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ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON
AND HER CONTEMPORARIES

Today, in most countries in the world, there are women practising medicine; I think I am correct in saying that they specialise in every branch; opportunities vary in different countries and even in different parts of the same country. In Australia there is a Flying Doctor Service, carried on by two women who are in general practice; they cover thousands of miles and deal with all types of emergencies. In the first world war, women worked as civilians in Military Hospitals, and in Auxiliary Medical Services, wearing the uniform and rank marks of whichever women's service they were attached to. In the last world war they wore uniform, and were attached to Battalions and to Military Hospitals as ordinary medical officers and as specialists, they were also attached to the Women's Services, but only after the war were they granted commissions in the regular forces.

The advance in the work and status of medical women in our own country and in America, was made possible by the vision, courage and perseverance of three young English women:

Elizabeth Blackwell,
Elizabeth Garrett, and
Sophia Jex-Blake.

The story of Elizabeth Garrett would be incomplete without some mention of Elizabeth Blackwell and Sophia Jex-Blake; they were very different in disposition, but their aim was the same, to open the door of Medicine as a profession to women.

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL.

Elizabeth Blackwell was the third child in a family of nine. Her father was a sugar refiner in Bristol; he was a whig, a nonconformist, and a reformer. He took an active part in the anti-slavery campaign. As the sugar trade was dependent on slave labour, he was not very popular with the other sugar refiners. He himself tried to grow and use sugar beet. Some time after riots in Bristol, when his refinery was burned down, he decided to go to America, where he had



friends. So Elizabeth was brought up in America. Mr. Blackwell believed in equal opportunities for his daughters, and they were educated with their brothers. Elizabeth, as a child, is described as being shy, quiet and strong willed, but she grew up into a pretty and happy girl, fond of dancing and full of charm.

Tragedy came to the family when Mr. Blackwell died at the age of 48, leaving nine children and many debts. The older members of the family opened a school, and in five years paid off the debts and educated the younger children; by 1844 they were able to close the school. Elizabeth wanted to get away from family responsibilities, and took a teaching post for a year. Then a friend, who was dying of cancer, said to her, "If I could have been treated by a lady doctor, I should have been spared much of my suffering." Elizabeth had always been scornful of those who were ailing and not physically fit. At first she felt it would be quite impossible and alien to her whole nature to become a doctor, but the idea remained with her, and finally an emotional crisis helped her to decide. She fell in love, but her lover's views on life were rigid and narrow, and she could not see that

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they would have any real companionship. So she decided that to study medicine would fill her mind and be an outlet for her energies. The family were consulted and thought of all the difficulties to be met, but decided that if Elizabeth wanted to become a doctor, she would become a doctor, but first the money for training had to be found. So in June, 1845, she took a teacher's post in North Carolina. It was ten days' journey from her home. Two younger brothers drove her in the family carriage, over rough roads and through rivers. They arrived late one night, and the brothers returned home the following morning. It is recorded that Elizabeth, sick and exhausted, was overcome by "an agony of feeling"; her courage gave way to doubt. Suddenly the answer came – hope and peace filled her soul, and a deep conviction that her life was accepted and that she would be guided and helped.

After two years in North Carolina, during which time she had read many medical books, Elizabeth went to Philadelphia to begin her search for medical training. She stayed with a Dr. Elder, who helped her with the study of anatomy and encouraged her in her efforts to get training. She applied to twenty-nine schools and was refused by all but one. Some of the professors, when approached, were very non-committal; one replied "That there were difficulties, but he did not think that they were unsurmountable." "You cannot expect me," he said, "to furnish you with a stick to break our heads with."

The Geneva school of Medicine in New York State, the Medical Faculty of which, when considering her application, felt it too great a responsibility to make a decision themselves, put the matter before the students, who, on 20th October, passed the following resolutions: "Resolved that one of the radical principles of a Republican Government is the universal education of both sexes, that to every branch of scientific education the door should be open equally to all; that the application of Elizabeth Blackwell to become a member of our class meets with our entire approbation, and, in extending our unanimous invitation, we pledge ourselves that no conduct of ours shall cause her to regret her attendance at the Institution." Elizabeth lost no time in accepting the offer of the Medical School, and started work on 6th November, 1847, and took her degree in January, 1849.

At the last, the Senate hesitated and was unwilling to grant her a degree, but the Dean of the Medical Faculty said, "She paid her tuition, didn't she? She passed every course, each and every one with honours. And let me tell you, gentlemen, if you hold

back I'll take up a campaign in every medical journal." The Senate gave in, and Elizabeth got her M.D. Many people attended the graduation ceremony to see "the woman doctor"; they saw, to their surprise, a small, slight, attractive woman, happy in her success. The next step was to try and get some postgraduate experience, and Dr. Blackwell, as she now was, decided to go to Paris. On her way to Paris, Elizabeth spent some weeks in London, to which her fame had spread, and was taken to see all the sights, entertained to lunch, dinner and dances, and thoroughly enjoyed it all. At a special soiree she met many of the most distinguished London doctors; if they expected to meet a "blue stocking," what they saw was a small, slight and attractive young woman in a "modest crinoline with pale blue frills and flowers in her hair."

Paris was a disappointment, as no hospital would admit her as a postgraduate student. She was advised to apply to La Maternite, a training school for midwives, and was admitted on the same terms as student midwives. Here the staff were helpful, and she gained some valuable experience in midwifery. After about six months in Paris she returned to London, and was fortunate in being admitted to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where the only department closed to her was that of Midwifery, as the Professor of Midwifery did not approve of a lady studying medicine. Elizabeth worked hard, but she also made friends, and was introduced to Florence Nightingale and Lady Byron, and had many social contacts. In July, 1850, she decided to return to America and to start practice in New York. No landlord wanted to give her rooms, so she applied to the women's department of the largest city dispensary, but was rejected. After many disappointments she got a flat and put up her plate, but no patients came. She wrote to her sister Emily, "A blank wall of social and professional antagonism faces a woman physician and forms a situation of singular and painful loneliness, leaving her without support, respect or professional council."

Elizabeth had become the first woman doctor; what was it all worth; even the University of Geneva had changed in its outlook, and the new Dean refused to admit women, so that her sister Emily could not gain admittance. But Elizabeth would not accept defeat, and, backed by some Quaker friends, she took a small room in a poor district of New York and opened her own dispensary. The response was overwhelming. The conditions the people lived in were appalling, and Dr. Blackwell not only doctored her patients, but lectured and exhorted them, trying to teach them the elements of hygiene.

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Emily Blackwell had been admitted to Rush College, Chicago, and then to Cleveland, Ohio, where she graduated in 1853. After graduation she went to Scotland and worked with Sir James Young Simpson, gaining postgraduate experience in midwifery and gynaecology. Meantime Elizabeth had come in contact with a Polish woman, Marie Zakrewski, then a midwife, who found herself destitute in New York. Elizabeth got her admitted to the University of Cleveland, from which she graduated in 1856, and about this time Emily came back from Europe, and now, with the help of Emily and Marie Zakrewski, and the financial help of friends, it was possible to bring to life a dream – the opening of her own hospital, and on 12th May, 1857, the “New York Infirmary for Women and Children” was opened, and was the beginning of a Medical School for women. In August, 1858, Dr. Blackwell went to London to give three lectures (to the Langham Place Group) on “Medicine as a Profession for Ladies”; she noticed a bright intelligent young lady whose interest in the study of medicine was aroused, Miss Elizabeth Garrett.

Though she got her name on the *British Medical Register* and was urged to stay in London, Elizabeth went back to America in the belief that Elizabeth Garrett would carry the torch.

ELIZABETH GARRETT.

We must now leave Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, as she goes back to America to work amongst the poor of her city, and to forward the education and training of medical women in the country of her adoption.

Elizabeth Blackwell had said that she left the “torch” in the capable hands of Elizabeth Garrett. The meeting between the two ladies had been almost a chance one. Hearing about “the Lady Doctor” from America, Elizabeth’s interest had been aroused, and she was invited by a friend in London to meet Dr. Blackwell, and afterwards she attended the lectures on “Medicine as a Profession for Ladies.” Dr. Blackwell was attracted by the “bright and intelligent young lady, Elizabeth Garrett,” and assumed that she wanted to take up medicine as a career. Elizabeth herself felt very much overwhelmed and that she was being thrust into work that was too big for her, but the seed was sown, and we will see later how it grew to fruition.

Elizabeth Garrett was born in London in the year 1836; she was the second daughter in a family of six daughters and four sons; her father, Mr. Newson Garrett, and his forebears came from Suffolk, and were gunsmiths and makers of agricultural implements. While the family was still young they

moved to Aldeburgh (by boat) and Mr. Garrett became involved in many business enterprises, owning his own fleet of barges. The family was a happy one. Mrs. Garrett was a very active and capable woman, and although she had a big family to look after, she often helped her husband in his office, writing his letters, as her “handwriting was neat and clear, her spelling and grammar correct,” she had been fortunate in having more education than her husband. She was a very religious woman and a pillar of the local church; indeed, although it was the custom for the father of a family to conduct ‘family prayers,’ this duty was undertaken by Mrs. Garrett, as on one occasion Mr. Garrett, having come almost to the end of a long chapter, turned over two pages at once and started on another; he quickly closed his Bible, and brought the family prayers to an end with, “for what we have received may the Lord make us thankful.” “He was never allowed to read (family) prayers again.

Mr. Garrett, himself without much education, spared no trouble or expense in the education of his children. Like Elizabeth Blackwell’s father, he believed in giving the girls the same opportunities as the boys, so when Elizabeth was 13 and Louie, her older sister, 15, they were sent to a boarding school, “The Academy for the Daughters of Gentlemen” at Blackheath, kept by Miss Browning and her sister, aunts of Robert Browning. At school they had all the extras, including a hot bath once a week, which was had in a laundry tub before the kitchen fire, screened by a towel horse, so they were known as the “bathing Garretts.” Miss Browning was in advance of her time and believed in plenty of fresh air, and used to go through the classrooms opening windows. French was always spoken, and the general standard of teaching was not very good. But after two years, when Elizabeth and her sister left, their education *finished*, they were thirsty for knowledge, and had made friends who in different ways influenced their lives.

In 1792, Mary Wollstoncraft wrote a *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. She appealed to women for worthy conceptions of self-respect, and to men to break the chains from women and to accept from them rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience. “It is time,” she wrote, “to strike a revolution in female manners; to restore their lost dignity and make them labour, and by reforming themselves, reform the world.” If women took exercise their bodies would become strong, and a reasonable education would cultivate their minds. Why should they not enter spheres of paid work, instead of eating out their hearts in idleness? “Women might certainly study the

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art of healing and be physicians as well as nurses,” and again, “Women must have a civic existence in the state, married or single.” “Let women share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man.” England was shocked, Mary Wollstoncraft was far in advance of her time, and her programme is not completed yet. Five years later she died, and during the next fifty years there was little improvement in the position of women. Then, gradually, the idea dawned that women had rights as well as men, and the organised women’s movements began about 1850. The demand for votes for women came in 1867.

Elizabeth became interested in the women’s movement in her early twenties, and to it she gave untiring support. “No one has time for everything,” she said, and “the passion of my life is to help women.” In conversation with her friend Emily Davies, “Women can get nowhere,” said Emily, “unless they are as well educated as men; I shall open the Universities to them.” “Yes,” agreed Elizabeth, “We need education, but we need an *income* too, and we can’t earn that without a profession.” “I shall start women in medicine,” and they agreed that Millicent, who was a younger sister of Elizabeth’s, should get the Parliamentary vote for women.

Miss Davies became the first mistress of Girton College, Elizabeth the first woman to qualify as a doctor in England and open the door of medicine to women, and Millicent, later Dame Millicent Fawcett, became President of the National Union for Women’s Suffrage Societies, and the success of the movement for the enfranchisement of women was in great part due to her wise guidance.

Having decided on her career, the next step for Elizabeth was to get her training. Although her father did not approve, he would not let her fight alone, and together they walked down Harley Street calling on the leading consultants, only to be met with – “Why not be a nurse?” “Because I prefer to earn a thousand, rather than twenty pounds a year.” No one offered to help, some laughed, some were rude; this opposition made Mr. Garrett determined that *they* must succeed, and he spared neither time nor money in the effort. Mrs. Russell Gurney, wife of the Recorder of London, had promised Dr. Blackwell, before she went to America, that she would interview any women who volunteered for medical training. An introduction was arranged for Elizabeth to meet Mrs. Gurney, and it was suggested that she should go into Middlesex Hospital as a nurse for six months in a surgical ward, as that would be a severe test. It was in the days when the frock coat worn for the ward round was changed for an old coat before entering the operating theatre,

and the surgeon washed his hands after the operation and not before. Sterilization was unknown and suppuration of wounds was accepted, and was called “laudable pus,” gangrene was frequent, and it was said that out of every three or four cases operated upon, one died.

Elizabeth came to London in June, 1860, and in August entered the Middlesex Hospital complete with linen apron and notebook. She met with consideration and kindness; the Matron set the tone and the nurses welcomed and helped her. The Medical Staff introduced her to the dissecting room and operating theatre. She was allowed to help the sisters do the dressings, to set the table and spread the ointments. One of her problems was how to treat the other students, not to be too frigid or stiff, and yet an absence of stiffness might be misconstrued. It would be best if they would just forget her sex and treat her as a student. She was given a room in the hospital, and in this she did her study and dissecting. Later Elizabeth was accepted for a special course of lectures and demonstrations in chemistry, and for this she paid fees, but she was not allowed as a regular student for the whole course. She was also admitted to lectures on *Materia Medica*, and the Treasurer took the lecture fees and became more friendly. The Senior Physician took her on ward rounds. Elizabeth wrote to a friend – “He is horribly unpunctual, but he can be heard and is a good doctor.” As the months passed Elizabeth became more confident, but in June, 1861, one year after her entering, she began to be dissatisfied with her progress, and the medical staff became less friendly. She obtained a certificate of honour in each class examination, which was a mistake, but she could not claim the prize, as she had not attended all the lectures. The examiner, in sending her the results, added, “I entreat you to use every precaution in keeping this a secret from the students.” Then the trouble arose: The Visiting Physician asked his class a question which none of the men could answer; Elizabeth gave the right reply and the students were angry and petitioned for her dismissal. A counter petition was sent to the Committee, but she was told that she would be admitted to no more lectures, though she could finish those for which she had paid fees. The Lecturers regretted that this decision had been arrived at, in “the case of a lady whose conduct had, during her entire stay in the hospital, been marked by a union of judgment and delicacy which commanded their entire esteem.” Elizabeth had received an undertaking from the Apothecaries Hall that she would be admitted to a qualifying

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examination for the licence when she had completed her studies according to the regulations of the court, which renders *an apprenticeship of five years* to a qualified practitioner imperative. Elizabeth, who wanted a University degree as well as a licence, decided to spend the winter in studying and preparing for matriculation at London or St. Andrew's. When Elizabeth applied to St. Andrew's University, she found that there was no matriculation examination, but a fee of £1 was paid for a ticket of membership of the University; this she succeeded in getting, but the fee was returned to her. However, as her name was already written in the University Book, Elizabeth sent back the fee with a covering letter saying that until the question was decided legally, she would retain the ticket. Then the legal argument began; the Lord Advocate of Scotland gave as his opinion that it was not impossible for the Senate to admit women – they could use their discretionary powers, but Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Solicitor General and Attorney General, gave as his opinion that, according to their charter, the University could not admit a woman, so the Senatus refused Elizabeth permission to attend classes. After this setback, Elizabeth went to Edinburgh and worked for a while with Professor James Young Simpson and Dr. Keiller, but the University refused to admit her as a student and she returned to London, and continued to work for her examination of the Apothecaries Hall, deciding that when she got her Diploma she would try for a foreign degree; she had a great desire to be able to write M.D. after her name.

Then started a weary round of trying to get instruction in anatomy, medicine and surgery, from professors and lecturers, and to get permission for clinical work in the hospitals. The London Hospital admitted her as a "nurse" for six months, and the Medical Staff allowed her to do ward rounds, but this soon came to an end. Then several members of the Medical Staff of the Middlesex Hospital gave her permission to do ward rounds, but this only lasted five months, as the Medical Committee objected to the ward rounds.

After six years of almost constant study, and having passed with credit her preliminary examination, Elizabeth had completed the curriculum for a Medical Diploma and, in the autumn of 1865, applied to the Society of Apothecaries for admission to the final examination. The Board wished to refuse, but Mr. Newson Garrett threatened legal action, and Elizabeth was allowed to enter; she passed with credit and obtained the Diploma L.S.A., and became the second woman to have her name on the Medical

Register. After this the Society of Apothecaries altered their regulations; in future all candidates must have worked in a recognised school of medicine, and women were excluded from these. No other woman appeared on the Register until 1877, twelve years afterwards. Mr. Garrett took a house, No. 20 Upper Berkley Street, and furnished it; Elizabeth put up her plate, "Elizabeth Garrett, L.S.A.," and *had a night bell*.

'Elizabeth's practice grew; many of her friends and their friends came to her. In this she was more fortunate than Elizabeth Blackwell. As well as her private practice she opened "St. Mary's Dispensary for Women," in a poor, crowded part of Marylebone; the patients were asked to pay a small fee, and for this they got their treatment and medicine. In the first few weeks she had between sixty and ninety women and children on each consulting afternoon. She also visited the patients in their homes and took midwifery cases in the district. She was fortunate in having the advice and help of the honorary consultants of St. Mary's Hospital when she needed it. In 1870 ten beds were added and the Dispensary was renamed, "The New Hospital for Women." Again, in 1874, more room was needed, and new premises were acquired in Marylebone Road, which provided twenty-six beds. At this time Miss Morgan, M.D., and Mrs. Louisa Atkins, M.D., both of Zurich University had joined the staff.

In 1868, the University of Paris admitted women to degrees in medicine. In spite of her busy life, Elizabeth started to study again and, in French, she passed all her preliminary examinations in quick succession, and got her M.D. for a thesis on "La Migraine." At the oral examination which followed, the examiners expressed surprise that she had not known of Dr. Graves of Dublin. "Mademoiselle," they said, "you do not know your great men." "But monsieur," she replied, "we have so many," so they smiled and forgave her.

Her practice well established and the work organised at St. Mary's Dispensary, Elizabeth offered for and got a vacancy on the Medical Staff of the Shadwell Hospital for Children (now the Princess Elizabeth of York Hospital). Shortly afterwards she was appointed Medical Representative on the Board of Management, and it was while serving on this Board that she met her husband, Mr. J. G. Anderson, who belonged to a shipping firm. About this time the Municipal Franchise was opened to women, and the Working Men's Association persuaded her to stand for the School Board, which she did, and was successful. She had to make many speeches, about which she said, "Bless us, it is a tough and toilsome business." Elizabeth polled 47,000 odd votes, against her

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opponent's 13,000.

In December, 1870, her engagement to Mr. J. G. Anderson was announced, and they were married on the 9th February, 1871. In relation to her marriage, Elizabeth wrote to a friend, "I am sure that the woman question will never be solved in any complete way so long as marriage is thought to be incompatible with freedom and an independent career, and I think there is a very good chance that we may be able to do something to discourage this notion."

It is an interesting fact that Elizabeth was able to persuade her husband to start their married life in *her* house. He seems to have been a remarkable man; there never seems to have been any question of her giving up her profession, and they were very happy. Though busy in their work, they found time for many social engagements, parties, dances and concerts, and for travel abroad.

Finding herself busy with her practice and her young family, Mrs. Anderson, as she now was, resigned from the Shadwell Hospital; this she always regretted. It was not until the year 1929 that another Medical Woman was appointed to the Medical Staff.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had three children, two girls and a boy; a great sorrow came to them when the second little girl died at 15 months of tubercular peritonitis.

Mrs. Anderson became Dean of the London School of Medicine in 1883; she was then 49, and held this post for twenty years, when she became President, and remained in office until her death in 1917.

By precept and example she taught the ethics of the Medical Profession. "The first thing women must learn," she said, "is to behave like gentlemen!" She was vigorous in mind and body, did not shrink from responsibility, inspired confidence; her judgment was good and fair; she had a good business head and was a good committee member; she was an excellent beggar and collected literally thousands of pounds for the school and the New Hospital for Women.

One of the early duties of the new Dean was to present the first two students of the school who had qualified for the degree of London University, Mrs. Mary Scharlieb and Miss Edith Shove; for this ceremony she persuaded her father to come to London. Mrs. Scharlieb had won a gold medal and a scholarship. In 1896, there was an entry of fifty new students, and the Board had to face the question of rebuilding, at a cost of £20,000, and in 1901 the London School of Medicine became one of the colleges of the newly constituted University of London.

In 1902 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson gave up active work and returned to Aldeburgh. There Mrs. Anderson was busy with her garden, and was said to be the best member of her own outdoor staff. She introduced home industries to Aldeburgh, and arranged concerts of classical music.

In 1907, Mr. Anderson died and left her very lonely. He was Mayor of Aldeburgh, and Mrs. Anderson was invited to finish his year of office; this she did. In 1914, although old and frail, she went up to London to see her daughter, Dr. Louisa Garrett Anderson, and Dr. Flora Murray leave for France with the first unit of the Women's Hospital Corps.

In her old age her family remained near her, and a faithful friend and nurse tended her. From youth to old age she had worked for one cause only, that of women. To her little grandson she said, "Colin, I have had a very happy life."

Of her, her daughter said, she carried happiness within her, and by her work brought happiness to other women.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's name is perpetuated for all time in the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, which was the New Hospital for Women, and started as St. Mary's Dispensary, a venture of faith.

SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE.

Sophia Jex-Blake was born in 1840; as she was a child who did not fit in at home, she was sent away to school, and seems to have had a stormy time, but she grew up into a young woman, intelligent, abounding in energy, and with little or no outlet for it. Her parents hoped that she would marry, but they were very religious and very strict, and she was not allowed to go to dances, theatres, or have any form of worldly pleasure. When Sophia was 18 she went to visit some cousins, and while there heard of Queen's College, and in her quick, impulsive way, she decided to go, and made her plans. Her parents were upset, but Sophia got her way, and accepted an appointment to teach mathematics.

As her main aim was to reform education, she went first to Germany and then to America to study different methods. In America she met Dr. Sewall, one of Elizabeth Blackwell's disciples, and became intensely interested in Medicine as a career, and had entered the Medical School in Boston, when her father's death changed her plans, and she gave up her study and came home to be near her mother. While at home she studied and got some coaching.

As London University had recently rejected the admission of women, Sophia decided to go to Edinburgh, fortified with letters of introduction to

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members of the Medical Staff. She was joined by four other women, and they were allowed to matriculate, and for a while all went well until the class examinations. Four out of the five women had gained honours, and one, Edith Pechey, had come at the top of the list and won the Hope Scholarship. Edith Pechey got a bronze medal, and the man immediately below her on the list was awarded the scholarship, on the grounds that the women had been *separately taught* ! From now on, the course of the women, who were joined by two others and so were known as The Septem (Seven against Edinburgh), was one long story of facilities granted and then withdrawn. Sophia Jex-Blake was a good fighter, but had not the tact of Elizabeth Garrett. She was almost idolized by the other six; nothing daunted her, and she was extremely kind and helpful to the members of the group. In May, 1876, Mr. Russell Gurney, the Recorder of London, introduced an Enabling Bill; this received the Royal Assent in August, 1876, and it enabled any University in Great Britain and Ireland to admit women to its examinations. Now the problem was, which Universities would act on their new bill, Edith Pechey and Edith Shove went to Ireland and came back with the promise that the Irish College of Physicians and the Queen's University had agreed to admit women to their degrees and diplomas. The following year Sophia Jex-Blake and Edith Pechey received their degrees in Dublin, and in 1877 their names were added to the Medical Register.

It was clear that there was no possibility of women getting any clinical training in Edinburgh, or of their being admitted to the final Medical examinations, so Sophia Jex-Blake and Isabel Thorne came to London, and some of the others went to Zurich and Paris. Sophia proposed at once to form a separate school of medicine for women. A number of leading medical men had promised to join the staff, men who were already recognised teachers at other schools. A provisional council was formed, and Mrs. Garrett Anderson was asked to join it and did so, serving the school to the end of her life. The Council met at 69 Wimpole Street, in the house of Dr. Anstie, with Miss Sophia Jex-Blake as Secretary, on 22nd August, 1874. Dr. Anstie became the first Dean of the School. Money was collected, and 30 Henrietta Street was bought, furnished, and equipped, and on the 12th October, the London School of Medicine for Women was opened, with fourteen students.

In May, 1875, the Provisional Council handed over to the Board of Governors. By a rotation of classes the curriculum was covered in three years, and at the end of the first session Lord Shaftesbury presented the

prizes.

A Medical School for Women was an accomplished fact, but there was no hospital willing to give them clinical teaching. The New Hospital for Women was not big enough; no examining board would admit them to their examinations. Then came the Medical Act of 1876, already mentioned, which gave Universities the right to admit women to their examinations for degrees and diplomas.

The problem of a hospital was solved when the Royal Free Hospital, after much negotiation, entered into a five year tentative agreement with the School. The Medical School was to pay £715 a year to the hospital, £500 in fees to the staff, and the balance to the general expenses of the hospital. The founding of the London School of Medicine for Women, and the agreement with the Royal Free Hospital, bear testimony to the perseverance and untiring efforts of Sophia Jex-Blake in the cause of Medical women.

Sophia Jex-Blake had done all the secretarial work for the school; now an official Hon. Secretary was to be appointed. Mrs. Isabel Thorne was chosen. Sophia was disappointed, but approved of the appointment; she herself went to Edinburgh, though she remained on the Board until 1896. In Edinburgh she started practice, and with her usual energy and foresight, formed a School of Medicine for Women, and founded a Hospital for Women and Children. Towards the end of her life, Sophia Jex-Blake suffered all the weariness and discomfort of congestive heart failure, but when able, still went out for her drives into the country. It was after one of these, feeling a bit more tired than usual, she sat down in her chair and went to sleep for the last time.

A brass tablet to her memory in St. Giles Cathedral, in Edinburgh, reads:

“Sacred to the memory of Sophia Jex-Blake, M.D., by whose energy, courage, self-sacrifice and perseverance, the Science of Medicine and the Art of Healing were opened to women in Scotland.”

May I quote from Rudyard Kipling (Today – 1914):

“No easy hopes or lies,
Shall bring us to our goal,
But iron sacrifice,
Of body, will, and soul.
There is but one task for all –
For each one life to give.”