

**BIOGRAPHY: PIONEER  
WORK IN  
OPENING THE MEDICAL  
PROFESSION TO WOMEN**

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Biography: Pioneer work in opening the medical profession to women by Elizabeth Blackwell

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**ELIZABETH BLACKWELL**

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BIOGRAPHY

PIONEER WORK  
IN OPENING THE MEDICAL  
PROFESSION TO WOMEN BY  
DR. ELIZABETH BLACKWELL. INTRO-  
DUCTION BY MILICENT G. FAWCETT

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A GOOD  
BOOK  
IS THE  
PRECIOUS  
LIFE-BLOOD OF  
A MASTER  
SPIRIT  
EMBALMED &  
TREASURED  
UPON PURPOSE  
TO A LIFE  
BEYOND LIFE  
MILTON

PIONEER  
WORK *for*  
WOMEN *by* D<sup>r</sup>  
ELIZABETH  
BLACKWELL



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by J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD  
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## INTRODUCTION

*For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march, my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,  
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Have the elder races halted ?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the  
seas ?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Do the feasters gluttonous feast ?  
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep ? have they lock'd and bolted doors ?  
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !*

THIS book has long been known and cherished by a few, but when it was first published, nearly twenty years ago, it made no wide appeal. It was caviare to the general. But the world has moved on a long way since 1895, and where it found an appreciative reader then, it should find a thousand now. It is in substance, though not in name, an autobiography ; and it tells the tale of one of the most courageous and successful pieces of pioncering that has ever been accomplished by man or woman.

Walt Whitman, in the well-known poem, some stanzas of which are at the head of this page, credits " the youthful sinewy races " with the grand task of making the roads and leading the way to new realms of human activity : the elder races, he would have us think, have halted, " wearied over there beyond the seas " ; they have fallen back on " the cushion

and the slipper," whilst the western pioneers fight on gallantly, joyfully opening the way for others to follow, rejoicing "in the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground," for "all the rest on us depend."

But the pioneer in this case did not belong to "the youthful sinewy races." Elizabeth Blackwell was born and lived for the first eleven years of her life in Bristol. Her subsequent life in America no doubt placed her in an atmosphere that was favourable to the full development of her vigorous and self-reliant character. But readers of this book will see that she remained essentially an Englishwoman. She writes on her first visit to England, after her girlhood, of the strong attraction which her native land exercised over her, and of her desire to settle there for good; of the warm sympathy she received from her English friends, and how this "strengthened that feeling of kinship" to England which finally drew her back to it as her permanent home and last resting-place. It was not only the climate and scenery of England that won her heart, she found in England a congenial social environment that appealed most powerfully to her.

In 1859 she writes to her sister Emily Blackwell: "The more I see of work in England the more I like it. . . . There is an immense charm in this fresh field where solid English heads receive the highest view of truth, where generosity and largeness of idea meet you at every turn. I like working and living in England, and there is no limit to what we might accomplish there."

So with all due appreciation of Walt Whitman's noble poem let no one think that "the elder races . . . wearied over there beyond the seas" are incapable of the heroic courage, the persistent steadfastness, the power "to scorn delights and live laborious days," which every pioneer must bring to his task.

Readers will almost inevitably compare and contrast this little book with the masterly *Life of Florence Nightingale*, published in 1913. The two women resembled one another in many ways; they were within a few months of the same age; they both had the sense of vocation, the strong religious feeling as the base and root of all their work; the same intense distaste to the ordinary life of young ladyhood, wasting

time over inane conversation, paying calls and making baubles which no one wanted; the same feeling that they had got to do what each eventually did do in the way of raising the standard of women's work; the same intense joy and satisfaction in her appointed task when once she had established the right and power to do it. But with all these similarities, their outward circumstances, and in some respects their characters, were as different as they could possibly be. Florence Nightingale belonged to a rich family, and for years she had to carry on a constant warfare with them, for they put every possible obstacle in the way of her carrying out her heart's desire, treating her purpose to train herself as a hospital nurse as they might have treated a wish on her part to become a kitchenmaid. This battle with her family left its lasting mark on her. One doubts, on reading her life, if she ever really quite forgave them. After her return from the Crimea, when she was great and famous, they were at her feet; but she let ten years go by without once visiting her home; and when her family came to London she intimated to them that she would prefer it if they would stay in some other hotel than that in which she had established herself. In both these respects, wealth and family relations, Elizabeth Blackwell's lot was in complete contrast to Florence Nightingale's. The Blackwells were as poor as church mice; but every sort of help which her family could give her in sympathy and encouragement, they generously and willingly gave. Florence Nightingale was one of two children, Elizabeth Blackwell was one of nine. Her very strong family affection finds expression in innumerable places in this book. Its first sentence expresses her conviction of the great advantage derived from being one of a large family group of healthy, active children, surrounded by wholesome influences. One of these wholesome influences was poverty—not poverty of grinding, debasing intensity, but none the less very real.

When Florence Nightingale finally overcame the opposition of her family, her father set her up with a handsome income. Elizabeth Blackwell had no income, but she had a little store of "carefully hoarded earnings," and when she set out first of all in pursuit of her quest, her two young brothers drove her on the eleven days' journey along untravelled roads,