persons who should
acquire such knowledge, and devote their lives to
using it for the benefit of the rest of the race. In
such case, would the natural idea be that members
of each sex should be so set apart for the benefit
of their own sex respectively,—that men should
fit themselves to minister to the maladies of men,
and women to those of women,—or that one sex
only should undertake the care of the health of
all, under all circumstances? For myself, I have
no hesitation in saying that the former seems to
me the natural course, and that to civilized society,
if unaccustomed to the idea, the proposal that
persons of one sex should in every case be con-

1 See Note A.  "Athenaeum, Sept. 24, 1867."
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Carefully considered the question from an historical point of view have any idea of the amount of evidence that may be brought to support this view of the case.

Referring to the earliest classical times, we find distinct mention in the Iliad of a woman skilled in the science of medicine, and a similar reference occurs also in the Odyssey. Euripides is no less valuable a witness on this point. He describes Queen Phaedra as disturbed in mind and out of health, and represents the nurse as thus addressing her: "If thy complaint be anything of the more secret kind, here are women at hand to compose the disease. But if thy distress is such as may be told to men, tell it, that it may be reported to the physicians," thus indicating a

1 In his "Essai sur les Femmes," Thomas points out that "Chez la plupart des sauvages...la médecine est la magie sont entre les mains des femmes." The passage is thus rendered by Professor Blackie:--

"His oldest born, bright Agamemnon, with golden hair,
A leech was she, and well she knew all herbs on ground that grew."

(Iliad, xi. 739.)

In hisNotes the translator remarks that "it seems undeniable that women have a natural vocation for exercising certain branches of the medical profession with dexterity and tact. It is gratifying therefore to find that a field of activity which has been recently claimed for the sex...finds a precedent in the venerable pages of the Iliad. In fact, nothing was more common in ancient times than medical skill possessed by females," in proof of which assertion he mentions (Emenee and others.) (Professor Blackie's "Homeric and the Iliad." Edmundon & Douglas)

2 Odyssey, iv. 227.
3 Hippolytus, 295-7.

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In more modern times, when almost all learning was garnered into the religious houses, which were not only the libraries but the hospitals of the day, it seems evident that the care of the sick and wounded fell at least as often to the share of the Nunneries as of the Monasteries, and probably medical skill, such as it was, found place among the nuns quite as often as among the brethren of the various religious Orders.

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prevailing public opinion that there were natural and rigid limits to the medical attendance of men and women, and that therefore some women were specially trained to do what the regular physicians must leave undone. It is at least remarkable to find such evidence of general feeling on this matter in a state of society supposed to possess much less delicacy and refinement than our own.

We find records of several Grecian women who were renowned for their medical skill, among whom may be instanced Olympias of Thebes, whose medical learning is said to be mentioned by Pliny; and Aspasia, from whose writings on the diseases of women, quotations are preserved in the works of Aetius, a Mesopotamian physician. On the authority of Hyginus rests the history of Agnodice, the Athenian maiden whose skill and success in medicine was the cause of the legal opening of the medical profession to all the free-born women of the State.

1 Finnauer's "Allgemeines Verzeichniss gelehrter Frauenzimmer."
2 I subjoin as a curiosity the quaint version of this story that is given in a letter from Mrs Calloor (a fashionable midwife of the reign of James II.), published in 1697, and now to be found in the British Museum. After saying that "Among the subtle Athenians a law at one time forbade women to study or practice medicine or physic on pain of death, which law continued some time, during which many women perished, both in child-bearing and by private diseases, their modesty not permitting them to admit of men either to deliver or cure them," she continues, "Till God stirred up the spirit of Agnodice, a noble maid, to pity

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The old ballad of Sir Isambard gives one illustration out of many of the prevailing state of things, relating how the nuns received the wounded knight, and how

"Like a day they made salves new,
And laid them on his wounds,
They gave hymn salves and drysakes lythe,
And belest the knyghte wonder wythe.""

It may be remembered that Sir Walter Scott, after describing how Rebecca "proceeded, with her own hands, to examine and bind up the wounds," goes on to remark, "The youngest reader of romances and romantic ballads must recollect how often the females, during the dark ages, as they are called, were initiated into the mysteries of surgery...The Jews, both male and female, possessed and practised the medical science in all its branches."

In the fourteenth century, when the Medical School of Salerno enjoyed high reputation, we find record of a female physician named Abella, who lived there, and wrote in Latin various works on medicine.

Early in the next century an Italian lady, Dorotea Bocchi, was actually Professor of Medi-
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same very suggestive title is the only one which at the present day in legal phraseology distinguishes the male practitioners of this branch of medical art.

From the time of Moses onwards this part of the profession has always been mainly in the hands of women, and in many countries of Europe no other usage has ever prevailed. The first regular French medical society, "La confrérie de St Cosme and St Damien," included within its organization the Company of Midwives, and from that time down to the present it seems in France to have been the custom to give to these women a regular education, terminating in sufficient examinations, an example which England would have done well to follow.

In this country, however, midwives appear to have held a most respectable position some centuries ago, and a curious idea of their importance, their duties, and their credit, may be gathered from a MS. volume (without date) now preserved in the British Museum, which was evidently written at a time when hardly any but women were employed in the "mysteries of the profession," and when it was a comparatively rare thing, that needed to be specially advised in certain cases, for them to "make use of (i.e., call in) a physitian." The writer remarks that "it is meet that the midwife be a woman well read and well experienced," and gives a caution that "drunkenness is a sordid sin in any who use it, but is a blemish worthy greater blame in ministers, magistrates, midwives, physicians, and chirurgeons."

Mrs Coler, in her letter previously referred to, tells us that in 1642, "the physicians and chirurgeons contending about it, midwifery was adjudged a chirurgical operation, and midwives were licensed at Chirurgeon's Hall, but not till they had passed three examinations before six skilful midwives, and as many chirurgeons;" but for some reason (connected probably with their occasional baptismal functions) the midwives were, in 1663, referred for their licence to Doctors' Commons, thus losing their official connexion with the medical world.

How it came that English midwives fell gradually from their high estate is partly explained by a very public-spirited book (with the appropriate motto "Non sibi sed aliis") written by a surgeon

1. Faccinelli’s “Proprietà Biografica delle Donna Italiane,” Venice, 1824.
2. Medicì’s “Scuola Anatomica di Bologna.”
3. Finsiter.
the precedent, and that our present Sovereign was the first queen who followed it. In a very interesting series of papers, by Dr Aveling, recently published in the Lancet, accounts have been given of a number of the royal midwives whose names have been honourably preserved in history, such as Alice Dennis, who attended Anne of Denmark, and received a fee of £100 “for her pains and attendance upon the Queen, as of His Highness’s free gift and reward, without account, impert, or other charge to be set on her for the same.”

The same writer mentions that Margaret Mercer was sent from England in 1693 to attend on “His Majesty’s dearest daughter, the Princess Electress Palatine.”

It is also recorded that “Mrs Labany attended Mary of Modena, Queen of James II., when she was delivered, on June 10th, 1687, of James Francis Edward, afterwards called the Pretender.” Mrs Wilkins, another midwife, seems also to have been present on this occasion, and it is stated that each of these persons received a fee of five hundred guineas for her services.

1 Lancet, April 13th and 20th; May 4th; June 1st; 1672.

1 It will be remembered that an attempt was made to throw doubt on the birth of this prince, but Dr Aveling remarks that: “Dr Chamberlen, in his letter to the Princess Sophia, showed the absurdity of this hypothesis”—(i.e., of the charge of conspiracy)

1 It may be interesting to give the following quotation on this subject from a popular magazine of thirty years ago:—“The accoucher’s is a profession nearly altogether wrested out of the hands of women, for which Nature has surely fitted them, if opinion permitted education to finish Nature’s work. But women are held in the bonds of ignorance, and then pronounced of deficient capacity, or blamed for wanting the knowledge they are sternly prevented from acquiring.”—Tait’s Magazine, June, 1841.
man is very rarely called in; notwithstanding, fatal cases are of far less frequent occurrence in Russia than in England;” and the same authority tells us that ladies practising midwifery are admitted into society as doctors would be, and are well paid, both by the Government and by private fees.

While thus briefly tracing out the history of midwifery in modern times, and the causes which led to its practice passing from the hands of women into those of men, I have not paused to mention, in due chronological order, those women who, in the last three centuries, have been distinguished for a knowledge of the other branches of Medicine and Surgery. Of these I will now enumerate a few, though my time and space are far too limited either to give a complete list, or to relate any but the most prominent particulars of each case mentioned; but I can promise that any one who will consult the authorities quoted will be abundantly repaid by the long and interesting details that I am forced to pass over in almost every instance.

In the seventeenth century, in England, one of the women most noted for medical skill was Lady Ann Halket, born in 1623, daughter of the then "Elites and Customs of the Greek and Russian Church," by Madame Romanoff. Rivingtons, 1862.


"An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury." Bristol, 1731.

of learned women, and about the middle of the last century the Chair of Anatomy at that University was filled by Anna Morandi Mazzolini, whose exquisite delicate anatomical models, executed in wax, became the pride of the Museum at Bologna. She first became interested in the study of Anatomy in consequence of her wish to help her husband, who was a distinguished anatomist, and a maker of anatomical designs and models. He fell into ill-health and mental despondency, and therefore "his wife, loving him dearly, and fearing that he would desert from his work, gave herself up to his comfort; and for this purpose became herself an anatomical sculptor, reading works of anatomy, consulting anatomical tables and preparations, taking theoretical and practical lessons from her husband, and, marvellous to say, even dissecting dead bodies with resolute mind, and with incredible perseverance.... Too long to describe are the works executed in wax by the able hands of this illustrious woman. They were collected in five elegant cases in our Anatomical Museum. The fourth case encloses delicate illustrations of all the parts belonging to the sense of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch—stupendous works in which she surpassed herself, and also her husband, and his colleague, Fercolo Lelli. These models were for some time kept in her own house, and each one who saw
them spread her renown, so that through distant countries was spread the fame of her works, so that every learned and distinguished person passing through Bologna was solicitous to visit and know personally the maker of these wonders."1

Signora Mazzolini also made original discoveries in anatomical science, which obtained for her many marks of distinction from the learned colleges and societies of the day. She was offered a Chair at Milan, with increased revenues, but preferred to remain at Bologna, where she lived till her death in 1774. Medicci, in his records of the Anatomical School of Bologna, speaks of this lady with profound respect, as distinguished alike by "rare powers, great erudition, gracious manners, and delicate and gentle temperament," and relates that her fame reached the ears of the Emperor Joseph II, who visited her in 1789, and "having seen her works and heard her conversation," loaded her with public honours. Her example seems to have inspired others of her countrywomen to follow in the steps of one so honoured, alike in the stern duties of her profession, and in the sanctities of household life; for in the course of the next half century several Italian women availed themselves of the thorough medical education which the Italian Universities never refused.

1 "Scuola Anatomica di Bologna," by Medicci.

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In 1788 Maria Petraccini took a degree in medicine at Florence, and we find her, a little later, lecturing on anatomy at Ferrara, in presence of the medical professors. She married Signor Feretti, and has left several works on the physical education of children.

Her daughter, Zaffira Feretti, seems to have inherited her mother's talents, for she studied Surgery in the University of Bologna, and there received a medical degree2 in May 1800. She obtained an appointment under the Italian Government, and for some time lived in Ancona acting as Director-General of the midwives in all parts of the country. She afterwards went to Turkey, and died at Patras in 1817.

Maria Mustelari seems also to have been a woman of unusual talent, and "progressed diligently in the most rigid sciences." She obtained a medical degree at Bologna in 1799. She subsequently became the wife of Signor Collizoli-Sega, and is described as possessing a "sweet and gentle temperament, with special love of silence and quiet. She centred her interests in her family, which she managed admirably."3

Still more distinguished in the annals of medicine was Maria delle Donne, who also studied in the University of Bologna, and "received the

1 Pachini.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

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Marianne, afterwards Frau von Heidenreich, studied in the Universities of both Göttingen and Giessen, and took her degree in the regular way in 1817. She is spoken of as "one of the most famed and eminent female scholars of Germany," and as being "universally honoured as one of the first living authorities in her special branch of science." She died only in 1859.

In France, the name of Madame Lachapelle was known and honoured as that of one of the ablest teachers of Midwifery during the latter part of the last century. She has left several valuable works on subjects connected with her specialty. Her funeral in 1821 was followed by all the chief physicians of Paris. Her pupil and successor, Madame Boivin, was still more distinguished for her medical knowledge and skill, and for her contributions to anatomical science. Her "Memoire de l'art des Accouchements" was approved by the highest medical authority, and was appointed as the text-book for students and midwives by the Minister of the Interior. She was invested with an Order of Merit by the King of Prussia in 1814, and in the same year was appointed co-director (with the Marquise de Belloy) of the General Hospital for Seine and Oise, and
in 1815 was entrusted with the direction of a temporary Military Hospital, for her services in which latter capacity she received a public vote of thanks. She was also entrusted with the direction of the Hospice de la Maternité, and of the Maison Royale de Santé, and was one of the most distinguished practitioners of the time. She made original discoveries in Anatomy, invented various surgical instruments, and obtained prizes for medical theses from the Société de Medicine.

Her medical writings were distinguished by "precision et clarté, jugement soin, erudition choisie, et savoir solide." In 1846 one of her books was eulogized by Jourdan as "ouvrage éminemment pratique, et le meilleur que nous possédions encore sur ce sujet," with the additional remark that "tout se réunit pour lui meriter une des premières places parmi les productions de la littérature medicale moderne." She was a member of the Medical Societies of Paris, Bordeaux, Berlin, Brussels, and Bruges, and was honoured with the degree of M.D. from the University of Marbourg. She died in 1841.

These numerous instances of the successful practice of Medicine by women seem to have been little known, or else forgotten, to judge by the surprise expressed when, after surmounting many difficulties, an English lady, named Elizabeth

branches have long been in their hands, we must go further to seek on what grounds their admission to the medical profession should be opposed.

Probably the next argument will be that women do not require, and are not fitted to receive, the scientific education needful for a first-rate Physician, and that "for their own sakes" it is not desirable that they should pursue some of the studies indispensably necessary. To this the answer must be, that the wisest thinkers teach us to believe that each human being must be "a law unto himself," and must decide what is and what is not suitable for his needs, what will and what will not contribute to his own development, and fit him best to fulfil the life-work most congenial to his tastes. If women claim that they do need and can appreciate instruction in any or all sciences, I do not know who has the right to deny the assertion.

That this controversy is no new one may be proved by reference to a very curious black-letter volume now in the British Museum, wherein the writer protests, "I mervayle greatly of the opynyon of some men that say they wolde not in no wyse that thayr daughters or wyves or kyngeswomen sholde lerne sciences, and that it shold apeare their codycyla. This thing is not

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Blackwell, succeeded in obtaining medical education and the degree of M.D. from a medical school in America in 1849. The novelty, in truth, was not in the granting of the medical degree to a woman, but in its being received by an Englishwoman, for it is hardly gratifying to one's national pride to find that England never has accorded such encouragement to female learning as was found in Italy, Germany, and France; and it is still more painful to realize that this country, almost alone, stands still aloof from the movement of liberal wisdom that has now in all these lands, as well as in Switzerland, and even in Russia, granted to woman the advantage of University education and degrees. English women are not behind others in desiring knowledge, but as yet they are forced to seek it on foreign shores, for hitherto no British University has ever fully admitted women to its educational advantages; and a few years ago, that of London, with all its professions of liberality, refused a woman's petition even for examination for the degree of M.D.!

So much for the historical evidence bearing on this question. I am indeed sorry to have paused so long on this part of the subject, but it seemed essential to a proper statement of the whole case.

If, then, nature does not instinctively forbid the practice of the healing art by women, and if it cannot be denied that some at least of its

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to say me to sustayne. That the woman apayreth by connynge it is not well to beleve. As the proverbe sayeth, "that nature gyveth maye not be taken away.""

If it be argued that the study of Natural Science may injure a woman's character, I would answer, in the words of one of the purest-minded women I know, that "if a woman's womanliness is not deep enough in her nature to bear the brunt of any needful education, it is not worth guarding." It is, I think, inconceivable that any one who considers the study of natural science to be but another word for earnest and reverent inquiry into the works of God, and who believes that, in David's words, these are to be "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," can imagine that any such study can be otherwise than elevating and helpful to the moral, as well to the mental nature of every student who pursues it in a right spirit. In the words of Scripture, "To the pure, all things are pure," and in the phrase of chivalry, "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

It has always struck me as a curious inconsistency, that while almost everybody applauds and respects Miss Nightingale and her followers for their brave disregard of conventionalities on behalf of suffering humanity, and while hardly any one would pretend that there was any want of femi-
nine delicacy in their going among the foulest sights and most painful scenes, to succour, not their own sex, but the other, many people yet profess to be shocked when other women desire to fit themselves to take the medical care of those of their sisters who would gladly welcome their aid. Where is the real difference? If a woman is to be applauded for facing the horrors of an army hospital when she believes that she can there do good work, why is she to be condemned as indelicate when she professes her willingness to go through an ordeal, certainly no greater, to obtain the education necessary for a medical practitioner? Surely work is in no way degraded by being made scientific; it cannot be commendable to obey instructions as a nurse when it would be unseemly to learn the reasons for them as a student, or to give them as a doctor; more especially as the nurse's duties may lead her, as they did in the Crimea, to attend on men with injuries and diseases of all kinds, whereas the woman who practises as a physician would confine her practice to women only. It is indeed hard to see any reason of delicacy, at least, which can be adduced in favour of women as nurses, and against them as physicians.

Their natural capacity for the one sphere or the other is, of course, a wholly different matter, and is, indeed, a thing not to be argued about, but to be tested.¹ If women fail to pass the required examinations for the ordinary medical degree, or if, after their entrance into practice, they fail to succeed in it, the whole question is naturally and finally disposed of. But that is not the point now at issue.

That the most thorough and scientific medical education need do no injury to any woman might safely be prophesied, even if the experiment had never been tried; but we have, moreover, the absolute confirmation of experience on the point, as I, for one, will gladly testify from personal acquaintance in America with many women who have made Medicine their profession; having had myself the advantage of studying under one who was characterized, by a medical gentleman known throughout the professional world, as "one of the best physicians in Boston," and who, certainly, was more remarkable for thorough refinement of mind than most women I know.—Dr Lucy Sewall.

Of course there may always be unfortunate exceptions, or rather there will always be those of both sexes who, whatever their profession may be, will be sure to disgrace it; but it is not of them that I speak, nor is it by such individual cases that the supporters of any great movement should be judged.

¹ See Note B.