



Pioneer Work In Opening The Medical Profession To Women (Classics in Women's Studies)

Elizabeth Blackwell

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Born in England, she immigrated with her family to the United States in 1832. After teaching school for more than a decade, the medical profession gradually became an irresistible calling, and she began applying to medical schools. After being rejected by the leading schools, Geneva Medical School (now Hobart College in Geneva, New York) accepted her admission. Though faced with ostracism and harassment from many of her male colleagues, she persevered, and in 1849 she graduated—first in her class.

Blackwell encountered further resistance in her attempts to set up a practice. When New York City's hospitals refused to offer her any post, she eventually opened up a small dispensary of her own in a slum district. Her perseverance once again paid off, for in 1859 the now greatly enlarged dispensary was incorporated as the New York Infirmary for Women and Children. By 1868, after consultation with Florence Nightingale, she was able to open up the Woman's Medical College at the infirmary, which remained in operation for thirty-one years. During the American Civil War she performed valuable service by helping to organize the Woman's Central Association of Relief, which selected and trained nurses for the war, and the U.S. Sanitary Commission.

In 1869, Blackwell moved permanently to England, where she established a successful private practice and was appointed professor of gynecology at the London School of Medicine for Women. She retired in 1907.

Full of insightful reflections on the philosophy of medicine, women's education, the evils of slavery, and the nature of American society in the nineteenth century, this unique autobiography will interest scholars and students of women's studies and the history of science.

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