

**ESSAYS IN MEDICAL  
SOCIOLOGY.  
VOLUME II**

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Essays in medical sociology. Volume II by Elizabeth Blackwell

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**ELIZABETH BLACKWELL**

**ESSAYS IN MEDICAL  
SOCIOLOGY.  
VOLUME II**



ESSAYS  
IN  
MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY

BY  
ELIZABETH BLACKWELL, M.D. 1821-1910.

*VOLUME II.*

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

ESSAY	PAGE
I. THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE - - - - -	I
II. ERRONEOUS METHOD IN MEDICAL EDUCATION	33
III. WHY HYGIENIC CONGRESSES FAIL - - - - -	47
APPENDIX - - - - -	85
IV. SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN BIOLOGY - - - - -	87
V. CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM - - - - -	151
VI. ON THE DECAY OF MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT - - - - -	173
VII. ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE WOMEN'S MEDICAL COLLEGE, NEW YORK -	197
VIII. THE RELIGION OF HEALTH - - - - -	211

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN THE  
PROFESSION OF MEDICINE

*Address given at the Opening of the Winter Session of the London School  
of Medicine for Women, October, 1889*





## THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE

IN the short time that we meet together to-day I will ask you to let me dwell upon the way in which the most beneficial influence of women in the medical profession may be exercised. I wish also to point out certain dangers, as well as advantages, with which medical study is now surrounded.

The avenues by which all may enter into the profession are now so much more widely thrown open that there is little difficulty in the way of any man or woman who may wish to acquire a legal right to practise medicine. In Paris all the public medical institutions, both college and hospital, are thrown open to students without distinction of sex. Not only as ordinary students, but as internes and externes, sex is no longer regarded there as a barrier to opportunity and position. The democratic principle is everywhere steadily gaining ground, and the individual allowed to try his strength in the great battle of life. Large numbers of women are taking advantage of this wider individual liberty to enter the medical profession. In Great Britain our

seventy-three registered lady-doctors are few compared with the 3,000 in the United States, yet the nine students who are now connected with our London school, with, in addition, the Edinburgh classes, the Dublin students, and the latest fact that the Glasgow Medical College has just opened its doors to women, clearly indicate that the movement has taken sturdy root in our country, and when our English work has been carried on for forty years, there is every probability that our British lady-doctors will equal numerically our kinsfolk across the ocean.

I think, therefore, that all will see the importance of considering the future of this growing army of medical women, and I particularly desire that our students of medicine should realize the far-reaching character, the social effects, of this medical career which they are entering on. It is quite certain that the wide adoption of the medical profession by women cannot continue to be an insignificant matter; it must exercise an appreciable effect on future society for good or evil.

If we were children entering upon a course of education, it would be premature to take stock of the results of education, and cast a far-seeing glance into the future.

But it is different with adult women—women of education, somewhat impatient of restraint—entering upon a larger liberty, and legitimately jealous of any interference with that liberty. It is therefore imperative upon us to consider very seriously this